

Editor's Note

We Live in Interesting Times!

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Welcome to the first issue of 2009! The global economic downturn is the major item on most agendas. While an imploding housing market, crisis in the banking and financial sectors and corporate downsizing with resultant layoffs are the public face of the indelicately labeled “credit crunch,” one wonders what may be occurring beneath the surface.

Practically everyone is affected. Governments, large corporations, small businesses, individual investors and consultants are all feeling the effects of the global recession. Whether opportunities for consultants are expanding or shrinking depends on who you talk to.

Clearly, some have been negatively impacted, tied as their fortunes are to that of clients in the established corporate sectors. Yet, the expertise of others is in high demand. The image of consultants as “solutions providers” could serve the industry well, particularly if this is combined with innovative methods that blend economics, cost-containment, human factors initiatives, leadership and a revamped global strategy into the consulting mix. The reality is that even with all the depressing news, we continue to live in interesting times. Consultants should take note.

If you have an unusual consulting narrative, case study, advisory notice, or useful tips on how consultants can not only weather, but perhaps even leverage the current economic crisis to their advantage, JPC would like to hear from you.

By sharing and exchanging ideas—good old fashioned networking—the consulting industry could, in fact, come out ahead. This would be a good starting point from which to assist a range of companies devise much-needed recovery or organizational development plans.

In this issue, we bring together three qualitatively different articles that again reflect on different aspects of consulting. Anderson writes on the role of consultants as brokers of local business development. The case study explores a business community development initiative in London, England, demonstrating how consultants working collaboratively can be agents of significant change.

Berg’s more systematic study explores frameworks for conducting assessments, which are the stock-in-trade of the consulting profession. The argument is that appropriate and effective assessments require comprehensive examination of both the individual and the setting. This leads to an interesting discussion of strengths, specific environmental factors and hope.

The third article by Hicks and Nair is provocatively titled, “If you can’t solve the problem, change the problem you’re solving,” and this is precisely what the authors recommend. The solution to effective problem solving is to frame or, occasionally, re-frame the problem. It is a case of consultants taking charge or proactively seeking to understand and interpret the needs of their clients.

Once again, we welcome your letters and comments, as well as any ideas you might have for future articles. Expanding our consultant knowledge base and thinking more collaboratively are two strategies we can all usefully adopt.

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Editor

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