



Why Consultants?

By A.H. Harry Oussoren

Seeking the advice of consultants is just a way of acknowledgement of our limitations. We don't know everything. Our judgement may be so tied up with our feelings that we can't get our situation into focus. We need perspective – a deeper, broader, higher, more thorough view of our situation.

That's where consultants are helpful. They ask the questions we might be afraid to ask. They probe into places we have agreed quietly not to explore. They bring information we don't have in our group. They elicit from us data we didn't know was within us.

Anybody can be a consultant. A consultant is another person who is willing to help us become the person, group, organization, congregation we could become. Most consultants don't know they're consultants. They function informally. They simply ask the questions that break logjams, that open up new vistas, that awaken dormant seeds. They're the helpful people who ask Why? forcing us to think through what we're doing.

There are also professional consultants. They have the expert knowledge in particular areas. They know the literature, the research base. They have a conceptual framework which informs their consulting. They are aware of their limitations. Not afraid to declare them, they'll draw in other expertise.

Professional consultants know that they are not going to be part of the organization seeking their skill. So they don't try to create the organization in their own image. Instead their role is to help the group or congregation identify its own well-founded hopes and dreams and to help plot courses which are headed that way.

There are good and bad professional consultants. The bad ones take over, think they know what you need, impose their ideas, and leave you with a big bill. The good ones try to understand, go into depth, draw on research, help you claim your own future. They also leave you with a bill, but it feels worth it!

In a time when many congregations are wondering what hit them and what their future may be, competent consultants are a gift of God, to help discern where God is calling us. The bill is worth it!

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