

GETTING STARTED IN INFOSEC CONSULTING THE MISSING CHAPTER

workbook



HOW TO START AND BUILD A
CONSULTING PRACTICE THAT YOU LOVE

T E D D E M O P O U L O S

The Missing Chapter Workbook

This workbook is design to complement “The Missing Chapter” of my book [*Getting Started in Infosec Consulting*](#).

[Click here to download The Missing Chapter](#) (it’s complimentary) if you don’t already have it.

The “Pre-ramble”

I missed one crucial thing in my book on getting started with consulting, something perhaps nonobvious.

I focused primarily on “how,” with a little “why” as well. I did this because most of the questions I’ve gotten and continue to get are on “how.” For example, “How to get clients,” and “How to set pricing.” I cover these extensively in my book; they are not “rocket science.” And of course these are very important questions.

Perhaps a more important question is:

“How do you start and build a consulting practice that you love?”

and we address this here in this “Missing Chapter.”

It is possible, and not uncommon, to build a career as a consultant or employee, perhaps making piles of money, and with plenty of accolades and respect, that you don’t love.

Some seemingly successful consultants have built consulting practices they dislike, or at least don’t love. And of course, our work is a major part of our lives, and you are far more likely to have a happy life if your work brings you joy.

I’ll go a step further. If a major part of your life is horrible, in this case your work, your life can’t be great! If you are a consultant and dread much of your work, much of your life is going to be dreadful.

I’ve worked with several six- and seven-figure earners who simply hate their work and literally are counting the years or days until they can switch jobs or fire major clients or retire. Often, they feel trapped.

I feel sorry for them. Don’t be like them.

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I strongly suggest you do the exercises in this book and write them down—don't just do them in your head. They don't take long. Also, it's recommended you write the exercises with pen or pencil and paper (or even chisel and stone tablet if you're old school). This engages a different part of the brain than simply typing them electronically.

And do the exercises quickly—time box them, allowing maybe five to ten minutes maximum per exercise. Remember each is a first pass and isn't intended to be perfect. Truly perfect doesn't exist in this universe, so don't let perfectionism get in the way.

Nothing is written in stone, unless or course, you literally use a chisel and stone tablets!

The Basics

Name

Date

We are going to look at our past work: the good, the mediocre, and the ugly. And we will think about what our ideal work would look like.

Then we are going to reverse engineer everything! And make plans to make things better, even if they are currently fantastic.

Step I: Positive Aspects and Commonalities of Previous and Current Work

Look back at your work history. Focus on the good.

Think about various phases of your career. If I was younger, I'd probably go back further to various summer jobs for example as a fry cook and as an intern for a judge. You may want to go further back.

What are the positive aspects? Pay particular attention to commonalities. Write them down.

Step II: Mediocre to Ugly Aspects and Commonalities of Previous and Current Work

Next let's look at the mediocre and ugly aspects of our work.

Once again, think about various phases of your career. What are the mediocre to ugly aspects? Write them down.

Step III: Core Values

Let's forget consulting or any type of work for a moment and focus on the bigger picture.

Why? Work is a major part of your life, so asking "*What would be the perfect work?*" involves asking what is important in your life.

What's most important to you? What matters most in your life (and hence work)?

Knowing what's important to you helps in making great decisions in life.

Building a consulting practice you love involves making great decisions! No, they won't all be great of course, but knowing what's important to you helps guide your decision making.

Some of our past decisions haven't been great—yes, I'm talking to you. It's ok. And not all our future decisions will be either. We want more of our future decisions to be great or at least "pretty good" and that's what this section is about.

We could use lots of different terms to describe what matters most to us.

I'm going to use the term "Core Values." Knowing your Core Values helps you to make good decisions in your life, including in your career, so that you can be successful.

Take five to ten minutes—and yes, having a time limit helps enormously here—and QUICKLY list the things important to you.

You can refine them later. I prefer single words!!

Remember: There are no right or wrong answers and this is a FIRST PASS.

Distill your list to the most important to you.

Some may sound good but may not be the most important.

You may have some values that can be combined.

There is no "perfect" so don't overthink this.

Try to get your list to three ideally. Four is ok, twenty-four is not! It should be a short list.

Your Core Values are your STRENGTHS.

Step IV: Your Ideal Work

In our next exercise, we will temporarily ignore the work we have already done.

First, describe your ideal work. Take three to five minutes to do this. Write down whatever pops in your mind. Of course, the exercises we've done above matter, but don't focus on them. Once again, don't aim for perfect. We will tweak it soon.

You can write a paragraph or two or just key phrases if you prefer. Whatever works for you.

What would be the perfect work for you? Yes, we are focusing on consulting but considering work in a vacuum right now.

Now let's take the results of Step I, "Positive Aspects and Commonalities of Previous and Current Work," and the results of Step II, "Mediocre to Ugly Aspects and Commonalities of Previous and Current Work," and compare them to what we've written.

There should be a lot of similarities and overlap. In other words, they should jive with each other. Make any tweaks you'd like. You may have missed something or over- or under-emphasized something.

Now compare to your Core Values. Your ideal work and your Core Values should be in agreement. Make any slight adjustments you deem fit.

Remember this is a work in progress. It will evolve over time and there is no perfect!

Step V: Non-negotiables

One last step to do.

We are going to talk about non-negotiables. Things that are not negotiable in your work and life.

There are both long-term and short-term non-negotiables.

An example of a long-term non-negotiable for me is that I won't work on anything that doesn't make a positive difference, whether to my clients or the world.

An example of a short-term non-negotiable for me is that I won't take any longer-term projects that require me to be gone for extended periods of time, as my mother is in her 90s and I want to spend a lot of time with her while it's still possible.

Write your non-negotiables down here:

Now make one final pass. Look at what you've written for your ideal work, and factor in any non-negotiables. Make any necessary tweaks and changes.

Write it down here:

Voila, you've got it: an idea to work towards to help guide your decisions in building a successful consulting practice!

For me, I'll summarize as:

Making a positive contribution through my work is essential. Most of my ideal work is in the strategic or advisory role, although I want to get my hands dirty with technology some of time as well. I love advising both new and established consultants and startups on the business side, as I know I make a very positive impact here, both to the individuals involved and their families.

I require lots of time off to pursue my own goals, whether professionally oriented or not. I don't mind working long and hard hours much of the time to accomplish this. I want to work in exciting places when I'm not working from home. And I insist that all my work has a significant "fun" component, although I realize that even the most enjoyable work may entail some drudgery and I'm ok with that!

The Final Words

Your statement of ideal work is a work in progress and is intended to morph and evolve over time.

Use it to guide you in creating a consulting career and life you love.

Realize we don't live in a perfect world and you may do some things in the short term that don't perfectly fit into "ideal."

Of course there are several reasons for this. It may be because you are just starting as a consultant and take on some work that may be "pretty good" or may be just "ok" to pay the bills. It may be for a myriad of other reasons.

So, let's build a successful consulting practice that you love.

And if you're already consulting, let's make sure you keep loving it and it keeps getting better!

Of course, what you envision may not transpire; but what you don't expect might be even better. Now you have a guide to help steer decisions in a positive direction.

Feel free to share this with anyone who might find it useful.

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