Internal Consulting Skills: Contracting, Diagnosis and Influence as a Trusted Adviser

23 – 27 August 2027
Paris - Right Bank business hotel



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Introduction:

Support functions such as HR, finance, IT, quality and strategy hold expertise that line managers need, yet their advice is often requested too late, accepted on paper and then ignored. Internal consulting skills close that gap by turning ad hoc requests into agreed engagements with clear roles, shared diagnosis and joint ownership of action. This Core Concept course trains internal advisers to contract with internal clients, gather and feed back data, work through resistance and influence without positional authority. Participants leave with an Internal Client Engagement Plan for a live request from their own organisation.

Course Objectives:

- Contract and re-contract with internal clients on outcomes, roles, access and confidentiality before work begins
- Select a consulting stance that fits the request, moving between expert, pair-of-hands and collaborative roles
- Gather diagnostic data through client interviews, observation and existing records and form a working picture of the problem
- Run feedback meetings that present findings in the client's language and lead to a decision on next steps
- Recognise and respond to client resistance and influence sponsors and line managers without formal authority
- Produce an Internal Client Engagement Plan with success measures for a live request

Target Audience:

- Specialists in HR, learning and organisation development who advise line managers on people matters
- Finance and business partnering staff who support budget holders with analysis and recommendations
- IT, digital and data teams who scope and advise on system and process requests from business units
- Quality, risk and continuous improvement staff who guide departments through improvement work
- Strategy, transformation and performance office staff who support leaders on internal studies
- Managers moving from technical roles into advisory roles serving other departments

Course Outline:

Day 1: The Internal Adviser Role and the Consulting Cycle

- Internal Versus External Consultant: Access, Credibility and Dual Loyalty
- Block's Five Phases: Entry, Discovery, Feedback, Engagement and Extension
- Consulting Role Continuum: Expert, Pair-of-Hands and Collaborative Stances
- Trust Equation of Credibility, Reliability, Intimacy and Self-Orientation
- Internal Client Portfolio Map and Current Relationship Health Check

Day 2: Entry, Contracting and Engagement Standards

- ISO 20700 Guidelines Applied to Internal Consultancy Services
- Contracting Meeting Structure: Wants, Offers, Concerns and Agreement
- Identifying the Real Client: Contact, Primary, Ultimate and Unwitting Clients
- Written Engagement Agreement: Scope, Roles, Data Access and Confidentiality
- Re-Contracting Triggers When Scope, Sponsor or Priorities Shift

Day 3: Discovery, Diagnosis and the Feedback Meeting

- Schein's Process Consultation and Humble Inquiry Questioning
- Diagnostic Interview Guide and Client Observation Log
- Presenting Problem Versus Underlying Problem Separation Canvas
- Working Hypotheses Tested With the Client Rather Than for the Client
- Feedback Meeting Agenda: Data, Interpretation, Choices and Commitment

Day 4: Resistance, Influence Without Authority and Measuring Value

- Forms of Client Resistance and the Name-It-and-Wait Response
- Influence Planning Grid for Sponsors, Line Managers and Gatekeepers
- Saying No and Redirecting Requests Outside the Adviser's Remit
- Implementation Support, Handover and Engagement Closure Review
- Internal Consulting Value Scorecard: Client Satisfaction, Outcomes and Reuse

Day 5: Consulting Role-Plays and the Internal Client Engagement Plan

- Contracting Role-Play With a Reluctant Department Head
- Feedback Meeting Role-Play Delivering Unwelcome Findings
- Resistance Role-Play From an Operations and a Finance Scenario
- Internal Client Engagement Plan Drafting for an Own Request
- Plan Presentation and Peer Consulting Critique

Skills You Will Gain:

- Internal Client Contracting
- Consulting Stance Selection
- Diagnostic Interviewing
- Feedback Meeting Facilitation
- Resistance Handling
- Lateral Influence
- Trusted Adviser Credibility
- Consulting Value Measurement

Why Attend This Course:

- Return with an Internal Client Engagement Plan for a live request, rehearsed and critiqued by peers
- Stop being treated as an order-taker by agreeing outcomes, roles and data access before starting work
- Handle difficult conversations with senior internal clients after rehearsing them in role-play with feedback
- Compare advisory practice with peers from HR, finance, IT and quality functions across several sectors

Conclusion:

Internal advisers earn influence through the way they manage the client relationship as much as through their technical knowledge. The course moves from the adviser role and the consulting cycle, through contracting and engagement standards, to discovery, diagnosis and the feedback meeting, and then to resistance, lateral influence, closure and value measurement. The final day rehearses the hardest consulting conversations and produces an Internal Client Engagement Plan that participants apply to a real request on their return.