

THE BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP

★
2009 EDITION



- ★ BCG'S COMPETITIVE STRATEGY AND INDUSTRY POSITION
- ★ COMPANY CULTURE AND CAREER PATHS
- ★ TRAVEL, COMPENSATION, AND PERKS
- ★ THE RECRUITING PROCESS

★ **INSIDER SCOOP: FRONT-LINE REPORTS** ★

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INSIDER GUIDE

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Consulting
Group*

2009 EDITION

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*The Boston
Consulting
Group at a
Glance*

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THE BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP AT A GLANCE

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Primary Competitors

Bain & Company, Booz & Company,
 McKinsey & Company

Key Differentiating Factors

- Heavier focus on strategy and operations projects (less on reengineering) than other firms
- Strong international presence: 1,698 employees work in the U.S.; 4,969 work in other countries
- One of the most prestigious consulting firms in the world

In the Recruiter's Words

"I would say that BCG does a great job of educating people about who we are and what we do. Candidates have every opportunity to learn what BCG is about during everything from our formal campus presentations to calls from individual consultants."

"After you start, you get a lot of informal mentorship as well as the more formal mentors that are set up for individuals."

"In all our new hires, we look for evidence of creativity, strong analytical and communication skills, and a

fondness for problem solving. Candidates should also communicate their desire to make an impact on our clients' businesses."

In the Interview

"I spent about 40 percent on case questions, 40 percent on my resume, and 20 percent on asking questions about the firm," says one insider. BCG case questions are based on real business issues that the firm's consultants have tackled in the past—not on brainteasers. "I interviewed at Bain and BCG," an associate hire says. "At BCG, the case was a challenging exercise and my interviewers worked through it with me. It was not adversarial at all. With Bain, it felt more like a test."

What Insiders Say

"BCG is a place where people can define their own path and have the support of high-caliber peers and mentors and the opportunity to work with a wide variety of excellent companies."

"My favorite thing about working at BCG is I get to tell the truth, and in doing so, I build my career instead of putting it at risk—which I think sometimes happens in a corporate environment."

"BCG equally values the success of its clients and the development of its people, and sees the two as mutually dependent on each other."

"People really value your input and your growth, so they invest a lot in making you a better consultant, a better communicator, a better businessperson, a better thinker."

"We aren't in a room by ourselves dreaming up answers. We share the stage with our clients."

"The BCG way is for someone to tell you all the things that are wrong with something and then say, 'Here's what we can fix.' We're about getting to the right answer. There isn't that concern about how somebody is going to feel if I challenge him."

“Our associates are shoulder-to-shoulder with the consultant, and meeting with the client, going through text with the client. They’re much more a part of the game than you would expect.”

“People come to BCG because they’re comfortable with conflict. We deal mostly with intellectual conflict. You don’t really see personal conflict.”

“We take a very collaborative approach with our clients. We don’t come up with the best theoretical solution to a problem; we come up with the best implemental solution.”

“New hires can expect a steep learning curve, almost daily challenges. They should be ready to be challenged but also expect the appropriate amount of support and know that there will be a safety net below [them].”

The Career Ladder

- Undergraduates enter as associates. MBAs, JDs, and PhDs enter as consultants.
- Candidates with master’s degrees in unrelated fields start as associates or consultants, depending on the relevance of their degree, any work experience, or honors they have received for business leadership.
- Industry hires with four or more years of experience usually start as consultants. Candidates with less experience may start as associates, depending on the depth of their previous roles and educational backgrounds.

ESTIMATED COMPENSATION, 2007–08, U.S. AND CANADA

Undergrads	\$65,000, plus \$5,000 signing bonus
MBAs	\$125,000, plus \$20,000 signing bonus
Summer Consultants	\$2,200 per week, plus \$2,000 up-front payment
Undergrad Summer Associates	\$1,200 per week, plus \$500 up-front payment
Relocation Bonus	Paid

Source: BCG

AT A GLANCE

Revenue

2007: \$2.3 billion
1-year growth rate: 28 percent

Source: BCG

Personnel Highlights

Consulting professionals worldwide, 2008: 4,500
Estimated number of hires, 2007–08, U.S. and Canada:

Undergrads: 100–120
MBAs and other advanced degrees: 240–360
MBA summer consultants: 150–180
Undergrad summer associates: 50–70

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OVERVIEW

With offices in places like Helsinki, São Paulo, Tokyo, and Warsaw, The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) defies its provincial name. Comfortably settled within the top tier of management consulting firms, its widely recognized strategy work, international status, and reputation for delivering innovative solutions make it competitive with the likes of McKinsey and Bain. Despite its small size (4,500 consultants compared to McKinsey's 6,500), BCG differentiates itself with its autonomous but supportive atmosphere, its creative approach to problem solving, and a focus on high-level strategy and operations work.

INSIDER SCOOP

"We bring insightful thinking to companies and industries. We don't work off a 'playbook' like some other consulting groups do, so we're coming up with lots of new and different ideas."

Founded in 1963, BCG came to prominence in the 1970s. Aiming straight at CEO-level strategy work, it grabbed clients, headlines, and top MBA talent, demonstrating that McKinsey was not the be-all and end-all of consulting. From the outset, BCG studiously put in the effort required to be an innovative industry leader. The company developed a number of analytical tools that quickly wrote the firm into the management consulting canon, including time-based competition, disease management, the experience curve, and the ubiquitous "cash cows, dogs, stars, and question marks" two-by-two matrix.

The technology and e-commerce explosion of the 1990s was a great boon for the consulting industry, and BCG was no exception. Accordingly, the company wasn't spared the effects of the downturn that followed. Now business is surging again, driven by the financial services, biotechnology, technology, and industrial goods markets. BCG insiders say they're working on a range of projects, picking up new clients and serving companies they've already helped. The

firm is eager to build long-term relationships. "In my experience we get a lot of support from clients and find they are really receptive to our ideas," says an insider. "In fact, I've worked with many repeat clients in the time I've been here."

Some BCG critics have complained about the high-pressure environment, but that's part of the management-consulting culture. Still, BCG has a reputation for being a great place to work largely because of its egalitarian and humane environment.

The firm placed eleventh on *Fortune's* 2008 list of "100 Best Companies to Work For." It ranked fifth on *Fortune's* 2008 list of the "100 Most Desirable MBA Employers," with 12.12 percent of MBAs placing BCG in their top five choices. In *Consulting* magazine's 2007 annual poll of consulting professionals, BCG ranked second on the list of "Best Firms to Work For." Having made itself such a compelling career option, BCG is a tough place to get hired at both the associate and consultant levels. "It's absolutely worth it," an insider says of the hoop-jumping required to land a BCG job, "just because of the perspective you're going to get and the people that you get to work with. I wouldn't change a thing."

THE BOTTOM LINE

BCG may be one of the smaller global management consultancies, but it casts a long shadow. Solidly among the consulting elite, BCG measures itself against McKinsey and Bain, while a number of other top management-consulting firms measure themselves against BCG. Although the work itself is pure consulting, the preferred flavor at BCG is strategy and cutting-edge analysis. But the congenial environment and prestige don't come cheap—the staffers at BCG work extremely hard to earn their salaries. Competition for the available spots each year is always intense; the firm hires about one in 137 applicants for associate positions.

COMPETITIVE STRATEGY

Since its inception, BCG has focused on high-level strategy projects rather than implementation work. “We’re not a firm you’d hire to implement an already existing strategy; we don’t take on implementation work that we didn’t come up with,” says one insider. Indeed, BCG insiders stress that clients come to the firm for creative approaches to tough problems.

Through good and bad markets, BCG has differentiated itself in the consulting marketplace with its reputation for breakthrough thinking and brutal honesty. “It’s full-package,” says one insider of the help BCG offers. “Anything outside of that full package is basically like handing the client a report that they can put on a shelf. It doesn’t help anybody.”

BCG is known for its structured approach to business and its use of conceptual frameworks. Two of the most influential BCG concepts are “deconstruction of the value chain” and “asset productivity.” In a nutshell, the two concepts refer to the increasing tendency of corporations to outsource production and their consequent need to extract more value from core assets.

People at BCG also describe the firm’s growing network of relationship-based client interaction. Like all top-tier consulting firms, BCG strives to secure repeat business by making its client relationships as collaborative as possible. “We understand our clients’ unique situations and find solutions that fit their exact needs,” says one insider. “So we don’t hide in a room and come up with an answer. We work with them every step of the way. We’ve got a client working with us and we keep them up to date on our thinking, where we’re going, and there are usually no surprises.”

Technology projects also make up a significant portion of BCG’s cases. However, unlike competitors such as Accenture and Capgemini, BCG doesn’t actually write the code and implement the technology

hands-on. Instead, BCG places the technology-investment decision into a strategic framework, helping the client determine whether the investment would add sufficient value.

Besides IT, insiders describe these areas as core to BCG: transformation, distribution strategy, market-entry strategy, technological licensing strategy, change management, and pricing. Internal projects, called *Tier One projects*, also demand the time of some BCG consultants.

“Basically, it’s the equivalent of BCG hiring itself,” explains an insider, who has worked on a Tier One project. “What we do is take on specific topics that we know are going to be of value to our clients, but we don’t have a specific client engagement at that moment for that particular topic.” For example, BCG notices that a number of its clients are devising new ways to develop drugs. “We then form a small case team to explore what’s going on in that market today; to study the literature; to examine other ways of thinking about this issue and then do some independent analysis to figure out what next wave of activity is necessary in product development in pharmaceuticals. We then use that as our R&D to develop different concepts, ideas, and analytical tools, which we bring to the client setting.”

These projects may not generate direct revenue, but the results of interesting projects are often widely reported in the press, enhancing the firm’s reputation. The general consensus among insiders is that business continues to grow and that BCG is well positioned for the future.

INSIDER SCOOP

“When I first started, there was an illness in my family, and BCG said that was more important than anything else. They’re quite a family-oriented company.”

INDUSTRY POSITION

BCG's ability to attract high-profile strategy and operations projects, and to do so internationally, has helped the firm maintain a position of influence beyond its relative size. In *Consulting* magazine's 2007 list of the "Best Firms to Work For," BCG came in at number two.

Of course, most of the largest firms on the list do more large-scale technology implementations than strategy. The table below shows where BCG ranks among some of its competitors.

Best Firms to Work For, 2007

Rank	Firm
1	Bain & Company
2	The Boston Consulting Group
3	McKinsey & Company
4	North Highland
5	PRTM
6	Booz Allen Hamilton
7	Kurt Salmon Associates
8	Oliver Wyman
9	West Monroe Partners
10	Slalom Consulting

Source: *Consulting* magazine, September 2007

WHERE MBAs WANT TO WORK

The ranking below is from *Fortune*'s 2008 list of the "Top 100 MBA Employers," which is based on a survey of B-school students from across the U.S. BCG held onto the fifth position for the fourth straight year.

Top MBA Employers: Consulting Firms

Rank	Firm
2	McKinsey
5	The Boston Consulting Group
6	Bain & Company
9	Deloitte
25	Booz Allen Hamilton
29	IBM
38	Accenture

Source: *Fortune*, "100 Top MBA Employers", 2008

A QUICK HISTORY LESSON

In the early 1960s, the consulting profession was a roll-up-your-sleeves-and-fix-the-problems-on-the-line type of industry. Even giants like McKinsey and Booz Allen focused on providing clients with operations advice. And then there was Bruce Henderson. A former Arthur D. Little consultant, Henderson looked at business from a new, treetop perspective. In 1963, he formed a firm under the wings of a Boston-area bank, giving birth to a new generation of consulting firms.

Although Henderson and the bank soon parted ways, his firm, The Boston Consulting Group, carried on.

BCG came to prominence in the 1970s when it began to nip at the heels of the older, bigger firms, scoop up some of their clients for top-shelf strategy work, and make its mark on the intellectual frontier of consulting. One of BCG's early and lasting innovations was its focus on high-level strategy projects. The company was among the first to build its business primarily on strategic work and to work closely with the CEO.

The firm also established a reputation for its business analysis and commentary. One of Henderson's early marketing efforts was a series of monographs, called *Perspectives*, on topics of general interest to business leaders. BCG continues to publish and distribute these to clients, along with many research-based publications.

Historically, BCG has also been known for its creativity, ability to customize services for clients, and objective analysis. Although the firm has worked increasingly on helping companies implement plans in recent years, its sweet spot remains developing strategy.

The 1990s were a period of growth for BCG and the consulting industry. Despite its success in the consulting marketplace, BCG opted not to grow as aggressively as some firms. This may have helped the company weather the industry bust of 2001 more successfully than some of its competitors—although the firm did feel the pain. When global revenue fell in 2001, layoffs followed. BCG cut consulting and support staff by 12 percent in North and South America in the first quarter of 2002. However, the firm has rebounded significantly, climbing from a consulting staff of 2,600 in 2002 to 3,900 in 2007.

In keeping with the firm's international flavor, BCG elected its first European president and chief executive in April 2003. A German, Hans-Paul Bürkner—who *Consulting* magazine ranked the number one most influential consultant of 2003—took over from outgoing president and current chairman Carl Stern in January 2004.

RECENT HISTORY

In 2005, BCG opened a base of operations in Detroit, Michigan, for the first time, and its consulting staff

grew by more than 300 people.

The firm was recognized by the World Economic Forum in 2006 for its work in the fight against malaria with a number of international organizations, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FIRM

VIEW FROM THE TOP

As a private company, BCG doesn't have to report its earnings to the public, reveal who's in charge, or share information about its internal management structure—and for the most part, it doesn't. Its business is organized into several sometimes overlapping practice areas, each of which is either industry-specific (such as health care or banking) or topic-specific (such as organizational effectiveness or IT). New consultants are not required to join a particular practice area. On the contrary, they're encouraged to be generalists—experimenting with different industries, projects, and clients, and working in more than one practice area. This fluidity has proved very attractive to many applicants. One insider tells us that in his two years with BCG, he's dabbled in various industries, including financial services, cruise lines, video-game publishing, and business software. Underlying the practice areas is an internal knowledge base of data and in-depth write-ups on business trends and obstacles.

INSIDER SCOOP

"We basically demand that clients engage fully, and that they have resources lined up for the project so that we can get appropriate input and participation from the people we're working with."

The Boston Consulting Group

BCG's practice areas comprise industry groups and functional groups.

Industry Groups

Consumer
Energy
Financial institutions
Healthcare
Industrial goods
Insurance
Technology, media, and telecommunications

Functional Groups

Corporate development
Information technology
Marketing and sales
Operations
Organization
Strategy

Cross-Practice Initiatives

In addition to industry and functional groups, BCG operates what they refer to as cross-practice initiatives:

- **The Global Advantage** initiative, which is cross-industry (like a functional practice) and cross-functional, helps clients wrestle with the complexities of running a global business.
- **The Social Impact** initiative, similar to an industry practice because it serves just a few types of institutions, works with clients that want to focus on corporate social responsibility, education, global health, or poverty and international development.

VIEW FROM THE MIDDLE

Beyond practice and knowledge areas, BCG organizes its business around regional offices. Consulting teams are usually staffed with people from the office that sold the project, but it's not uncommon for associates and consultants to work on projects managed by other offices. An online staffing system gives

consultants a view into projects being staffed locally as well as those outside their offices.

Offices function relatively independently, but there is some collaboration. "There are linkages between our offices, but it's not day-to-day because you have a link with your own office," says an insider. "Boston and New York do a lot of work together because they are geographically close and they share a few clients."

One office administrator, appointed by the CEO from among the partners and senior partners, manages each office. Insiders say the culture of each office typically reflects the personality and management style of the office administrator. At some point during the recruiting process, you'll be asked where you'd like to work, and it's best to tell your recruiter about any particular location preference. Talking to people in a specific office is the best way to find out which location is right for you. You may be attracted to a fast-growing office, such as New Jersey, which opened its doors in April 2006.

VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM

A BCG project team is usually made up of three to six members from different levels within the firm. Of course, there are occasional one-off projects that could require 20 to 30 people. "But we're more likely to have a couple of partners, two people at the manager level—either a principal or a project leader—and somewhere between three to six consultants or associates," says an insider.

Depending on the client and the project type, there may be a number of small teams working independently and simultaneously on different aspects of a large study. Work is typically broken into modules, which are completed by individual team members or small groups. Projects normally last three to six months, although this varies, especially given how often clients request follow-up work at the conclusion of a project. But the client is never left in the dark. "We demand that clients engage fully and that they have resources lined up for the project so that we can get appropriate input and participation from the people we're working with," says one insider. "The partners are more engaged in the projects, which

creates a lot of value for both clients and consultants because our apprenticeship model is really dependent on junior folks getting time with senior folks.”

RECENT CLIENT LIST

Consulting firms are notoriously tight-lipped about the names of their clients. (You’ve heard the refrain, “Sure, I could tell you...but then I’d have to kill you.”) But by doing a little detective work, we’ve uncovered the following BCG client names:

Clients

Aetna	Keebler (part of Kellogg Company)
All India Management Association	Larsen & Toubro Infotech
American Airlines	Le Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville
Avery Dennison	The Metro Group
The Dallas Foundation	Orbitz
The European Union’s Phare Programme	Pfizer
Ford Motor Company	Russian Ministry of Fuel and Energy
The Government of Canada	Tata Group
Harvard School of Public Health	U.S. Agency for International Development
IBM	Whirlpool
Initiative for a Competitive Inner City	Wyeth
Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association	

source: wetfeet research

TYPICAL STUDIES

BCG’s **traditional forte** has been its strategic work and industry and company analyses. But the firm also tackles large-scale implementation projects, especially those related to postmerger integration of companies, although these projects generally have a strong strategic component as well. Here are a few examples of BCG projects:

SURVEY OF THE OPEN-SOURCE SOFTWARE (OSS) COMMUNITY

A 2002 BCG survey of the “hacker” culture—programmers involved in the OSS community, not those who break into computer systems—explores the human factors that have contributed to the success of OSS. The study’s two authors, a consultant and a senior principal at BCG, surveyed 526 OSS developers about why they contribute to the OSS community, their professional backgrounds, and the average time they spend on shared programming projects.

Although hackers have made significant concrete contributions to the marketplace—the Linux operating system, for example—the study notes that the open-source model offers the business world other valuable insights. The survey shows, for example, that intellectual enjoyment fuels the creativity of hacker culture, and posits that companies able to foster a similar level of employee motivation will enjoy a distinct competitive advantage.

EUROPEAN TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

BCG worked with a northern European country’s railway, automotive, and employee associations to create an initiative to safeguard and improve the country’s transportation infrastructure and mobility. The BCG team surveyed more than 170 organizations within the country, analyzed the findings, and presented its recommendations at a national mobility

The Boston Consulting Group

conference. As a result of the project, a forum has been established to promote dialogue and collaboration between businesses, public transportation agencies, and the automotive industry.

PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY MANUFACTURING STRATEGY

A major pharmaceutical firm engaged BCG to help it develop a drug manufacturing strategy. BCG considered the optimum shape of the manufacturing network and came up with recommendations on the firm's best approach, including how much to outsource.

RETAIL TIME-TO-MARKET STRATEGY

BCG worked with a large retailer to speed its products' time to market. The BCG team explored ways to improve the retailer's supply chain efficiency by interviewing key people within the client's operation and its many suppliers, and and of course, with plenty of number crunching and analysis.

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS COMPANY PRODUCT STRATEGY

BCG worked with a company that had invested a lot of money in a consumer electronics technology that was selling poorly. The company was interested in other ways it could use this technology. An insider describes what happened after BCG studied the situation: "We said there were simply no good applications to justify keeping the technology. We recommended selling it. And the client just didn't want to hear that."

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF THE WORLD'S POOR

Some of BCG's projects are not only ambitious, but potentially lifesaving. Teaming with the Rockefeller Foundation, an organization dedicated to enriching the livelihoods of poor and excluded people throughout the world, BCG hopes to make a social impact. Since 1999 both organizations have focused on efforts to discover and develop new drugs to fight tuberculosis, a disease that claims the lives of nearly 3 million people every year.

WHAT'S HOT

COMPETITION FROM RAPIDLY DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

As globalization rises in the marketplace, top companies in developed economies are seeking ways to thrive not only in their home markets, but overseas as well. At the same time, they're trying to figure out how to handle the tough competition from fast-rising corporations in rapidly developing economies (RDEs). Clients need details about these challengers. And to market successfully in the RDEs, they need strategies that are as fresh and pliable as the global marketplace. BCG's May 2006 report "The New Global Challengers: How 100 Top Companies from Rapidly Developing Economies Are Changing the World" grew out of this client need. "The reality is that we are seeing a lot of companies from developing nations playing on the world stage," Hal Sirkin, senior partner, told Asia Times Online in a 2006 article. "It has become an issue in U.S. boardrooms, where executives see they have new competitors and must address them in a number of ways." Sirkin and two BCG colleagues, Jim Hemerling and Arindam Bhattacharya, published a book in June 2008, *GLOBALITY: Competing With Everyone From Everywhere for Everything*, which built on the "global challengers" research.

BACK TO BASICS

With an uncertain economy to contend with, brand building, new product development, and pricing are all bringing clients in the door at BCG. Clients are looking for value and ways to improve the bottom line without undertaking potentially risky ventures. "We are seeing quite a bit of work around pricing," one insider says. "Using the right kinds of theories to do pricing can help clients grow their top line without any contribution to their cost base." Another insider says, "With pricing, we're analyzing the treasure hunt. Shopping attitudes have changed: for instance, barrier-breaking in the middle class. Middle-class families no longer only shop at middle-class stores."

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE VALUE CHAIN

You've heard about vertical integration—corporations internally managing the entire production process, from conception and manufacturing of products through sales, marketing, and distribution (think IBM up until 1993)—but what about deconstruction of the value chain? With forces such as globalization and the Internet encouraging consumers to shop around, corporations are feeling competitive pressure to outsource larger chunks of their production processes and focus on one functional niche. But where does it make the most sense to specialize? What supplier relationships should the corporation pursue? Where are the opportunities to build businesses among or for related companies and partners using the Internet? That's where BCG comes in, helping its clients recast their competitive strategies and develop action plans to streamline operations accordingly.

ALWAYS THINKING

BCG encourages and nurtures intellectual growth. Its Strategy Institute might be described as an in-house think tank to help formulate innovative strategic approaches and to keep the firm looking that much further ahead. Directed by BCG senior partner Martine Reeves in New York, the Strategy Institute's mission is to seek out insights from areas such as the natural sciences, the humanities, the social sciences, and popular culture and apply them strategically to BCG's work with clients. The premise of the Strategy Institute's "Poetry and Strategic Thinking" project is that reading poetry develops cognitive skills often lacking in fast-paced business environments. Executives strive for certainty and closure, but reading poetry, which is indeterminate, may help executives build their intuitive faculties. You could wait for the book about the project to learn how it works, but better yet, read some inconclusive verse and find out for yourself.

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ASSOCIATES

Associates at BCG are recent graduates, some with relevant work experience. “You really do get to start working right away,” says one insider. But it’s not as though they toss the newbie to the sharks without teaching him how to swim. Associates receive a week of orientation and training before they are given their first project, and each new recruit is assigned a mentor.

INSIDER SCOOP

“If we’ve hired them, we believe they can do the job. So new hires should come in confident, willing to share their opinions from the start.”

“During the first six months, keep your eyes and ears open,” says an insider. “In that time, you get a lot of support. They give you a broad range of skill sets. They’ll work actively to help you develop whole

new skills. But after those six months, you’re expected to be able to add to your skills on your own; you’re expected to go without their guidance and continue the learning yourself.”

Unlike at some firms, associates work directly for project leaders, rather than for junior consultants. BCG also is unusual in the amount of contact its associates have with clients. One insider says he was meeting with the CFO of a client just a few months after joining BCG.

Associates must be prepared to offer frank analysis, even when they’re not sure if the client will like it. “Don’t come in timid,” says an insider. “Come in with your ideas, plant your flag in the ground, and talk things out. Be part of the team up front. The sooner you start getting ideas out and having them proved or disproved—when you feel like part of the team—your confidence level will go up exponentially.

BCG associates spend most of their time on:

- Analyzing research findings
- Developing conceptual frameworks to apply to a particular project
- Planning and conducting field research at client sites
- Collecting data and information from libraries and other sources
- Interviewing clients, customers, and competitors, and working with clients in a team environment
- Working on “investment projects” (research and analysis that BCG takes on to develop new capabilities or clients)
- Communicating team findings and ideas to the client
- The dreaded—but compulsory—spreadsheet-crunching and heavy data analysis

SAMPLE PROJECTS

A client in the consumer products industry wants to find a new way to segment customers. The associate's challenge is to figure out ways to identify the highest-value customers without obtaining tons of data and then to advise the client on how to use its promotion dollars more effectively to reach those customers. “We used existing data to find a unique segment of high-value customers the client might otherwise have missed,” says an insider. A second-year associate was involved in a project

to help a company beef up its presence in the public eye. “I was working for a video-game publisher to determine the best way to optimize its marketing and product development costs to get more bang for the buck,” an insider says. Another associate worked on a project for a major food and beverage company that wanted to rev up its business. BCG was brought in to evaluate various approaches, such as products targeted at empty nesters, women, or children.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ASSOCIATE (UNDERGRADUATE)

7:00 AM. Get up and head out the door, usually without breakfast.

7:45 AM. Meet teammates downstairs in the hotel lobby before heading over to the client.

8:15 AM. Arrive at the client's office and rush to prepare my slides and last-minute analysis.

9:30 AM. Meet with the client and go over what I've found so far.

11:00 AM. Gather more data in response to some client questions. Take a few more moments to catch my breath...and catch up with emails.

11:30 AM. Grab Japanese food for lunch. Sometimes someone will pick up a takeout order and we'll eat at the office. On other occasions we may go out as a team, as time permits.

12:30 PM. Run through more analyses in preparation for a meeting with the project leader.

1:30 PM. Meet with the project leader to review my findings.

2:30 PM. Pop out a few more data requests from the client.

3:00 PM. Another meeting with a group of managers from the client. They want to check in and sniff around to see if everything's moving forward. They seem satisfied and, more important, intrigued by my research.

4:30 PM. Follow up on yet more requests for data.

5:00 PM. Take some time to speak with outside vendors to gain a fuller perspective on the client. We like to get many points of view about a client because most of the time, clients won't do that themselves. Good to know what they're doing well and what they're not doing so well.

6:00 PM. Data-crunching time.

7:30 PM. I'm done with the bulk of the day. Leave with the team and return to the hotel, where I use downtime to lift weights and run on the treadmill. I might even find time for a quick swim.

9:00 PM. Go out for dinner with some team members. Once a week everyone tries to go out together. No chance to work out, but everyone needs balance, right?

10:30 PM. Return to my hotel room to crunch more numbers and do more analysis. It's a hotel room—what else is there to do?

12:00 AM. Phew! Lights out.

CONSULTANTS

Each year BCG hires an elite band of consultants from top business schools and, increasingly, law schools and university graduate-school programs. “You don’t necessarily have to be a subject-matter expert, because we’ll have those on the case,” says one consultant insider. “After a few years of working, you start to nail down what you really like, what you’re good at, and what people recognize you as being good at—and you’ll start to do those things more.”

INSIDER SCOOP

“When we select people to come work with us, we’re looking for open-minded folks who can do the tap dance.”

Insiders report that newly hired consultants typically spend their time:

- Developing financial models
- Participating in and leading brainstorming sessions
- Conducting interviews with clients, competitors, and external information sources
- Performing market analyses
- Conducting online or library research
- Developing and testing hypotheses about client issues
- Meeting with team members to develop work plans and lay out project strategy

■ SAMPLE PROJECTS

A biotechnology company engaged BCG to examine its drug launch process. The fast-growing company was concerned that its current process might no longer be suitable as the company increased its product portfolio. With only four people on the project, the consultant wore many hats. During the eight-week engagement, he reviewed the existing process, conducted interviews with employees, and helped to conduct weekly touch-point meetings with the client. “As the company grew, it needed a more comprehensive process for launching drugs,” says the insider. “We helped them develop a process that minimized

operational risk by making sure issues can be resolved quickly.”

Another common type of project helps clients assess the costs and benefits of continuing a specific business or product line. One insider describes a project for a paper company that had been sustaining heavy losses in a particular line of business: “Our team had to decide what to do with that line—keep it and make it better or sell it to an acquiring company. We developed a certain hypothesis and then tested it out by talking to the client’s customers, looking at financial and operational data, and reading press releases and other

industry-related information on the Internet.”

“I think BCG gives you as much responsibility as you can handle,” one consultant says, commenting on how quickly BCG tossed a hefty amount of responsibility—and trust—his way. “Six months into my tenure with the company, I was traveling to Latin America with the COO of a multibillion-dollar company and I was trusted to converse and present things myself. I was representing BCG for a major, major client. I’m not saying that happens to everyone; I’m saying they’ll give you as much as you can handle.”

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CONSULTANT (MBA)

8:30 A.M. Arrive at work and spend the first half-hour responding to voicemails and emails.

9:00 A.M. Prepare for a meeting with my teammates (we meet every week to evaluate how a project is going).

10:00 A.M. Have a case meeting and review each of the modules. Everyone chimes in and gives feedback. There's a lot of give-and-take.

NOON Spicy chicken sandwich for lunch. It's always refreshing to get away from the fluorescent lights and computers for a while.

1:00 P.M. Do analysis of a case and hunt for information from a database.

4:00 P.M. Speak with a client to go over some findings—it's stimulating to take data and run with it, showing the client how the information is useful. Then I finish up some analysis I started earlier.

6:00 P.M. Hit the gym for a spinning class. I'm busy and work long hours, but there's also time to have a life.

7:00 P.M. Go home via the Underground.

7:30 P.M. Thai food for dinner. There's time to have a life, but not necessarily to cook dinner.

8:00 P.M. Finish some analysis to present the next day to the project leader. Hang out with my roommate and finish the evening by reading the book I've been working on. In all, it's been a reasonable day. The intensity level for a consultant waxes and wanes. There are times I might have to rearrange my schedule and stay late at the office. But there's a fair amount of flexibility. I can work from home. There's not a lot of emphasis on face time.



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LIFESTYLE

The consulting lifestyle is difficult and fast-paced, and life at BCG is no exception. “The hours are highly varied, depending on what type of project you’re working on and what industry you’re working in,” says an insider. “I’d still say that a light week is about 55 to 60 hours. A heavy week is about 70 hours.” There are plenty of people at BCG—especially those who entered the consulting world after years in another field—who aren’t fazed by such high numbers. “There are definitely bad days, but on average I work a lot less than when I was an investment banker,” says another insider. “I work a lot less than my friends who are still bankers or who are corporate lawyers.”

INSIDER SCOOP

“If you tell people, ‘I’m training for a marathon and I really need to run every morning,’ no one is going to say no. They always work around what’s really important to you.”

In most cases, work hours stack up because of all the traveling the job requires. Since BCG matches clients and regional offices based on geographic proximity and doesn’t believe that staff must sleep at the client site, consultants’ travel schedules are generally less hectic than at other firms. In fact, one Dallas-based insider says that two-thirds of his annual travel is made to cities within the Lone Star State.

BCG insiders say they have a lot of control over the hours they work: “All of the managers take a large role in creating flexibility with hours,” one says. “Typically, at 7 p.m. everyone heads out of the office to grab dinner, see family, or catch a basketball game if they want to. Some might work the hours differently during the week, so they have more time during the weekend. That aspect of BCG really makes it easy for us to balance work with the other parts of our lives.”

Another insider explains that it’s up to employees to manage their time: “I manage my work during the week so that my weekends are open. If I don’t get

things done, then I have to work the weekends. But I get things done. I make sure to work, and make sure the projects are scoped correctly so I can actually manage my lifestyle.”

Hours can vary dramatically according to location and the type and stage of the project you’re working on. Expect to work anywhere from 55 to 70 hours a week. During an intense period, which hours you work will depend on the style your team adopts. “Some project teams work most weekends,” says one insider. “Other teams like to crunch during the week so their weekends are as free as possible.”

CULTURE

Despite some shrinkage in 2002, the number of consultants at BCG has grown from about 1,900 worldwide to roughly 4,500 over the past several years. Fortunately, growth and economic uncertainty don’t seem to have eroded the company’s culture or values.

One aspect of the culture that clearly remains is its intellectualism. “BCG hires a lot of very smart people from diverse backgrounds, but you have some common themes,” says an insider. “They are successful people; they’ve done well with endeavors in the past. They have a common bond and they also like to have fun. We’re not just here to be here.” In other words, this is the kind of place that doesn’t cut corners; it’s an East Coast establishment, although insiders indicate that it’s more laid-back than that label suggests.

Starting several years ago, all North American BCG offices implemented a business-casual dress code five days a week. Although BCG’s Ivy League reputation is still alive and well outside the firm, insiders insist it’s not something that they think about day-to-day. That is, the sweat and effort exist without the elitism. “This is a place where you work hard, and the reason people tend to stay in this environment is because they like the people they’re working with. It creates good friendships.”

The intensity of consulting can easily fuel competition. “We’re very oriented toward developing

people,” says one insider. “Unlike other places—not just other consulting offices, but corporate America [in general]—there isn’t any politics. It’s very straightforward: ‘This is what you need to do to advance your career and here is how we can actually do that.’ So I don’t feel there’s cutthroat competition. I don’t feel I’m being held back because somebody else is working against me.”

BCG insiders repeatedly praise the intelligent, supportive, respectful, and congenial atmosphere of the firm, especially compared to some of its main competitors. “I looked at a whole bunch of consulting companies and BCG was in my top five choices,” says one insider. “Having spoken to all the people and going through what I call the informal process—getting to know folks through recruitment—I chose BCG because of the people. I found really smart, interesting people there, and quite diverse as well. I found the diversity at BCG to be better than at any other firm.”

Insiders also say they appreciate the nonhierarchical environment and believe their creativity is valued. “The way we work is that we want all ideas out there,” a consultant tells us. “You have to go stake a flag in the ground and roll with that until we prove it or disprove it.”

INSIDER SCOOP

“We don’t want everyone to just nod heads and go along. We want various views, so we can have a robust conversation about what’s going on.”

Another consultant says the things she’s learned from her BCG peers—both above and below her—have been a rewarding part of the job. “I’ve gotten so much training, feedback, and coaching on so many things I never would have thought I’d learn while I was here—stuff like putting yourself in someone else’s shoes and seeing things through their eyes, and wording things so people can understand them better or so that people are more responsive to you. I think the people skills you get are really valuable for any kind of management position.”

In an office with such highly driven individuals, you’d think “conflict” would be a familiar concept. But while there are some internal disagreements (and

ways to address them, such as anonymous reviews conducted by subordinates), insiders say they’re rare. “With the kind of people we recruit, you’ll find most of them are pretty outspoken. If there ever is a problem, we’ll debate about it, take advice about it, and work together to solve it. You don’t tend to leave things to fester here because you have the opportunity to speak.”

BCG keeps individual offices small and familial. Insiders say that officers stay active in the careers of other professional staff, as well as in the firm’s marketing and recruiting efforts. “Everyone who is more senior really cares about you and they’re truly interested in what you’re doing,” says one insider. “They care about your personal life and they want to make sure you’re happy.” Office doors are always open, and there’s no sense of hierarchy or artificial prestige associated with titles.

Many BCG employees like to spend time together outside of work—and it isn’t specific to one office or another. “I’ve had the opportunity to work in several offices since I joined,” says one insider. “We hire people who have the tendency to want to spend time with their coworkers outside of normal work hours. I worked in Stockholm for about a year and my colleagues did a great job of inviting me to parties, dinners and things with their families, and that’s completely consistent with what I saw in London and what I see in Texas. I think it’s a global thing; we as a firm make a point of encouraging people to socialize outside of work.”

The sentiment seems to be that when you work so closely with people on your team, you can’t help but bond with them. “It’s like a big family or support group, if you will,” says an insider. “It’s a very happy social situation. If you’re going to be stuck at an airport until three in the morning, you wouldn’t mind being stuck at the airport with one of us.”

“It’s a collegiate atmosphere,” says another insider. “You join in a class and you join with a bunch of other consultants or associates. Your class has a social budget and you’re actually given money to go out and do your own thing.” That “thing” includes regular events such as bowling, camping, hiking, sailing, and

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dinners. This promotes friendship and camaraderie among consultants who joined in the same year. An insider recounts a story of that shared connection: “We had a bunch of associates who recently moved to Boston just to join the company, and they didn’t have many friends or network contacts except for their classmates. Some live together now and they have a social network, and that can be a bad thing for some people, but it works out pretty well here. I’m not saying it happens to everyone, but it’s especially true for the younger people.”

WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

Business schools and consulting firms alike have struggled to become more diverse, but their efforts have not yielded impressive results. A recent study conducted by BCG found that only 7 percent of students in top business schools are African-American, Hispanic, or Native American, yet those groups make up 15 percent of the student population at top law and medical schools. An insider says: “A lot of firms fall short because it’s difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to recruit different ethnicities than what the B-schools provide.” So how does BCG compare?

A female insider from the San Francisco office praises BCG’s efforts in that area. “They are great when it comes to diversity,” she says. “I’m a minority and I’ve worked with more [minorities] here than I did at my previous job as an investment banker.”

Women make up about 46 percent of BCG’s U.S. employees. A large effort is in place to drive those numbers up. Since 2004, a push to hire more women resulted in a 100 percent increase in female consultants. According to insiders, the New York office is more than half female—BCG tells us that in 2008, 51 percent of that office was female, including 40 percent of the consulting staff. “New York definitely has more women than the average,” says one insider. “A woman used to head up the New York

office, and she recruited women heavily.”

BCG was even named to *Working Mother’s* “100 Best Companies” list in 2007. The publication praised BCG for its hospitable work environment, not just for working mothers but for all women.

The firm’s diversity efforts include identifying promising minority undergraduate candidates, holding receptions and other events at schools to introduce minority students to consulting and BCG, attending the National Black and Hispanic MBA conferences, and recruiting at historically black colleges and universities.

■ DIVERSITY RETREATS

The consulting firm also holds annual diversity retreats every fall in different locations (the last two have been in New York and Las Vegas). BCG invites all African-American and Hispanic employees in North America, as well as “offerees” (students with offers). Also in attendance is a good chunk of the firm’s senior leadership, including the CEO, the chairman, and the head of all the offices in the Americas.

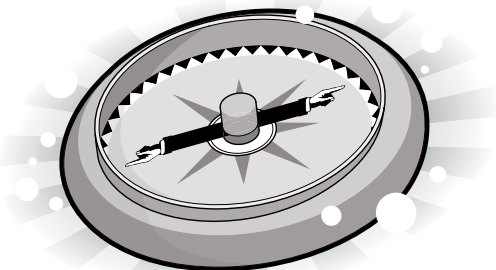
The retreats include sessions on topics such as developing strong mentoring relationships, what it takes to get promoted, how BCG is doing on recruiting and maintaining diverse employees, and how the diversity practice is doing with clients. One day of the retreat

focuses on a team-building activity such as a scavenger hunt, and there are social events in the evenings, including dinners, a night with a keynote speaker, and outings at bars or clubs.

“The evening events are a lot of fun and the sessions during the day are very useful,” says an insider. “Both diversity retreats that I have attended have been the best BCG events I’ve been to. It’s a really fun weekend, it provides a great opportunity to meet and bond with people from other offices, and it gives junior staff great exposure to partners and firm leadership. The fact that the CEO and others are there shows how committed BCG is to diversity.”

Four diversity initiatives are in place at BCG, each of which focuses on recruiting, retaining, and meeting the needs of its respective group: the North American Black Diversity Initiative, the U.S. Hispanic Initiative, the LGBT Network, and the Women's Initiative. In 1998, BCG appointed a director of diversity, a position whose purview covers both associate and consultant recruiting. In May 1999, BCG appointed its first African-American officer, and recruiters say others have been appointed since then.

In 2000, the company organized a diversity initiative with the objective of drawing more BCG employees into the recruiting and retention work. The firm says of itself, "We are committed to making BCG a company in which all individuals have an opportunity to flourish and succeed, regardless of their background, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation." Currently, BCG's workforce is composed of 26 percent minorities. In 1997, BCG launched its LGBT Network to address recruiting and retention goals among these communities. The network sponsors an annual worldwide retreat, maintains a mentor network, hosts targeted recruiting dinners at key MBA schools, and maintains an intranet site. In November 2001, a Boston-based gay and lesbian networking organization recognized BCG for its "significant contribution to business, to the quality of work lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual people, and to the well-being of the New England GLBT community." "Insiders we spoke to say several of their colleagues are out. In 2008, the firm was recognized by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Corporate Equality Index as a "Best Place to Work" for GLBT employees.



COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

BCG is uniquely egalitarian when it comes to compensation. Everyone in a class begins with an identical salary, and salaries rise in lockstep as the class moves up the seniority ladder. Associates' bonuses can cause total compensation to vary significantly, though. Also, an individual's promotion from associate to consultant can raise his compensation considerably. Once a year, a presentation is made to consultants delineating salaries at every level. Even the office head's take-home pay is disclosed. This transparency eliminates petty salary jealousies, concerns about gender bias, and so on. In addition to being fair, starting salaries have also held steady for the past couple of years—the consulting industry as a whole hasn't been under much pressure to boost salaries, given the lack of dot-com era stock option offers and the like. Based on what insiders at BCG tell us, MBAs in the U.S. will start with salaries around \$125,000 (not including signing bonuses, which are estimated at \$20,000), and undergrads will start around \$65,000.

The year-end bonus varies according to individual performance, and this is where the bulk of compensation differences are seen. One insider says this merit-based system means your year-end bonus may range from practically nothing to 40 percent of your salary. And the firm's revenue has an impact on bonuses as well. During off years around the 2002 economic downturn, bonuses were lower than during boom times. But during years of exceptional company performance, BCG rewards staffers with an additional bonus.

In addition to salary, BCG provides its employees an excellent set of benefits, including ample health-care and a generous profit-sharing retirement fund where the firm contributes 15 percent of total compensation (based on compensation plus bonus).

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Outside the U.S., perks vary depending on the laws of the country, but you can expect something equitable. As a general rule, the firm pays for associates in good standing to go to business school. BCG also pays full moving costs for new hires.

Both consultants and associates start with three weeks of vacation time, which is standard in the consulting industry. After two years, vacation time increases to four weeks.

PERKS

Insiders enjoy the BCG-sponsored activities outside the office, especially the social functions, sports teams, wellness days, and community service outings hosted by groups such as One Team, the New York office's social activity committee.

Those who like the freedom to dictate their own schedules have it at BCG, which is especially nice in a career that takes up so much time.

BCG also offers outstanding outplacement assistance for those who decide to leave the firm. One associate said that partners placed calls to personal friends at companies he was interested in exploring. "BCG gives an incredible amount of support when you are transitioning out of the firm. BCG, the partners, and alumni have been incredibly helpful in terms of leads. People who are being recruited by firms shouldn't be afraid to ask how helpful the firm is when it comes to sharing contacts."

INSIDER SCOOP

"Some people get up and work really early, but I prefer to get up later. I said that to the people I work with from the get-go, and they were totally cool with it. People find their own styles and it all works out."

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

BCG offers its consulting expertise to a number of nonprofit causes around the world. On the global level, BCG focuses on the challenges of the developing world and seeks to support progress toward attaining the UN Millennium Development Goals (eight criteria set for responding to the world's greatest development challenges). The firm has partnered with the UN World Food Programme, Save the Children, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as other organizations specializing in global health. Additionally, BCG has a very active local social impact program, with each office determining the areas it wants to focus on and which organizations it wishes to partner with. Some examples of recent localized initiatives: helping transform public education in Dallas, teaching business skills to high school students in Europe and Asia, and working with a foundation to open a world-class contemporary art center in Beijing. "Recently, we've done a lot of educational work," an insider says. "We've worked with public schools and had a big project in New Orleans for awhile, helping them get back on their feet, and that has expanded into other educational projects as well."

Beyond pro bono work, many BCG offices actively support traditional volunteering. The New York office hosts a mentoring program for inner-city high school students, busing them to the office and helping them with homework, essays, and college applications. Twice a month, employees visit a women's shelter to play with the children living there.

TRAVEL

Travel during projects varies greatly, depending on the type and stage of the project and the proximity of your office to major clients. BCG places a strong emphasis on regional travel and an economical use of face time on location. The goal is to keep travel to within four days of the week.

“In most cases, it’s less than four days out,” one principal says. “We try to make sure that everyone is back in the office on Friday. It doesn’t always work out. But it fosters our collegiate culture and ensures that as offices grow, people stay connected and we [have time to] welcome new people.”

This holds true in offices across the country: “When the office gets back together on Friday, it tends to be a pretty fun day; there are social events and the like happening in the office. The weekends tend to be pretty free,” says one insider.”

BCG consultants travel as required, rather than as a matter of policy. Of course, there are some projects where face time is critical. Others can be completed remotely. One insider who’s been with the company for more than 15 years says his career-average nights-per-week away from home has been less than one.

TRAINING

BCG trains all new hires through formal programs, on-the-job mentoring, and feedback from higher-level staff. “There is a percentage of time in their first year that is spent on training, whether it’s how to write slides, how to put together a story, how to use Excel, whatever it may be,” a recruiter says. All new associates and consultants participate in local orientations, where they learn about the workings of their offices, meet key staff, and bond with their peers. They all then have training where they go through case simulations and specific skills training to build their foundation for success in consulting and, in particular, at BCG. Consultants also receive significant training

in their first few months, including a nationwide training session.

“There’s a ton of infrastructure around helping you,” one insider says, recalling his early days at BCG. “You never want to have someone not deliver because they didn’t have the tools around them to help get there. I wasn’t worried because there were so many infrastructures to help me—between what was a relatively intense training program before I even stood in front of a client, to mentors within the office, to my classmates or people somewhat senior to me, to my case team.”

BCG staff also has an extensive e-learning system with instruction modules to prepare new hires for special issues, such as share valuation, that they may face on a case. Some of the modules must be completed within the first six months, while others are optional. There are also skills workshops and ongoing training sessions related to various practice areas for which employees can sign up via email. Non-MBA consultant hires take a business-essentials course that provides the business background necessary for them to step into their jobs at BCG.

INSIDER SCOOP

“I never really had the nervousness associated with not performing—there was so much emphasis on making sure you have the tools to perform, I felt like I couldn’t miss.”

Beyond this formal training, you can expect to learn from the senior members of the BCG organization. Each class of hires has a dean, typically a manager or consultant who provides mentoring with regard to career issues, training, and working with other teams, and who keeps tabs on how people in the class do on their cases. Individually, each hire has an officer with whom he or she works to chart a career. Insiders say most of their learning comes from on-the-job experience and through interaction with others on their case team, as well as from senior-level members of the firm. “My advice would be to just be open to learning a bunch of different things and to learning in

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general,” says one consultant about preparedness. “You learn this job on the fly, so you need that flexibility and to be open to new things. You learn that at times you’re going to be wrong about things, and you learn how to accept that.”

CAREER PATH

The consulting profession in general has a high turnover rate—many people decide they don’t want to spend their lives living out of suitcases. Nevertheless, BCG has tried to create an environment in which people have the opportunity and the incentive to stay on for the long haul, and it seems to have a relatively good support structure for employees’ personal and professional development. Each person has special relationships with four people (at the very least): his or her office mate, the class dean, an office sponsor (an informal buddy—no politics allowed), and a career-development counselor who gathers feedback for semiannual performance reviews, aids career development, and communicates the employee’s needs to the career-development committee.

The BCG food chain, in ascending order, goes from associate to consultant to project leader to principal and, ultimately, to partner. In summer 2000, BCG made its promotion track more performance-based, rather than entirely tenure-centric, meaning it isn’t absolutely necessary to go through the 2-2-2-year process (consultant to project leader to...). However, insiders tell us that the effects of the change have not been huge, and that the system still isn’t entirely based on merit. One insider points out, “Going from consultant to partner in eight years is very typical... you could do it in six, but that would be unusually fast.” Another insider notes that the system is designed to “reward those at the margins who have shown exceptional ability or who have made a big difference.”

OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Undergraduates enter as associates, and they can be promoted to consultant without going to B-school. BCG will frequently underwrite up to two years of graduate school plus an allowance for living expenses in the low five figures, and one insider says that upwards of 95 percent of BCG’s associates go on to get graduate degrees of some kind. The tuition and two-thirds of the living allowance are considered a loan that is forgiven if you return to BCG after graduation and stay on for at least two years. A large percentage of associates choose to go this route, and BCG encourages it with formal training on how to apply to B-school. Some offices also offer GMAT prep courses and invite recruiters from business schools to meet associates.

Although the bulk of BCG consultants have an MBA, several years ago BCG formally ended the need for an advanced degree to move up to project leader. However, few associates actually skip the MBA hurdle and move up the BCG ladder without a business degree.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MBAs, JDs, AND PhDs

MBAs, JDs, and PhDs are hired as consultants, and those who enjoy the lifestyle and do well at the work can move up—on the basis of performance—to project leader after about two years, to principal two years after that, and finally, two to four years later, to partner. Although PhDs and JDs aren’t as plentiful as MBAs, they are valued; one New York consultant estimates that 10 to 20 percent of his classmates have PhDs. With regard to promotions, insiders feel that the firm is particularly fair.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIDCAREER CANDIDATES

BCG does hire individuals with industry experience who have been out of college for four to six years, but they make up a small number of new recruits. Industry experts usually join at the consultant level on a three-year track to project leader status.

INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

BCG generates about 70 percent of its revenue from international business, and its network of international offices is expanding rapidly. It has long been one of the leading consulting firms in Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, and during the 1990s it expanded significantly in Asia, Central Europe, and Latin America. The firm's Ambassador Program allows consultants to spend time at a foreign office. Those interested can sign up to be transferred for a year or longer. Alternately, consultants can get international experience by working on specific cases that require extensive field work abroad; they might be assigned to projects managed by a foreign office or transferred to a different regional office for anywhere from six to 18 months.

INSIDER SCOOP

"One woman I know decided to rent a flat in Paris, rather than flying back and forth every other week. The firm is paying for it."



Outside of this program, international opportunities tend to depend on BCG's casework and your performance locally, and you may have to struggle to get them. "It really depends on what's in the pipeline at the time. The timing has to work out right," says one insider. Another agrees, saying, "It's more typical that you'll travel internationally if the client you're working with has an internationally based office." There are opportunities, however, and one insider says the firm remains flexible in its international policies.

THE INSIDE SCOOP

WHAT EMPLOYEES REALLY LIKE

The Natives

Several BCG insiders speak of strong friendships with coworkers. That mutual respect extends to feelings of equality, regardless of an employee's rank on the career ladder. "Even the junior people have an equal say in partner meetings," says one insider. "No one holds back." It's a positive thing for an office when the natives aren't afraid to speak—even if they're restless. "To be perfectly honest," says another insider, "you rarely see problems because the communications lines are wide open and things are talked out before they can get too big."

INSIDER SCOOP

"One good thing about BCG—everyone has a voice."

Custom-Made Culture

Every insider we spoke with had high regard for the BCG culture. "I don't know about every office, but in my situation here, it's total teamwork, a total collaborative organization," says an insider. "Everybody seems predisposed to like each other. It's a very social office, and not just at the bar. We do plenty of happy hours, but we also do Saturday

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afternoon BBQ-type stuff and go to different events. And our spouses and significant others are all part of that.” Staffers seem to genuinely value diversity. “We work in a diverse work environment and with a diverse set of clients, and we believe that the strength of our company is our diverse set of ideas,” says another insider. “If you believe that—and we all do—we believe a diverse group of working folk is the right answer. BCG has spent a significant amount of time trying to ensure that we have a representative class of people coming in every year, not only from a recruiting, but also from a retention standpoint.”

The Truth Shall Set You Free

No matter what the solution or its potential out-of-pocket cost to a client, BCG consultants always offer up the best solution every time. “It’s our responsibility to weigh the options and provide a full recommendation to the client,” says an insider. “It must include the cost-benefit analysis. For us, it’s imperative to be as explicit as possible in explaining what the value is, and what value they’d get out of it compared to the cost. Any case I’m presenting to a client where they need to invest, that is front and center stage. There’s no way I’d feel comfortable talking about only one side of the equation, the benefits they’d get or the cost they’d have to pay. I try to present as integrated a solution as possible. I view that as a positive thing. That’s our job, to work directly with the client to figure out and develop the value-maximizing solution—to use dorky, consulting phrasing—that’s customized to their particular situation. It’s not enough to say you should go in direction X or Y, it’s ‘Here’s where the greatest value is, and here’s what you need to get there.’ If you have to pay \$500 million dollars to buy a new plant or to build a new plant for this, then that’s the number and there it is.”

WATCH OUT!

Always On

The consulting lifestyle is not for the faint of heart or body. “It would be ideal if I could do the same work and not travel,” says one consultant. Most people can expect to travel a couple of days a week, on average. Also, several insiders complained of the unpredictable schedule that goes along with consulting. “It’s hard to make plans, like dinner with friends, more than a few hours in advance,” says one insider. “You do end up with free time, but it’s unpredictable, and sometimes you have to cancel plans.” Another insider says, “In the middle of a difficult week, it’s easy to wish we worked a few less hours. When a client asks for something urgent, we have to respond.”

INSIDER SCOOP

“My coworkers are pretty cool people to hang out with, the kind of people you’d have fun hanging out with even if you weren’t at work.”

Networking Works

One consultant shares his personal trick to making life easier (and more rewarding) at BCG: “I would say to network with everyone in the office—not necessarily work-related—for a couple of reasons: One is that you’ll meet people you’ll like. You’ll understand the kinds of projects and work going on, and you might get on a project you find more interesting than others. It’s such a diverse, interesting group of people. Two, you’ll meet people who can help you. If you have a certain type of business problem on a project, you can speak to the expert in the office and they’ll be more than happy to help you.”

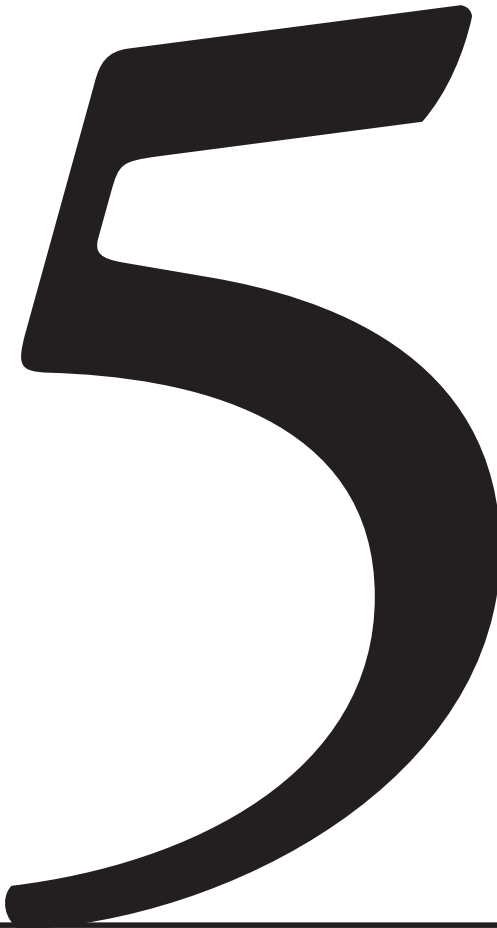
Jump Right In

One insider says that new hires need to take advantage of every situation, or they run the risk of reflecting on it later as a missed opportunity. “Literally the day after I started, I was in a senior client meeting,” recalls one insider. “I was more of a wallflower that day, but I at least had the access and opportunity. You can be thrown right in. You have to be ready when you show up.”

New Case, New Challenge

Consulting is a fast-paced business, and you'll be expected to become familiar with new industries and problems very quickly. "I think the thing that really is different about BCG as compared with the industry is that we really push the client to challenge their ideas," says one consultant. He stresses that you must focus on every case that comes across your desk because should you ever get lazy, you won't be able to fall back on previous solutions, no matter how effective they once were. "You have to understand that the right answer for one company isn't right for another. When you can actually demonstrate that you have an understanding of that, you increase your credibility." Insiders have also warned that your first case can often make or break your experience at BCG. Most top consulting firms will say that you are given a second chance if things don't work out on a particular case, but the reality is that an early failure is likely to hinder your career progression.

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THE RECRUITING PROCESS

Although hiring at BCG was up in 2007, so was the amount of eager applicants. That trend continued in 2008, and with a bullish economy, competition has become pretty stiff. On the upside, an MBA recruiter at BCG noted that direct competitors in consulting have also continued vigorous hiring despite stagnation in other sectors of the economy.

As the fortunes of the consulting industry rise, so does interest among applicants. Those in charge of recruiting at BCG devote a significant amount of time to finding the perfect candidate. Kermit King, senior partner and managing director in the Chicago office, has been involved with MBA recruitment for ten years. He told *BusinessWeek* that he spends 30 percent of his time on finding new candidates, a clear indicator that BCG puts as much work into finding new recruits as job seekers put into getting hired.

At BCG recruiting follows a centralized process, but individual offices hire separately to fill their own needs. Movement between offices is possible, with one recruiter estimating that 20 percent of her location's employees began their BCG careers at other offices. The firm has an extensive on-campus recruiting program at top colleges, MBA programs, and some non-MBA graduate-school programs. BCG hits most of the usual suspects in its recruiting efforts—Stanford, Harvard, Wharton, Kellogg, Chicago, INSEAD, Dartmouth, and MIT. Even if the company recruits at your school, you still need to submit your resume online at the Careers section of www.bcg.com. Don't despair if your school isn't on the list, or if you spent a few years making the world a better place. BCG still wants to hear from you; submit your resume online.

For most offices, BCG puts entry-level consultant candidates (MBAs, PhDs, and JDs) through two rounds of interviews and undergrad candidates

through three. All interviews include case-study conversations. Whereas many consulting firms present case questions and look for interviewees to return a “right” answer, BCG takes a different path. (Check out WetFeet's *Ace Your Case*® series for advice and practice on case questions.) The cases are always drawn from real cases the interviewer has worked on. The first round of interviews may take place in a hotel off campus. During the final round, BCG will fly you to the office where you want to work. You'll have two to four interviews during the half-day visit, and they'll be just as rigorous as those in the first round. During lunch you may meet some of the senior people in the office, as well as current consultants and associates.

For international offices, the approach may be slightly different. One European candidate reported: “The interviews were very conceptual. There was almost no quantitative content.” On the other hand, we've heard of one case in which an undergraduate candidate in Mexico was required to complete a preliminary math-skills exam before his first interview—but this is unique to Mexico.

INSIDER SCOOP

“We respond to every application. In order to do that, we actually have to read it.”

UNDERGRADUATES

Gaining admission to the associate pool at BCG is notoriously difficult. Company recruiters may get as many as 10,000 applications for about 100 associate positions in North America. Most of the applicants have amazing backgrounds. You know the type: valedictorians, 1,600s on the SATs, summa cum laudes, class presidents, sports stars.

One factor to note: The firm likes to see clear evidence of quantitative capability—course work such as economics or engineering, for example, or summer experience that involved working with numbers. However, many BCG insiders emphasize that BCG doesn't just hire undergrad number-crunchers: “We'd prefer to see those who have a finance or business background, but it isn't necessary,” says one insider.

MBA'S AND OTHER ADVANCED-DEGREE CANDIDATES

Fifteen to 20 percent of BCG's new hires come from PhD and JD programs. However, the firm doesn't follow rigid quotas. It actively recruits at the top 10 or 11 business schools, and at many other programs and institutions. An insider says about one-quarter of all interviewees make it to the second round and that about half of those get an offer.

Recruiters tell us that BCG has been among the more aggressive consulting firms in its efforts to hire non-MBA advanced-degree candidates. These applicants start at the same level as MBAs and receive additional business training within the company. Engineering degrees are common, economics degrees less so. If BCG does not recruit directly from your university or program, apply directly online on the career pages of the BCG website.

MIDCAREER CANDIDATES

Although it has no formal industry recruiting program, insiders say BCG does hire people from the real world. Currently, about 5 percent of the consulting hires each year are from industry, and that number is expected to grow in the coming years. Although many industry hires do hold an MBA, it's not a requirement. For associate positions, BCG welcomes applications from those without an MBA who have one or two years of relevant work experience, such as in investment banking, venture capital, or consumer goods, and/or additional education other than an MBA, JD, or PhD. Apply online at BCG's website.

INSIDER SCOOP

"We don't receive as many applications from people with backgrounds other than finance or business, but we consider all of them."

SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES

BCG usually brings on a large crop of first-year MBAs as summer consultants; the firm also offers summer spots for 50 to 70 exceptional undergraduates who have completed their junior year. This is a great way

for an interested student to check out BCG (and vice versa). But there's more: There's a tendency among consulting firms to choose applicants with previous consulting experience, and if you're hired for the summer and do well, you'll almost certainly receive a full-time offer. Summer consultant insiders tell us the firm goes out of its way to give them challenging and interesting assignments.

INSIDER SCOOP

"We hire out of the top business schools in the country, so we expect the people coming out of them are ready to start—that they have a good amount of business knowledge, enough to get onto the team and be part of the team."



ON-THE-RECORD RECRUITER INTERVIEW

We designed the on-the-record recruiter interview to get you inside the recruiter's head and get the info you need to ace your interview. The following is an interview with a BCG recruiting manager.

What do you look for in candidates' resumes?

We look for indications of leadership as well as academic performance. We look for career progression.

What are immediate turn-offs on a resume?

Job-hopping. It's one thing when you consider promotions, but when you see somebody moving around every year—or less—we find it hard to believe that the reason is some increased responsibility or opportunity. When you see that over and over, it's a red flag. Also, there are an amazing number of applications where we find the cover letter referring to a different company. I've been shocked at how many of those there actually are.

What interviewing techniques does BCG use?

We do case-style interviews, which means for consultants and associates a single interview during the first round of interviews typically takes 45 minutes. So there'll be some review of the resume, an opportunity for the candidate to expand on what's written on the paper, and then they go through a case example. So it's interactive. There's an issue and a set of data and information presented to the candidate. We ask: What are the issues in this case? And the candidate actually works through it. They have the opportunity to ask for more information, and it's an opportunity for the interviewer to see how the person thinks in a business situation.

How do you decide which candidates to advance, especially if everyone performs well in the interview?

Case-style interviewing is a very different way of interviewing. It's an unusual individual who can do this without preparation, because you have to be very efficient with your time. You have to be able to organize things and pick through stuff and figure out what's the most important information. You have to take cues from your interviewer. If your interviewer tells you that something is not important, they're not trying to trick you. They're giving you a clue that you're going down the wrong path. Again, we observe: How is this person thinking, how is this person taking cues, what is her business judgment like? It separates the top candidates from the others.

What's the biggest mistake a candidate can make in an interview?

One of the big mistakes someone can make is not preparing for the interview. As I said, it's an unusual individual who can walk in and do this well without having prepared. Another mistake is when a candidate gets set on a path and he doesn't want to veer from that, even though he's getting clues that it's not the right path.

What's the best way to break into the interview cycle if you're not on campus?

We have an online application on our website, so those candidates are reviewed and the offices can select from that pool who they would like to interview. In some cases, all of our applications go through that website. For example, all of our PhD applications go through the online application, even if we recruit at that school. For PhDs and MDs, there are some supplemental questions they need to respond to explaining their dissertation, and four or five additional questions.

What's the most effective way for a candidate to follow up after an interview?

If the applicant is on a campus where we recruit, she is free to call the recruiter; or on our website, there's a page that explains who the recruiting team is at a certain school as well as a calendar of events, what the resume deadline is, and other information. Everybody else is applying through our online application and they can certainly send an email following up on their application.

What kind of degrees do your hires have? Do all of them have a business background?

We have people with various graduate degrees—MBAs, PhDs, MDs, JDs, master's in public administration. They come from all sorts of backgrounds, and they don't all have business degrees.

What are the qualities necessary for success in your firm?

The successful people in our firm are those who are genuinely curious about things and want to figure out: Is this the right thing to do in this case? That's because every case is different. So you need a natural curiosity. And the other thing is the ability to work in a fairly unstructured environment. Since every project is different, you must have the ability to draw on your experiences, but also to look at each project with a blank-sheet perspective and not get locked into a certain mind-set.

THE INTERVIEWER'S CHECKLIST

BCG looks for the best and the brightest. Successful candidates come from diverse backgrounds, but most have completed quantitative coursework along the way (economics and engineering count). "We're looking for a range of capabilities," says one insider. "Those capabilities extend along the problem-solving dimension, the communication dimension, and an attitude dimension."



[CHECKLIST]

Here is what the recruiter will be looking for:

- Academic ability (top grades a real plus; standardized test scores will be evaluated)
- Analytical skills (demonstration of quantitative course work and skills)
- Integrity and ethics
- Interpersonal skills, ability to communicate and listen well
- Presentability and maturity (Can I put this person in front of a CEO?)
- Leadership
- Creativity
- Pleasant personality (Do I want to work with this person?)
- Enthusiasm, energy, and motivation
- Desire to make an impact on clients' businesses
- Empathy

INTERVIEWING TIPS

1. If you've done hard-core intellectual work sometime in your past, mention it. One good way to do this is to talk about a challenging academic problem you've faced. Try to present the example in a way that demonstrates your aptitude for consulting.
2. BCG uses case interviews from the get-go, so be prepared. Practice cases with your friends. "You're not born knowing the practice case—you work at them," says one insider. Remember, it's not so much what you know, but how you think. Walk your interviewer through your analysis of the key issues rather than jumping right into "the answer." If 2x2 matrices come naturally, you're in good shape. In your answer, interviewers want you to show logic and structure, and then depth. "Just about everyone we bring in has an impressive background and good personal skills," notes a recruiting insider. "The case questions can be the differentiator." (See *WetFeet's Ace Your Case*® series for in-depth discussion of and practice for case interviews.)
3. Be creative. Almost every insider we spoke with emphasized that BCG is looking for people who tackle cases sans the standard solution formulas. "Don't always use the three Cs and four Ps," warns one insider. "That'll almost count against you. Don't get caught up in any regimented approach to doing cases—you need to incorporate the 'outside-the-box' BCG thinking style in your interview."
4. Try to be conversational, rather than technical. "In the interview, you really have to try to have an intellectual conversation about a business problem," says one insider. "Pretend you're talking about a case to a client on an airplane—try being conversational. After all, one of the main things we're evaluating is your client presence."
5. Be visual. "It's a plus if you can draw something [that] illustrates your thinking," an insider says. Remember, an important part of your job will be conveying your thinking to the client as clearly as possible. In your interview you don't have the luxury of PowerPoint, so make a pencil and paper work for you.
6. Be real. "Focus on communicating your true personality in the interview, rather than guessing what the interviewer wants to hear," says one insider. Another agrees: "It's really obvious to the interviewer if you're just trying to kiss up to him."
7. BCG believes in its differentiators and culture. Therefore, you probably wouldn't impress your interviewer if you started talking about how all consulting firms are really the same.
8. Demonstrate by your actions that you'd be a good person to work with. In other words, work hard to keep your most irritating personal habits under control. One thing to keep in mind: BCGers don't go in for self-promotion or boasting.
9. Showcase your leadership skills. "We want people others will be motivated to follow," says one insider. "But we want leaders who are also fun to be around, not ones who just want subservience."
10. Balance your professionalism with excitement. "In the interview, it's okay to say something you've worked on was really cool if you think it's really cool," says one recruiter. Show enthusiasm for learning and analysis, and be willing to challenge conventional wisdom. Remember, BCG prides itself on being able to create novel solutions.
11. Make it clear that you can self-start. Think of examples that demonstrate a high degree of

self-motivation. In particular, you may want to talk about situations in which you were able to function in unstructured environments.

12. BCG attaches great value to a person's ethics and integrity. Be prepared to discuss yours openly. One recruiter says, "We want the real answer, not the stock answer. BCG consultants often need to give difficult news to clients. Even if the truth is hard to hear, it's not something that we will compromise."
13. Ask questions. Yes, we've already mentioned this, but an insider tells us that it's so crucial, it bears repeating. "We say the biggest mistake (among applicants) is not asking questions," says the insider.
14. Stay calm. You have to stay calm in front of clients. "Too many candidates get nervous. What we care about are the steps in your logic," says an insider. Be articulate and express your reasoning.

GRILLING YOUR INTERVIEWER

This is your chance to turn the tables and find out what you want to know about BCG. We strongly encourage you to think up your own questions. In the meantime, the following samples should get you started. "Rare" questions are meant to be innocuous. "Well-Done" questions will help you put the fire to your interviewer's feet, but beware—they may also turn you to toast!

RARE

- What are the biggest areas of growth for BCG in the U.S. or internationally?
- What brings such a high percentage of your

clients back to BCG again and again?

- How does BCG support the personal and professional growth of its employees?
- How different are the culture, atmosphere, and workload from office to office?
- Why would a client hire BCG rather than one of its competitors?
- How does BCG leverage its international presence in its U.S.-based engagements?
- How likely would it be for me to be staffed on an international project?
- How has the upturn in the economy affected BCG's business?

MEDIUM

- What is BCG doing to increase office diversity and open up opportunities for women and minority candidates to reach the top ranks?
- How much say do BCG consultants (or associates) have in the types of projects they work on?
- With BCG doing well in the marketplace, how is the firm making sure it doesn't grow too quickly?
- How do the firm's leaders communicate their view of the organization's goals and vision to BCGers at all levels?
- How would you change BCG or your work environment if you could?

WELL-DONE

- I understand that BCG occasionally turns certain projects away. How does BCG determine what type of projects it will take on?

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- Out-of-the-box thinking sounds good, but what does BCG do to make sure that it doesn't reinvent the wheel on each project?
- BCG has had a reputation for being academic. Do you find that to be true?
- What role do BCG's frameworks and concepts play in the real world?

- When engagements involve outsourcing, or other controversial topics, does that impact the way BCG presents recommendations to clients?

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CONSULTING-SPEAK

To help prepare you for both your interviews and a possible career in the field, we've asked our insiders to give us the most up-to-date consulting jargon. Beware: Unauthorized use of these terms has been known to seriously offend every known species of consultant.

2x2

Pronounced “two by two,” this is a favorite consulting tool used to analyze a number of items along two dimensions. It's basically a graph with X and Y axes that cross in the middle, creating four different sectors. Don't be surprised if you're asked to produce one of these during your interview.

Benchmark

Here's another standard-issue item from the consulting toolbox. Benchmarks are levels of performance or output against which you can evaluate a specific performance. A benchmark study analyzes the performance of a number of companies along specified dimensions. For example, a software company might hire a consulting firm to do a benchmark study on how much other firms are spending on customer service.

BHAG

Big Hairy Audacious Goal. This buzzword comes from the book *Built to Last* (see next entry).

Built to Last

A book written by James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, who destroy the myth that the core product is more important than the vision the company espouses. The term now enjoys widespread usage to describe a company with a strong culture based on a core ideology or identity. More loosely, it refers to those firms that want to be around for many decades or centuries, not just a few years.

Business design

Here's a consultant's definition: “For a company, it's not about growing your top line [sales], it's about growing your bottom line [profit]. Business design is about what you do, how you gear up the troops. It has everything to do with whom you hire and what they do. It's your channel, your product, how you execute your offering.”

Cactus job

A dull assignment, especially one that's below the consultant's perceived skill set.

Case interview

Your interviewer will give you a set of facts and ask you a question in order to analyze how you structure a problem, think it through, and come up with a solution. Case questions can be numerical (“How many dimes are currently in circulation?”) or business-related (“Suppose a client asked you to figure out why his business is experiencing an unusual decline in sales and a severe cash flow problem.”). But don't be surprised if it's just wacky: “If Dannon, Yoplait, and Colombo yogurts came to life, what kind of people would they be?”

Change management

Here's a \$5 buzzword that sounds like it's making things clear, but it's just muddying an already fuzzy concept. Most firms use this term to refer to a specific type of consulting work dedicated to helping a company restructure its organization and cope with the human problems that accompany such an effort.

Convergence

Consulting services in telecommunications (cable, wireless, wireline, and Internet), computers, and media—or “converging” industries. The thinking is that the Internet, the telephone, the TV, the PDA, and the PC will someday all become one.

Core competencies

Things a company does best. This term can also be applied to you—what technical or interpersonal strengths will help set you apart from your peers?

Customer relationship management (CRM)

Communication technology that helps companies manage customer information.

Deliverable

The product or solution you give (deliver) to the client. If you promise an analysis of shipping costs, for instance, that's your deliverable. Deliverables typically come with dates (when you will deliver) that are tracked, often by a project plan.

Enterprise resource planning (ERP)

An IT solution to streamline operations by connecting all parts of a business electronically—including HR, billing, and inventory. A popular consulting project during the '90s, ERP spurred double-digit annual growth for firms. Because the systems connect disparate parts of the company, implementing them can be a complex project.

Engagement/project/study/case/job

These are all different ways in which firms refer to a specific project. Interviewers often note which term you use—just to see whether you've read the company literature. Using the wrong word is not an automatic ding, but you'll impress your interviewer if you get it right.

Framework

Any kind of structure you can use to look at a problem. It can be as simple as, "The company's problems stem from both internal and external factors." Or it can be something more MBA-ish, like Porter's Five Forces. Consultants love frameworks, and the more you use them (up to a point), the more analytical you'll sound. (But, as we've said, the best time to use them may not be in an interview for a position with BCG—where they're looking for your original thinking and problem-solving ability. Save them for use on a case after you've been hired.)

Growth

From 1997 to 2000, most firms shifted their focus from reengineering—which often meant downsizing—to growth. Growth involved taking a small private startup from, say, 25 or 30 employees to more than 500 and going public.

Implementation

These days, nobody admits to doing just pure strategy work. The reason? Too many consulting firms were criticized for leaving behind a big stack of slides that never resulted in any action by the client. As a result, all of the firms talk about how they work with clients to make sure their expensive analyses and recommendations are actually put into place. Implementation may also refer to the acts of installing and configuring software, and of training the users so they can use the system successfully.

On the beach

In consulting, this refers to any period of time during which you aren't staffed to a project. Although you won't necessarily see any sunshine here, you won't have to be any place in particular, so there's a chance you'll be able to leave the office early, do your laundry, pay your bills, and maybe even see your honey. The wise consultant maximizes his time on the beach to take advantage of computer-based training, to help work on proposals, or any other activity that supports the growth of the business and allows him to network with senior folks.

Operations

These are the day-to-day tasks associated with the running of a company. In a manufacturing company, it includes the buying and processing of raw materials as well as the sale and distribution of the final products. Many consulting firms do a big business providing operations advice. At the simplest level, it means helping clients run their businesses better.

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Outsourcing

To reduce overhead expenses, companies are turning to outsiders to provide many of the functions and services traditionally done in-house. Popular candidates for outsourcing include accounting services, marketing communications, payroll management, and data processing. Increasingly, public firms are seeking out these services because they create stable revenue flows, which investors like.

Pay-for-performance

Billing based on performance, rather than strictly on hours.

Presentation

In the traditional consulting project, the presentation was the means by which a consulting firm shared all of its insights and recommendations with a client company. The client's top management team would assemble in a boardroom, and a partner or case team manager would spin through dozens of overhead slides displaying all of the completed analysis. Although the standard overhead slide show is now considered a bit sterile, it's still a popular drill at most firms, but PowerPoint slides are far more common.

Reengineering

Reengineering lost its cachet in the mid-1990s. In its purest sense, a reengineering project was supposed to involve a complete rethinking of a company's operations from ground zero.

Scribe

To take notes. Welcome to your summer internship and your first year on the job.

Shareholder value analysis

The goal of many companies is to enhance their value to shareholders, and they engage lots of consulting firms to help them do it. There are all manner of ways, proprietary and not, to analyze shareholder value.

Socialize

Use strong-arm tactics to gain consensus, as in "Socialize the client into accepting the recommendation."

True north

The place you want to get to. If you're heading true north, you're moving in the right direction.

Value chain analysis

An analysis of all of the processes that go into a product, from the gathering of raw materials needed to make the product to the delivery of the final product to the customer. At best, each stage adds value to the product.

Virtual office/hoteling

Sexy terms for an office setup in which nobody has a personal desk or office. It means you could be hanging out with the clerks at Kinko's.

White-space opportunity

A moneymaking opportunity in an area you aren't set up to make money in. Think of it as an unbridged gap between what you do and what others do, or an untapped source of growth.

RECOMMENDED READING

Fortune, June 16, 2008

In the article, “Staying Power”, *Fortune* highlighted four companies that are doing well at retaining their top talent and keeping turnover rates low. BCG’s Kim Powell was quoted as saying, “If you can achieve your career goals without having to leave the firm, you stay.” After joining BCG, Powell took a sabbatical to work at a nonprofit and earn an MBA from Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management, later returning to work at the firm.

Steve Gunby, chairman of BCG North and South America, said in the article that the firm makes sure consultants develop skills that interest them: “That does make them more attractive to the outside world. But no matter how marketable people are, if they’re really excited about what they are doing, they don’t leave.”

The 2008 BCG 100 New Global Challengers: How Top Companies from Rapidly Developing Economies are Changing the World

In 2006, BCG created a report containing a list of 100 companies from rapidly developing economies (RDEs). For established multinationals it served as a scouting report for rising competition, and potential suppliers and customers. Written primarily by BCG partners—among them, Hal Sirkin, David Michael, and Arindam Bhattacharya—this 2008 report gives an update on previously listed companies, as well as more recent success stories. There is much to be learned here about the role of RDEs in globalization, and the nascent companies that could very well be your clients some day.

BusinessWeek, July 31, 2006

In “Emerging Today, Global Tomorrow,” a *BusinessWeek* cover story, BCG senior partner Hal Sirkin discusses how corporate America has begun

to take notice of the challenges posed by emerging multinationals from rapidly developing economies (RDEs). The article features data and the “BCG Emerging 100” list from the recent report *New Global Challengers: How 100 Top Companies from Rapidly Developing Economies Are Changing the World*. Data from this report is also featured in the piece “Fighting Back,” which outlines the options U.S. companies have to respond to the potential threat posed by these emerging companies from RDEs.

The Washington Post, March 29, 2006

In an article titled “Learn the Lesson of Charleston’s Port,” BCG senior partner George Stalk discussed the congestion of North America’s West Coast ports with containers from China. According to Stalk’s analysis, the cost advantage that some retailers or manufacturers currently enjoy by sourcing from China can be negated by the costly impact of these transportation bottlenecks. Stalk’s BCG report, titled *The China Rip Tide: Threat or Opportunity?*, examines this issue in detail. Stalk has also been quoted on this topic in articles in *The Toronto Globe & Mail* and *The Vancouver Sun*.

Financial Express, March 2006

“Time to Fundamentally Rethink Corporate Social Responsibility”

In an op-ed piece in *The Financial Express*, BCG senior adviser Arun Maira explains that current approaches to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), based primarily in philanthropic activities, are inadequate to address environmental and social emergencies. Maira asserts that the rethinking of CSR must be directed to two objectives. One involves reducing corporations’ net consumption of natural resources to zero; the other involves creating a pattern of economic activity by which poor people in the communities and countries where the corporations operate can see a direct connection between their own incomes and the growth of the corporations’ activities and profits.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Read *The Boston Consulting Group on Strategy* to learn more about key BCG strategy concepts from the past 40 years, such as market segmentation, performance measurement, resource allocation, and organizational design. Published in April 2006, this update includes discussions of “hardball” strategies from George Stalk, “new luxury” from Michael Silverstein, and collaboration and networks from Philip Evans.

See how BCG thinks the middle class is changing the consumer goods market in the May 2006 *Treasure Hunt*. In this follow-up to his best-selling *Trading Up*, BCG senior partner and managing director Michael Silverstein shows how middle-class shoppers are maximizing their buying power by buying low-end and premium items, and shunning goods and services in the ho-hum middle zone.

To learn how BCG leaders think the game of business ought to be played, read *Hardball: Are You Playing to Play or Playing to Win?* by Rob Lachenauer and George Stalk. Published in September 2004, the book has generated buzz among readers of business management tomes.

Get a feel for the thinking coming from BCG’s Strategy Institute as it adapts the wisdom of a 19th-century Prussian general to today’s business world in *Clausewitz on Strategy*, by Christopher Bassford and Tiha von Ghyczy, and edited by Bolko von Oetinger.

In 2007, BCG senior partners James P. Andrew and Hal Sirkin published *Payback: Reaping the Rewards of Innovation*. The book suggests that innovation is validated only when it brings about higher profits, and the authors discuss that need for balance between resources directed at innovation and the reward at the other end.

In January 2008, Stalk returned with another book, *Five Strategies You Need Right Now*, which is part of Harvard Business Press’ new series, “Memo to the CEO.” In the book, Stalk discusses five strategies that CEOs should pay attention to now in order to get a leg

up; advice given ranges from addressing supply chain deficiencies to utilizing infinite bandwidth.

Published in June 2008, *GLOBALITY: Competing with Everyone from Everywhere for Everything* offers a glimpse into the future. BCG senior partners Sirkin and James W. Hemerling and partner Arindam Bhattacharya, seek to define an era of international business after globalization. Despite a self-conscious attempt to popularize a new buzz word, early critical reviews concede that the authors offer plenty of keen observations on the competitive landscape of emerging markets. In this new era, companies from rapidly-developing economies—“the global challengers”—are competing with larger corporations in developed countries for customers, suppliers, resources, intellectual property, people and industry leadership.

You’ll also find plenty of recent publications written by a variety of BCG consultants by exploring the company’s database at www.bcg.com/publications.

A general resource for information about the consulting industry is *Consultants News*, published by Kennedy Information: www.consultingcentral.com.

Read WetFeet’s *Ace Your Case*® series for expert help in mastering the case interview, and *Killer Consulting Resumes!* for resume advice tailored to those seeking work in consulting. Both books are available online at www.wetfeet.com.

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Who We Are

WetFeet was founded in 1994 by Stanford MBAs Gary Alpert and Steve Pollock. While exploring their next career moves, they needed products like the WetFeet Insider Guides to guide them through their research and interviews. But these resources didn't exist. So they started writing! Today, WetFeet is the trusted destination for job seekers aiming to research companies and industries, and launch and manage their careers. WetFeet helps more than a million job candidates each year to nail their interviews, avoid making ill-fated career decisions, and add thousands of dollars to their compensation packages.

At WetFeet, we understand the challenges you face and the questions you need answered, so we do the research for you and present our results in a clear, credible, and entertaining way. Think of us as your own private research company whose primary mission is to assist you in making the best possible career choices.

In addition to our Insider Guides, WetFeet offers services at two award-winning websites: WetFeet.com and InternshipPrograms.com. Our team members, who come from diverse backgrounds, share a passion for the job search process and a commitment to delivering the highest-quality products and customer service.

WetFeet is a Universum company. Universum also publishes Jungle magazine, Jungle Campus, The Companies You Need to Know About, Hispanic Professional, and the Ideal Employer insert for Black Collegian. Through our combined efforts, we aim to provide you with an ever-expanding array of career resources that will put you on the inside track to a successful professional life.

“What’s the Story Behind the Name WetFeet?”

The inspiration for our name comes from a popular business school case study about L.L. Bean, the successful mail-order company. Leon Leonwood Bean got his start because he, literally, had a case of wet feet. Every time he went hunting in the Maine woods, his shoes leaked. So, one day, he decided to make a better hunting shoe. And he did. He told his friends, and they lined up to buy their own pairs of Bean boots. And L.L. Bean, the company, was born . . . all because a man who had wet feet decided to make boots.

The lesson we took from the Bean case? Lots of people get wet feet, but creative problem-solvers make boots. And the same entrepreneurial spirit motivates us at WetFeet!

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