



THE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS OF INDIA

CONSULTANTS FORUM

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CMC - GLOBAL

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Esteemed Members,

I am delighted to welcome you all to this IMCI Consultants Forum. It gives me great pleasure to address this gathering of thought leaders and professionals who continue to elevate the standards of management consulting across India.

We have some exciting developments to share with you.

Firstly, I am thrilled to announce that we have recently signed an MOU with a prestigious Maharashtra State Skills University Mumbai. This partnership marks a significant milestone in our journey to nurture future consultants and will culminate in the launch of our collaboration post-Diwali. This initiative will provide immense value by offering cutting-edge CERTIFICATION IN MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of our community.

Additionally, I am glad to share that we have taken a big step in expanding our presence by setting in motion to set up our ever first chapter in JAIPUR. An initial meeting has been successfully held, and I am confident this will strengthen our network and provide a valuable platform for members in the region.

On another pioneering front, IMCI is working towards launching India's first-ever training course based on the globally recognized consulting standard, ISO 20700:2017. This initiative reaffirms our commitment to upholding excellence and ensuring our consultants are at the forefront of global best practices.

We look forward to your continued support and engagement as we drive these transformative initiatives forward. Together, we are setting new benchmarks for management consulting in India.

With best wishes

Anuj Bhargava,
President IMCI 2024-2025

EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present the **September 2024** issue of the **Consultants Forum of IMCI**, which helps you share your views, ideas, and experiences, fostering a vibrant community of knowledge sharing and professional growth.

We are happy to share the contributions made by Mr. Prashant Upadhyaya, Mr. Ashokkumar Prabhakar, Mr. Rajendra Desai, Mr. Vijay Karna, and Ms. Radhika Parthasarathy. Their insights have significantly enriched the present issue of the Consultants Forum.

The present issue focuses on essential topics, including the recognition of the critical role played by independent management consultants in business development, the role of artificial intelligence (AI) for effective leadership, agile management and remote workforce optimisation, simplifying complex supply chain models using practice insight, connecting industry professionals and academia, and accelerating the green hydrogen economy by applying design thinking in management consulting.

Unlike medicine, legal, auditing, and other professions, there is no statutory requirement for registration for a consultant. There are no restrictions or boundaries defined for entry into the consulting profession. You can become a consultant if you have skills, experience, and knowledge in a specific field, and a market for such expertise exists. However, to be an effective consultant, you must be a professional, regularly upgrade your skills and knowledge and have a professional network. Professionalism implies a commitment to the quality of consulting work and dedication to the client's interests. IMCI provides you with the opportunity and advantage to network with the thought leaders and the management consulting community members. The code of conduct and ethics laid down by IMCI governs you, and the clients trust you implicitly. IMCI is taking initiatives, such as signing an MOU with Maharashtra State Skills University and launching a training course based on the globally recognised consulting standard ISO 20700:2017. These are steps to encourage members to be effective consultants.

Effective consulting should result in constructive and tangible results. The consulting process is effective when it meets the requirements, goals, and objectives of the consulting project and satisfies the client. Technological advances such as Artificial Intelligence(AI) and Digital Transformation have dramatically changed the consulting sector. To create value via consulting services, consultants should be able to provide significant customer benefits and meet their requirements.

Your active participation is appreciated and crucial to making the Consultants Forum a vibrant platform for knowledge sharing and professional growth. Your contributions are valuable and integral to shaping the content and direction of the Consultants Forum. We eagerly look forward to your continued involvement in the forthcoming issues.

With best wishes,
Ramesh Tyagi



THE UNSUNG HEROES OF BUSINESS: INDEPENDENT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

PRASHANT UPADHYAYA

Management consulting plays a crucial role in shaping modern businesses, yet it remains less recognized by the general public compared to professions like accounting, law, medicine, or engineering. This article explores the reasons behind this lack of visibility and the challenges faced by independent management consultants in gaining recognition for their work.



•Limited Public Exposure

Unlike doctors, lawyers, or engineers, management consultants primarily operate behind the scenes in corporate environments. Their work rarely directly impacts the average person's daily life, making it less visible to the general public. Additionally, the confidential nature of many consulting projects further limits public awareness of their contributions.

The absence of a standardized, widely recognized certification process (comparable to bar exams for lawyers or medical licensing for doctors) also contributes to the profession's lower profile. While certifications like Certified Management Consultant (CMC) exist, they are not as universally recognized or required as in other professions.

•Recognition and Compensation in the Corporate Sector

Certified Management Consultants often struggle to receive fair recognition and compensation for their efforts in the corporate sector. Several factors contribute to this:

- Intangible results: The impact of management consulting is often indirect and difficult to quantify, making it challenging to demonstrate clear value.
- Short-term focus: Many companies prioritize immediate results over long-term strategic improvements, which are often the focus of management consultants.
- Internal resistance: Organizational politics and resistance to change can hinder the implementation of consultants' recommendations, potentially diminishing their perceived value.

While some consultants, particularly those working for prestigious firms, can command high fees, many independent consultants find it challenging to secure commensurate compensation for their expertise and effort.

•Challenges in Achieving Limelight

Independent management consultants face unique obstacles in gaining prominence compared to other professionals:

- Lack of public-facing roles: Unlike lawyers arguing high-profile cases or doctors treating well-known patients, consultants rarely have opportunities for public recognition.
- Client confidentiality: The need to maintain client privacy often prevents consultants from publicizing their successes or sharing detailed case studies.
- Diverse specializations: The broad range of consulting specialties makes it difficult for the public to form a cohesive understanding of the profession.
- Limited media representation: Management consulting is rarely featured in popular media, unlike the frequent portrayals of lawyers, doctors, or engineers in TV shows and movies.

To overcome these challenges, independent management consultants must be proactive in building their personal brands, networking, and showcasing their expertise through thought leadership and public speaking engagements.

In conclusion, while management consulting plays a vital role in the business world, the profession faces unique challenges in gaining widespread recognition. As the business landscape continues to evolve, there may be opportunities for independent management consultants to increase their visibility and receive greater acknowledgment for their contributions to organizational success.

Here are a few tips to position yourself as a sought-after Management Consultant in the business arena:

•Leveraging Expertise for Self-Promotion

Certified Management Consultants can enhance their visibility and credibility by:

- Thought leadership: Regularly publishing articles, whitepapers, or books on industry trends and best practices.

- **Public speaking:** Presenting at conferences, webinars, and industry events to showcase expertise.
- **Social media presence:** Maintaining active, professional profiles on platforms like LinkedIn to share insights and engage with potential clients.
- **Case studies:** Developing anonymized case studies that highlight successful projects and measurable outcomes.
- **Networking:** Actively participating in professional associations and industry groups to build relationships and referral networks.
- **Specialization:** Focusing on niche areas to become recognized experts in specific industries or business functions.

•**Improving the Profession as an Independent Consultant**

Individual consultants can contribute to elevating the profession by:

- **Upholding ethical standards:** Consistently adhering to and promoting high ethical standards in all client interactions.
- **Continuous learning:** Staying updated on emerging trends, technologies, and methodologies to provide cutting-edge advice.
- **Mentoring:** Guiding and supporting new entrants to the field to ensure the profession's long-term growth and quality.
- **Collaboration:** Partnering with other consultants to tackle larger projects and share knowledge.
- **Professional development:** Pursuing advanced certifications and participating in ongoing education programs.
- **Advocacy:** Working with professional bodies to promote the value of management consulting to businesses and the public.

•**How Industries and Corporates Can Support Management Consultants**

Companies can play a crucial role in fostering the growth of management consulting:

- **Transparent partnerships:** Establishing clear objectives and success metrics for consulting engagements to demonstrate value.
- **Long-term relationships:** Developing ongoing partnerships with consultants rather than viewing them as one-time service providers.
- **Implementation support:** Committing resources to implement consultants' recommendations and track long-term outcomes.

- Testimonials and references: Offering testimonials and serving as references for successful consulting projects.
- Knowledge sharing: Collaborating with consultants to produce case studies or co-authored publications on successful initiatives.
- Professional development: Including external consultants in relevant internal training programs or industry events.
- Feedback mechanisms: Providing constructive feedback to help consultants continuously improve their services.

By implementing these strategies, Certified Management Consultants can enhance their professional standing, while businesses can derive greater value from consulting engagements. As the relationship between consultants and clients evolves, the management consulting profession has the potential to gain wider recognition for its critical role in driving business success and innovation.

Dr. Prashant Upadhyaya (CMC) has two decades of experience across several industry sectors and has authored three books viz. Ternicode: Law of Three (genre: Business & Leadership), ManusCrypt: Designed for Mankind (genre: Strategy & Information Systems) and Swarbhanu Rahasya: Role of Nodes in Destiny (genre: Indology). He has served over two hundred clients across four continents. He holds double doctorate, is a post-doctoral senior fellow and an executive alumnus of IIM, Indore and IIT, Kanpur. His LinkedIn profile is – <https://www.linkedin.com/in/prashantau>



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AI INSPIRES NEW LEADERSHIP INTELLIGENCE: A STRATEGIC INSIGHT FOR INDEPENDENT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS IN INDIA

ASHOK PRABHAKAR

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not just another technological advancement but a transformative force reshaping leadership paradigms across industries. For Independent Management Consultants in India, understanding how AI impacts leadership intelligence is crucial to staying relevant and competitive. This article delves into how AI can enhance leadership capabilities, provides actionable strategies for AI-driven leadership, and discusses building an AI-ready culture, all backed by real-world examples from leading professional services firms.

The Evolution of Leadership Intelligence

Traditional leadership has relied heavily on experience, intuition, and human judgment. While these traits remain invaluable, they are increasingly insufficient in today's fast-paced environment. AI introduces a new dimension to leadership—data-driven insights that allow leaders to process vast amounts of information, analyse trends, and predict outcomes with unprecedented accuracy.

The need for evolving leadership intelligence arises from several factors:

- 1. Complexity of Business Environments:** The modern business world is characterised by volatility, heightened customer expectations, and fierce competition. AI helps leaders navigate this complexity by providing insights that may need to be noticed.
- 2. Data Overload:** With more data available than ever, the challenge is not the need for more information but the ability to swiftly convert it into actionable insights. AI addresses this by rapidly analysing data and generating valuable insights.
- 3. Personalisation:** AI allows for highly tailored strategies that target specific markets and individual team members and clients, enhancing engagement and satisfaction.

Case Studies in Professional Services

AI's impact on leadership is best illustrated through real-world applications in professional services firms:

- **Accenture:** This global consulting firm integrated AI into its leadership structure to analyse client data, predict market trends, and personalised service offerings. The result was faster decision-making, higher client satisfaction, and improved profitability. For independent management consultants, adopting similar AI tools can enhance client engagement by anticipating needs and customising solutions proactively.
- **PwC:** Known for managing large-scale digital transformation projects, PwC employed AI-driven tools to provide real-time analytics, project health scores, and risk assessments. This enabled leaders to address potential issues before they become critical, demonstrating how AI can facilitate more efficient project management.
- **McKinsey & Company:** McKinsey utilised AI to enhance its leadership development programs by identifying potential leaders and creating personalised growth paths. This approach resulted in more effective training, reduced turnover, and a stronger leadership pipeline, underscoring that AI can also play a pivotal role in talent management.

Actionable Strategies for AI-Driven Leadership

To effectively integrate AI into leadership practices, independent management consultants should consider the following strategies:

1. **Leveraging AI for Data-Driven Decision-Making:** AI tools can analyse market trends, customer behaviour, and internal performance metrics, allowing leaders to make decisions based on solid data and intuition. For instance, incorporating AI dashboards into daily operations can provide real-time insights into key business areas, helping spot opportunities and risks early.
2. **Enhancing Team Performance through AI:** AI-based performance management systems can help identify strengths and areas for improvement within teams, providing continuous feedback and tailored development opportunities. This approach enhances engagement and productivity by aligning projects with team members' strengths.
3. **AI in Strategic Planning:** AI can simulate various strategic scenarios, helping evaluate risks and opportunities more accurately. For example, AI models can assess the impact of entering a new market or launching a new service, providing a clearer picture of potential benefits and challenges.
4. **AI-Driven Client Engagement:** AI tools can predict client needs and tailor offerings accordingly, increasing client satisfaction and strengthening loyalty. Personalised marketing campaigns and service offerings based on AI-analysed client behaviour can be the difference between retaining a client or losing them to a competitor.

Building an AI-Ready Leadership Culture

To fully leverage AI's potential, it is essential to cultivate an AI-ready leadership culture. This involves several key elements:

1. **Fostering a Learning Mindset:** Encourage continuous learning about AI and its applications. This does not mean everyone needs to become an AI expert, but a foundational understanding of how AI works and its business applications is crucial. Regular training and workshops on AI for leadership teams can support this initiative.
2. **Promoting Collaboration Between AI and Human Intelligence:** While AI provides data and insights, human judgement remains essential. Encourage teams to view AI as a partner rather than a replacement. Cross-functional teams that blend AI expertise with business knowledge can lead to more innovative solutions and better decision-making.
3. **Addressing Ethical Considerations:** AI has incredible potential but raises concerns about bias and privacy. Establish clear guidelines for ethical AI use within your organisation to ensure transparency, fairness, and respect for privacy. This approach builds trust with teams and clients and helps avoid potential pitfalls.

Implications for Independent Management Consultants

Integrating AI into leadership practices is not just an option but a necessity for independent management consultants. Here's why:

1. **Staying Competitive:** As AI continues to reshape industries, consultants who understand and leverage AI will have a significant competitive edge. They will be better equipped to offer innovative solutions, enhance client satisfaction, and drive business growth.
2. **Enhancing Value Proposition:** By incorporating AI into their service offerings, consultants can provide deeper insights and more strategic advice, enhancing their value proposition to clients. This approach positions them as thought leaders and trusted advisors in an increasingly complex market.
3. **Driving Client Success:** AI-driven insights can help clients navigate challenges, identify opportunities, and achieve their strategic goals more effectively. Consultants who can guide their clients in leveraging AI will foster stronger relationships and drive long-term success.
4. **Expanding Service Offerings:** AI opens up new avenues for service offerings, such as digital transformation consulting, AI-driven market analysis, and predictive analytics. By increasing their capabilities in these areas, independent management consultants can diversify their services and tap into new markets and revenue streams.

Conclusion

AI transforms leadership intelligence, making leaders more effective, insightful, and strategic. For independent management consultants in India, understanding how to harness AI's potential is key to staying competitive and delivering exceptional value. By adopting AI-driven strategies, fostering an AI-ready culture, and addressing ethical considerations, consultants can enhance their leadership capabilities, drive client success, and secure a strong position in the market. Now is the time to embrace AI and leverage its transformative power to lead the future of consulting.

WHY DO I BELONG TO THE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS OF INDIA?

TO BE A BETTER CONSULTANT	LEARN NEW SKILLS	SHARE INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES	DIFFERENTIATE MYSELF FROM MY COMPETITORS
FIND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS COLLABORATION	COLLABORATE OTHER CONSULTANTS AND PROJECTS	FIND A MENTOR & BUILD MY BUSINESS	BECOME A CERTIFIED MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT TO GROW!!!!



OCCAM'S RAZOR APPLIED TO SIMPLIFY COMPLEX SUPPLY CHAIN MODELS USING PRACTICE INSIGHTS

RAJENDRA DESAI,
SENIOR CONSULTANT, ISME, BANGALORE

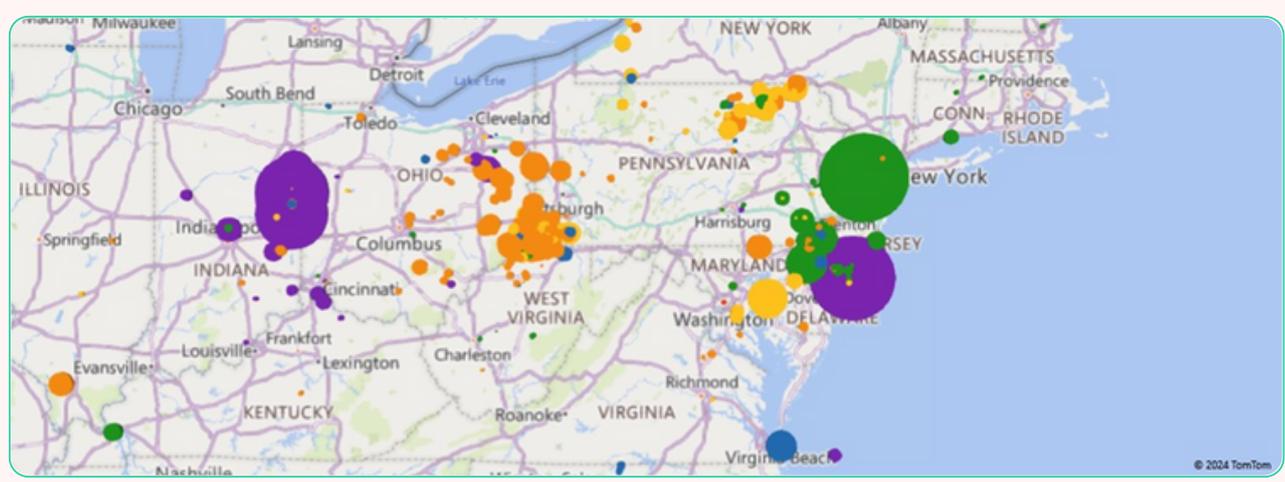
Occam's razor also known as the **Law of parsimony** suggests that nature takes the simplest means possible to any given end. This is typically used to accept the simplest of all explanations as the most effective.

In my work as a consultant in Supply Chain Analytics, I have found this principle very useful. Ground realities of firms' supply chains tend to translate into complex analytics models which are hard to solve. Simplifying complex models to use fewer variables, reduced abstract ideas and guesses **using practice insights** makes them amenable to **fast and practical solutions**.

Let me share an example from a recent project on Logistics Optimization.

Background: This US based firm had a large distribution network for rental of HDPE mats. These are large mats 8'x 14' x 4.25" used by Oil and Gas, Utilities and Construction Industries for levelling and creating safe roads/workspaces at project sites. Mats are rented out for a duration and returned to their warehouse for reuse. Transport costs are a focus for the firm with over 2500 client sites and 20+ warehouses across the US.

At first glance this looked like a simple transportation model. However, when we collected the data on ground realities, the complexity started evolving. A partial bubble chart of the demand and supply locations at a certain point in time is shared below.



The complexity of this transportation model arose from factors like:

- mapping distances between the supply and demand locations (while latitude and longitudes of these locations were known, the earth's curvature in measuring distances needed to be factored in),
- supply locations included warehouses and current demand locations where projects are coming to a close and mats have to be returned to the warehouse – or preferably sent to another project
- availability and variation of supply and demand over time
- limited use of mats returned by Oil and Gas Industry in non-O&G projects
- Transportation decisions to be made frequently / every time a set of customer demands needed to be satisfied / project contracts ended.

These considerations added complexity to the model and our initial assessment was this model could become highly non-linear or at best a mixed integer model with variables running into 1,00,000+ variables and an equally large number of constraints. Even with the current advanced computing software and facilities available, the solution times and costs would make the model(s) impractical to use frequently. We needed build a simpler solution without diluting the ground constraints.

In the interest of keeping this article brief, I will share an outline of the simplification of 1 aspect that helped us create a completely linear model, reduce the number of variables and constraints in the optimization model and the ability to solve this in a few seconds using a version of the simplex algorithm implemented by Frontline Systems in their software Analytics Solver. The model was eventually implemented as an app which the field managers could use frequently (as many times a day as they needed) using real time data directly extracted from their backend Oracle database to show them the optimal routing for the available mats to the demand locations.

Handling time dependency of supply and demand: The availability of demand and supply at various points in time at various locations, necessitates introducing a time dimension in the model which rapidly increases the number of decision variables.

For example, to optimize decisions with 100 demand locations, 30 supply points (including projects where contracts come to an end and mats would be available to shift on a priority to another project) would have 3,000 decision variables in a basic transportation model. The planning horizon could be daily, weekly, monthly...introducing a proportionate multiplier to the decision variables using the time dimension. If the planning horizon is monthly, any model would have to factor in the supply and demand available each day of the month and the 3,000 variables in the example above would go upto $3,000 \times 30 = 90,000$ variables with an equal scaling up of the constraints.

A typical mathematical formulation of the objective function is

$$\text{Minimize } Z = \sum_t \sum_j C_{i,j} \cdot X_{i,j,t} + \sum_t \sum_k C_{k,j} \cdot P_{k,t} \cdot X_{k,j,t}$$

Where:

- $C_{i,j}$, $C_{k,j}$:Transport cost per Mat from Yard(i) to Project(j) / Project(k) to Project(j)
- $X_{i,j,t}$, $X_{k,j,t}$: Quantity of Mats to be shipped from Yard(i) to Project(j) / Project(k) to Project(j) in time period t
- $P_{k,t}$:= 1 if Project(k) is completed on or before time period t, = 0 otherwise.

The range of possible values for the indices t :(1..365) / I : (1..25)/ j : (1..2500)/ k : (1..2500) depending on the planning horizon, regions for optimization, number of supply yards and project locations.

Inventory carrying costs were ignored as this was to be integrated with a larger network planning model to be subsequently created. Constraints using the above variables, including time slots for the planning, imitated the ground realities while creating a large and complex model.

Even with high end software like the Gurobi Solver (which has no limits to the size of linear/mixed integer models and is extremely fast solving optimization problems with 1 lakh+ variables in less than a minute), the added complexity of non-linearity/mixed integer variables would require large computing resources involving a high cost/time. This solution would be useless at the field level where they need decisions fast to handle what-if scenarios.

Through interviews with area managers, we understood their planning horizon was typically 1 week and the criticality/flexibility of meeting customer start date demands. This insight enabled us to prepare a time weighted distance cost matrix to penalise stocks requirements and availability at various points in time within the planning horizon.

$$\text{Time weighted Distance Costs} = M_{ci,j} = [W_{ij}(t)] * [C_{i,j}]$$

Here $W_{ij}(t)$ is a time dependent weight created to modify the distance costs between yard(i)/project(i) and project(j)

This enabled shifting the time dimension out of the decision variables for both demand and supply. The start and end dates of projects were available in advance for the planning window. The model could now be a simple transportation model with the time weighted distance costs. Other ground constraints like non-use of O&G mats in other industries, project to project transfer getting higher preference were similarly transferred from their variable dependency to weights in the model.



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AGILE MANAGEMENT AND REMOTE WORKFORCE OPTIMISATION: NAVIGATING THE NEW NORMAL

ASHOK PRABHAKAR

As the business landscape continues to evolve, the role of management consultants, particularly independent ones, has become more critical than ever. The rapid shift to remote work brought about by the pandemic has accelerated the need for agile management practices. These practices are crucial for organisations seeking to maintain productivity, drive innovation, and ensure employee engagement in a distributed environment. In this article, I will share insights from a case study where I successfully guided a mid-sized technology firm in India through the transition to agile management and remote workforce optimisation. Additionally, I will outline key actions independent management consultants can take to leverage these trends to grow their businesses.

The Case for Agile Management in a Remote World

In mid-2023, I was approached by a midsized technology firm based in Bangalore, struggling to adapt to the new realities of remote work. Despite having a solid technological foundation, the company faced declining productivity, missed deadlines, and low employee morale. The CEO, a visionary leader, recognised the need for a fundamental shift in how the company operated but needed help figuring out where to start.

The firm's challenges were not unique. Many organisations in India, accustomed to traditional hierarchical structures and in-office workflows, were at a crossroads. The pandemic had upended their operational norms, and the once-effective command-and-control management style was now counterproductive. The need for agility—both in mindset and operations—was clear.

Implementing Agile Management: A Step-by-Step Approach

Understanding the urgency, I proposed a phased approach to transitioning the firm to an agile management model. The goal was to create a flexible, responsive organisation that could adapt quickly to changes while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration.

Phase 1: Assessment and Alignment

The first step was a comprehensive assessment of the company's existing processes, technology stack, and team dynamics. I interviewed key stakeholders, including department heads, team leaders, and employees, to gain insights into their pain points and challenges. The findings revealed communication silos, a lack of clarity on project goals, and a rigid hierarchical structure that stifled innovation and agility.

Armed with this information, I facilitated workshops with the leadership team to align the company's vision, goals, and the desired state of agility. This alignment was crucial to ensure buy-in and support from the top, which would be vital for the subsequent phases.

Phase 2: Agile Framework Selection and Customisation

Next, we focused on selecting the most suitable agile framework for the organisation. Given the firm's project-based nature and the need for frequent deliverables, we opted for Scrum, a popular agile framework that emphasises iterative progress, collaboration, and flexibility. However, recognising that no one-size-fits-all solution exists, we customised the Scrum framework to better suit the company's specific needs. This included defining shorter sprint cycles, establishing clear roles and responsibilities, and setting up cross-functional teams.

Phase 3: Training and Change Management

Implementing agile management required a significant cultural shift. To facilitate this transition, I organised extensive training sessions for all employees, from senior leadership to individual contributors. These sessions covered agile principles, the Scrum framework, and practical skills such as sprint planning, daily stand-ups, and retrospective meetings.

Change management was critical in this phase. Resistance to change is natural, particularly when new working methods are introduced. To address this, I identified organisational change champions—respected individuals who could advocate for the agile transformation and provide peer support. Regular communication and feedback loops were established to address concerns and adjust the implementation strategy.

Phase 4: Technology Enablement

A crucial component of agile management and remote workforce optimisation is using technology to facilitate collaboration and transparency. I worked closely with the company's IT team to identify and implement tools supporting the agile processes. We deployed digital tools, including project management software, communication platforms, and data analytics tools, to provide real-time visibility into project progress and team performance.

Phase 5: Continuous Improvement and Scaling

The final phase focused on fostering a culture of continuous improvement. We implemented regular retrospectives at the end of each sprint cycle, allowing teams to reflect on their performance, identify areas for improvement, and implement changes in the next cycle. This iterative approach helped the organisation become more adaptable and resilient, capable of navigating the uncertainties of a rapidly changing business environment.

Within six months, the transformation was evident. The firm saw a 30% increase in productivity, a 40% reduction in project delivery times, and a significant improvement in employee engagement and satisfaction. The company was not only surviving in the new normal but thriving.

Key Actions for Independent Management Consultants

The success of this transformation underscores the growing demand for agile management and remote workforce optimisation expertise among Indian businesses. As independent management consultants, there are several key actions we can take to capitalise on this trend and expand our businesses:

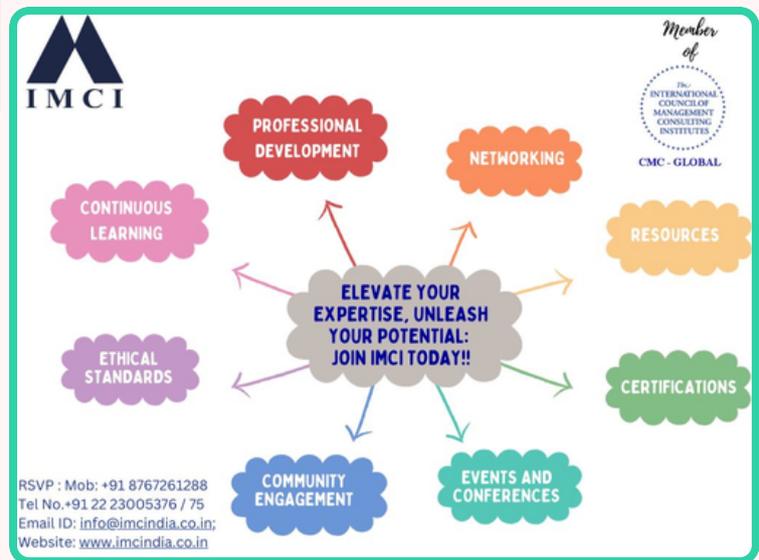
- 1. Develop Deep Expertise in Agile Frameworks:** Mastery of agile frameworks like Scrum, Kanban, and Lean is essential. Independent consultants should invest in certifications and continuous learning to stay updated on the latest agile practices and tools. This expertise can position you as a valuable resource for organisations looking to enhance their agility.
- 2. Offer Tailored Solutions and Customisation:** One of the strengths of independent consultants is the ability to provide personalised, hands-on service. Offer customised agile solutions that cater to each client's unique needs rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. This personalisation can differentiate you from larger consulting firms and build stronger client relationships.
- 3. Leverage Technology to Enhance Service Delivery:** Use digital tools to streamline your consulting practice and deliver client value. For example, project management software can provide clients with real-time insights into their transformation progress. Additionally, use data analytics to demonstrate the impact of your services and build a strong business case for continued engagement.
- 4. Build a Network of Agile Champions and Advocates:** Establish a network of Agile champions within your client organisations. These individuals can help drive adoption from within, advocate for agile practices, and provide valuable feedback to refine your consulting approach. Additionally, fostering relationships with these champions can lead to new business opportunities through referrals and testimonials.

5. Focus on Change Management and Cultural Transformation: Agile management is as much about mindset and culture as it is about processes and tools. Offer services that address the cultural aspects of agile transformation, such as leadership coaching, team-building workshops, and change management strategies. This holistic approach can help clients achieve sustainable, long-term success.

6. Position yourself as a Thought Leader: Share your insights and success stories through articles, webinars, and speaking engagements. Positioning yourself as a thought leader in agile management and remote workforce optimisation can help you attract new clients and build your reputation in the market.

Conclusion

The shift to remote work and the growing need for agility present significant opportunities for independent management consultants in India. By developing expertise in agile management, offering tailored solutions, leveraging technology, and focussing on cultural transformation, consultants can help businesses navigate the complexities of the new normal and drive growth. As we adapt to an ever-changing business environment, our role as trusted advisors will only become more critical. It's time to seize the opportunity and lead the way in agile transformation.





BRIDGING THE GAP: MY JOURNEY IN CONNECTING INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS WITH ACADEMIA

VIJAY KARNA

As a business management consultant with over 30 years of experience, I have had the privilege of working across various sectors, driving strategic initiatives and fostering innovation. One of the most rewarding aspects of my career has been the opportunity to bridge the gap between industry and academia. Over the years, I have witnessed firsthand the immense value that collaboration between seasoned industry professionals and students in universities and management institutes can bring.

The Industry-Academia Connect: A Synergistic Relationship

The concept of connecting industry experience with academic learning is not new, but its importance has never been more pronounced. In today's fast-paced, ever-evolving business landscape, it is crucial that students are not only equipped with theoretical knowledge but also exposed to practical, real-world challenges. Similarly, industry professionals' benefit from engaging with academic institutions by gaining fresh perspectives and exploring cutting-edge research that can be applied to their work.

One of the most effective ways I have found to facilitate this connection is through the establishment of industry-academia incubation centers. These centers serve as hubs where professionals and students come together to collaborate on research projects, share knowledge, and explore the latest trends in management consulting. Through these initiatives, students gain hands-on experience, and industry professionals stay ahead of the curve by tapping into the innovative ideas that emerge from academic research.

Real-World Applications: Topics That Benefit Both Sides

Over the years, I have worked on several projects that have successfully integrated industry and academia including IITs, IIMs, premier Management Institutions and Universities. Here are a few examples of topics that have proven to be mutually beneficial:

1. Digital Transformation in Business Management

Digital transformation is a topic that has been at the forefront of industry discussions for several years. For students, understanding the impact of digital technologies on business processes, customer experience, and organizational structure is crucial. Industry professionals, on the other hand, can benefit from academic research that explores new digital tools and strategies. By collaborating on projects related to digital transformation, students can develop practical skills, while professionals can gain insights into the latest technological advancements.

2. Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword; it is a critical component of modern business strategy. Through industry-academia collaboration, students can engage in research on sustainable business practices and CSR initiatives. Industry professionals can apply these insights to their organizations, ensuring they stay compliant with regulations and meet the growing demand for ethical business practices. This collaboration also allows students to understand the real-world challenges companies face in implementing sustainable practices.

3. Data Analytics and Business Intelligence

The ability to harness data for decision-making is a skill that is highly valued in today's business environment. Students can learn about data analytics tools and methodologies through coursework, but working on real industry projects allows them to apply these skills in a practical setting. Industry professionals, in turn, can leverage the fresh analytical approaches developed by students to enhance their business intelligence efforts. This symbiotic relationship ensures that both parties stay at the cutting edge of data-driven decision-making.

4. Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship and innovation are critical for driving economic growth and competitiveness. By partnering with universities and management institutes, industry professionals can mentor students on the practical aspects of starting and scaling a business. In return, professionals can benefit from the innovative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit that students bring to the table. Incubation centers often serve as the perfect platform for this exchange, fostering an environment where new ventures can be nurtured and grown.

5. Leadership and Change Management

Leadership and change management are perennial topics in management consulting. Through collaborative research and case studies, students can gain insights into the complexities of leading change in organizations. Industry professionals, particularly those involved in large-scale transformations, can share their experiences and challenges, providing students with a realistic view of what it takes to drive change. This interaction helps to develop the next generation of leaders who are equipped to handle the dynamic nature of modern business.

The Impact of Industry-Academia Collaboration

The benefits of fostering a strong industry-academia connection are manifold. For students, it provides a unique opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical context, making them more industry-ready upon graduation. For industry professionals, these collaborations offer access to the latest research, innovative ideas, and a pool of talent that can be nurtured and potentially recruited.

Moreover, these collaborations contribute to the overall advancement of the management consulting field. By working together on research projects, industry and academia can push the boundaries of what is possible, driving innovation and ensuring that both parties stay relevant in an ever-changing world.

Conclusion

In my journey as a business management consultant, the industry-academia connect has been one of the most fulfilling aspects of my career. It has allowed me to give back to the academic community while staying at the forefront of industry trends. As we move forward, the importance of this collaboration will only grow, ensuring that both students and professionals continue to thrive in a complex and competitive business landscape.

By embracing this synergy, we can create a future where knowledge and experience are shared freely, leading to innovations that benefit not just individual organizations but society as a whole.

About author:

Vijay Karna is a seasoned Digital Transformation Practitioner with over 30 years of experience in the industry. He has a proven track record of leading large-scale Digital transformation programs and driving digital initiatives across various sectors, including energy, utilities, chemicals, and manufacturing. His expertise includes management consulting, account management, business process change management, and pre-sales consultancy, with a strong focus on delivering maximum business value through innovative solutions. Vijay has also authored and co-authored several books on digital transformation and business process change, showcasing his thought leadership in the field. He has held senior leadership positions at leading organizations such as Cyient Ltd, Capgemini, HCL Technologies, IBM, and Infosys, where he has spearheaded SAP delivery excellence, managed technology risks, and led strategic deals worth over \$100 million. His extensive experience is complemented by certifications as a Chartered Engineer, Distinguished Architect, and GRI practitioner, making him a highly respected figure in the industry. Additionally, Vijay is deeply involved in industry-academia collaborations, mentoring students, and delivering guest lectures on topics such as AI, IoT, and sustainability.



ACCELERATE THE GREEN HYDROGEN ECONOMY IN INDIA BY APPLYING DESIGN THINKING IN MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

RADHIKA PARTHASARATHY



Abstract

While Design Thinking as a management consulting tool is not new, its application in the realms of green hydrogen initiatives in India could help overcome the gap between ambition and the action. With the pressing need for our economy to shift towards clean energy, green hydrogen presents a clear opportunity for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing India’s energy security. Let us explore the possible synergies between Design Thinking and Green Hydrogen, in this article.

Introduction

The Source of Green hydrogen is electrolysis of water done using green energy (such as wind, solar, or hydroelectric power). The world perceives it as a key pillar in the move to a low-carbon economy. Globally, countries like the European Union, Germany, Japan, and Australia, have set sails towards ambitious green hydrogen strategies. The global market for green hydrogen is expected to grow exponentially, with estimates suggesting it could meet up to 24% of the world’s energy needs by 2050, creating a market worth over \$2.5 trillion annually. Zooming in to India, the **National Hydrogen Mission** announced in 2021, aims to become a global hub for green hydrogen production and export by 2030. Although India has a competitive cost advantage given the abundance of renewable energy resources, the challenges are plentiful.

Multi-Stakeholder, Complex Problem with a Simple User Centric Solution

The energy sector in India is at a critical juncture, of meeting the country's ever-growing energy demands while transitioning to a sustainable, low-carbon future. As the government pushes forward with ambitious initiatives like the National Hydrogen Mission and the broader commitment to renewable energy, the complexity of these efforts becomes increasingly apparent. The involvement of diverse entities with different priorities, resources, and perspectives creates a need for innovative approaches that can effectively navigate these complexities.

Challenges:

1. **Technological:** Ranging from high production cost which is currently at \$6 to be brought to an ambitious \$2, to make it viable; limitations are storage and distribution capabilities to insufficient electrolyzer capacity.
2. **Regulatory:** According to World Bank, approval of a green hydrogen project alone takes 18 months, similarly another study by TERI points out that policy inconsistencies cost upwards of 30% in compliance, making it confusing and expensive for businesses to negotiate the bends on the energy route.
3. **Market Adoption:** According to NITI Aayog, incentives to businesses for adopting green hydrogen solutions could reduce the cost by 20-30%, but such demand side incentives remain absent, and so does the necessary impetus to research and infrastructure.

The Why and How of Design Thinking in Green Hydrogen

WHY?

Lot is attributable to perception! According to **BloombergNEF**, over **50%** of private investors cited “regulatory uncertainty” and “lack of proven technology” as major barriers to investing in green hydrogen initiatives in India, which brings us to the ‘Why’. The User Centricity of the method makes it a perfect candidate for Stakeholder Alignment. Design thinking helps align diverse stakeholders, from policymakers and businesses to communities, by focusing on their needs and concerns. For instance, principles of empathy immersion, synthesize the findings, and ideation in collaborative workshops between regulators and private sector leaders could co-create streamlined, transparent regulatory frameworks that reduce compliance costs and time.

HOW might we create a supportive regulatory framework that incentivizes private-sector investment in green hydrogen?” Most of my colleagues and readers would agree a clear problem definition, is half the battle won.

Ideation workshops with diverse stakeholders, along with proven brainstorming tools, could produce actionable insights and ideas. These ideas could eventually be strengthened and rounded, in the direction of cheap and low fidelity prototypes, imagine digital platforms for regulatory compliances or mock-ups of public awareness campaigns.

The iterative nature of the methodology ensures feedback is taken from all stakeholders on such prototypes, in a controlled environment. From policymakers to investors and energy companies, prototyping would provide critical points that are often missed out in the complexities of solutioning. Revising, incorporating, and doing another mock drill, would iron out the finest wrinkles. The evolution of solution and therefore the market could change the complete landscape of green energy.

In conclusion, while at a first glance this excerpt might appear to oversimplify a large and complex problem, the simplicity of the process is in fact the golden key. At this stage, the importance of cross industry collaboration cannot be emphasized more. Diverse industries: technology, finance, government, and consumer goods all converge towards a common objective. It not accelerated innovation but also builds an ecosystem where startups, established companies, research institutions, and government agencies work together to drive green energy solutions. Consulting firms are well poised to set themselves apart by adopting fresh, creative approaches rather than traditional linear ones for value creation, both for themselves as well as their clients.

About the writer

With extensive industry experience as a Management Consultant, Radhika Parthasarathy has successfully led initiatives in diverse sectors such as road safety, operations, strategy, and artificial intelligence. An Electronics and Communication Engineer at the core, Radhika completed specialized programs in Infrastructure Project Management from L&T Institute of Project Management and in Artificial Intelligence from the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow. She also studied Design Thinking from the prestigious IDEO, USA. Currently, Radhika is pursuing active research at the intersection of AI, emergency response, and road safety, aiming to leverage AI technologies to improve safety outcomes and operational effectiveness in these critical areas.

SUCCESSFUL IMCI EVENT

THE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS OF INDIA - **IMCI AHMEDABAD CHAPTER** is thrilled to announce the successful conclusion of a program which took place on 31 August 2024 on the subject "The Experience of Writing Books on Management"

The event brought together for a memorable and impactful experience. The event achieved significant milestones and generated tremendous enthusiasm among participants.



IMCI ON-LINE SESSION CONDUCTED

July 2024- Sept 2024

SR NO	CHAPTER	DATE	THEME	SPEAKER
1	HYDERABAD	19-July-24	DRIVING ESG AND SUSTAINABILITY	Mr. Vijay Karna, Senior Director, Digital Transformation Managing Consultant, Cyient Ltd.
2	CHENNAI	30-July-24	TRANSFORMING STRATEGY MANAGEMENT WITH THE BALANCED SCORECARD	Mr. Gopal Sharma, Strategy Management Mentor, Author
3	PUNE	18-Aug-24	MENTAL HEALTH: A RISING CHALLENGE IN THE CORPORATE WORLD	Mr. Sushil Eapen, CEO of Silver Oak Health
4	HYDERABAD	09-Aug-24	DATA - DRIVEN CONSULTING	Mr. Ravi K. - Data Governance and Data Privacy Lead - Independent Consultant.
5	HYDERABAD	13-Sept-24	CONSULTING TOWARDS PERFECTION	Prof. Saibaba Reddy Eadala, Professor of Civil Engg & Principal JNTUH College of Engineering, Hyderabad (Retired)

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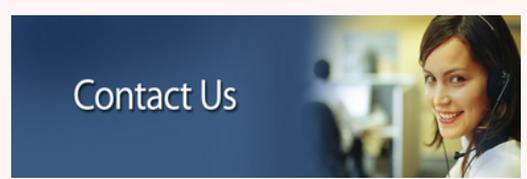
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About IMCI

The Institute of Management Consultants of India (IMCI) is the apex body of management consulting professionals in India, being the only registered institute of established management consultancy firms and practicing individuals in the country. Originally founded in 1963 as Management Consultant's Association of India (MCAI), MCAI was renamed as IMCI in 1991 when it joined the ICMCI as the first Asian Country to become a full member. The International Council of Management Consulting Institute (ICMCI) www.cmc-global.org has authorized IMCI to award Certified Management Consultant (CMC) certification in accordance with International Standards.

At IMCI, we understand that the world of business is rapidly evolving, presenting new challenges and complexities. That's why we have created a community that brings together industry leaders, seasoned consultants, and aspiring professionals like you. Our association serves as a platform for networking, knowledge sharing, and continuous learning. By becoming a member of the IMCI offers several benefits, both for individual consultants and consulting firms. Some of the key benefits include:

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Institute of Management Consultants of India (IMCI) Membership is an investment in your professional growth and a commitment to excellence in the consulting arena. We believe that your unique perspective and experience will greatly enrich our community.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more, please feel free to reach out to our membership team at [Mob: +91 8767261288 Tel No.+91 22 23005376 / 75 Email ID: info@imcindia.co.in].