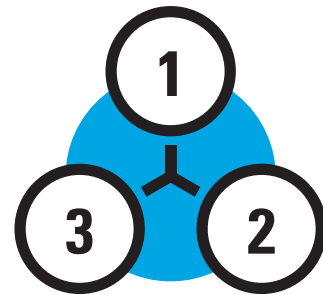


10 Lessons to Learn About Business Consultants

When 10th Street Hardware owners Steve DeShong and Troy Usnik were making plans to open a second store in Philadelphia, a friend recommended using a business consultant to help them manage the development of the new operation. DeShong is now convinced they made the right decision. Here are 10 lessons he learned from working with a business consultant. ➔



Bring them in at any stage of the plan.

"We started working with a business consultant just because of this new location," DeShong says. "He participated in the lease negotiation aspect of the new store, he helped launch our new website and he is helping us with our marketing for the new store."

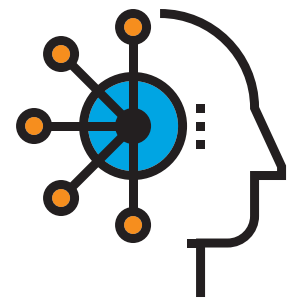
They can focus on what you've been meaning to get to.

"Our business consultant asked why we hadn't finished our new website. I told him it's because we didn't have time to write the content or get the photos, and he got right to work to put content together for us."



They are specialists or jacks-of-all-trades.

DeShong's business consultant helped develop the strategic plan to present to the real estate agent and the building owner. Now that the lease is signed, the consultant developed a marketing plan for the new location and helped launch a new website in just a few months.



They can offer an outsider's perspective.

"He told us that even though we know so much about our store and what we offer our customers, that doesn't mean we should assume our customers know what we know. Hearing that made us realize that we don't do enough to sell everything we know and do."



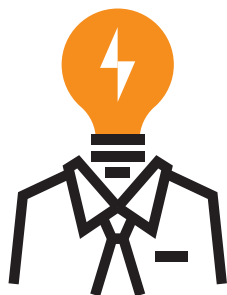
They work with your existing ideas.

"When my friend suggested I work with a business consultant, I didn't know what that meant. I thought, 'Will he give me ideas? I've got tons of ideas, I just need them to be implemented.' Once we met, he understood what we needed, and it seemed to be a good fit."



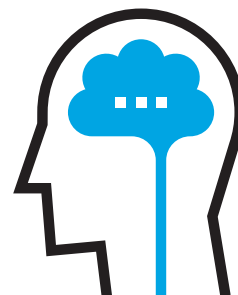
Find an expert.

The business consultant DeShong works with previously ran his own small business before selling it to become a consultant for other small businesses. The consultant's prior experience helped confirm DeShong's feeling that they had found the right person for the job.



They should improve your vision.

DeShong had ideas to market the new location, and his business consultant helped him think of ways to reach new customers, like creating welcome packages for new apartment residents with branded sponges and coupons for a free key copy.



Find a consultant who gets stuff done.

"When our consultant came back with our strategic plan outlined, he told us 'I'm going to be a partner in your business who doesn't wait on any customers. I will be able to get stuff done for you because I'm not going to be distracted by the store itself.'"



They can position your business.

"The strategic plan was useful with the real estate agent and the building owner for the second location. They wanted someone with a track record, and they were impressed by our outline of how we planned to improve on our business model for this new store."



They may not be necessary forever.

DeShong anticipates there will be plenty of long-term work for his business consultant at the new location, but he is waiting to see what that looks like. "In the future, we will need to evaluate his usefulness for the company, just like any other aspect of our business."

