Overview
Consulting is the practice of helping organizations to improve their performance, primarily through the analysis of existing organizational problems and development of plans for improvement. Consultants offer skill in assessing and solving business problems, and are hired by companies who need their expertise, fresh outside perspective, and/or extra set of hands.

Some management consulting firms specialize in giving advice on general business strategy questions, while others are known as technology, marketing, finance, operations or human resources specialists. Some concentrate on a specific industry area, like financial services or retail, and still others are more like gigantic one-stop shops with divisions that dispense advice on everything from top-level strategy, to choosing customer account management software, to saving money on paper clips. Here are the different types of consulting specializations

(1) STRATEGY - aims to help a client’s most senior executives understand and face the macro-level challenges of running their company or organization.
(2) OPERATIONS – examine a client’s internal workings, such as production processes, distribution, order fulfillment and customer service
(3) MARKETING- shape overall marketing plans or develop detailed approaches to launch a new product or optimize existing ones
(4) IT - help clients achieve their business goals by leveraging in-depth knowledge of computer and telecommunications hardware, software and the inner workings of the Internet
(5) FINANCIAL – address Corporate finance, risk management and insurance engagements, and Corporate restructuring or “turnaround”
(6) HUMAN CAPITAL - maximize the value of employees while placing the right people with the right skills in the right roles

What Consultants do on a Daily Basis
Generally, projects follow the cycle of pitching, research, analysis, reporting and implementation. Depending where you are in the project lifecycle, here are some of the things you could be doing:

Pitching
- Helping to write the project proposals (using PowerPoint and/or Word)
- Assisting in the presentation of a sales pitch to a prospective client
Research
- Performing secondary research on the client
- Interviewing the client’s customers to gather viewpoints on the company
Analysis
- Organizing and summarizing product or customer datasets in Excel, Access or SAS
- Building quantitative financial models in Excel or performing statistical analysis on data in Excel, SAS or SPSS
• Discussing the data, trends and preliminary model outputs with team members and supervisors

Reporting
• Preparing interim, draft and final presentations (typically a “deck” of PowerPoint slides)
• Helping to present the findings and recommendations to the client

Implementation
• Acting as a project manager or “warm body” for the implementation of your strategy, if your firm is typically active during the implementation phase of a project
• Documenting a proposed process for the organizational change required to support the recommended strategy

SKILLS

 Problem-Solving Skills
 Analytical Thinking Skills
 Leadership & Team Based Skills
 Business Judgment
 Communication Skills
 Project Management
 Professionalism

4-YEAR PLAN FOR CONSULTING

Freshman year
Assess
• Identify how your interests, values, and skills align with career options by taking a career assessment, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or Strong Interest Inventory.

Explore
• Get involved in one or two student organizations to explore your interests.
• Take diverse coursework and talk with different academic departments to explore interests and strengths
• Speak with upperclassman you know pursuing careers in consulting to learn about the process

Decide
• Research summer opportunities that will support specific skill development for a career as a consultant

Act
• Convert your high school résumé into a professional document and upload it to CareerCat.
• Create a LinkedIn profile and build your network by requesting connections with personal and academic contacts.
• Pursue summer opportunities with targeted résumés and cover letters.
• Attend early identification programs sponsored by consulting firms

Sophomore year
Assess
- Meet with a career counselor to better articulate your skills, values, and interests.
- Begin to develop a career narrative and professional introduction.

Explore
- Use LinkedIn and Our Northwestern to view profiles of alumni who studied your major and work in consulting.
- Conduct one or two informational interviews each quarter with personal contacts, Northwestern alumni, or industry experts.
- Increase your leadership experience in student organizations by chairing a committee, initiating a project, or running for office.

Decide
- Decide on summer opportunities to pursue.
- Narrow down and decide on academic major(s), minor(s), and certificate program(s); meet with University Academic Advising if you are considering an interschool transfer.

Act
- Update your résumé in CareerCat.
- Participate in the Consulting Bootcamp Program during spring quarter.
- Update your LinkedIn profile and connect with new contacts.
- Participate in career fairs to connect with specific firms and learn about early identification programs.
- Apply for summer internships using targeted résumés and cover letters.

Junior year
Assess
Explore
- Research organizations and discriminating between their cultures and work specialities
- Evaluate summer internship options and application timelines

Decide
- Identify employers to pursue
- Consider alternative summer plans

Act
- Prepare for case interview and behavioral interview
- Continue to network with Northwestern alumni using the LinkedIn alumni tool.
- Strategically participate in recruitment events

Senior year
Assess
- Reflect on your summer experience and what you learned

Explore
- Expand your knowledge of specific consulting opportunities and examine work settings
- Engage in networking at employer information sessions, coffee chats, career fairs, etc.

Decide
- Identify employers to pursue based on the perceived cultural fit and skill set requirement
- If applicable, consider full-time employment offer from summer internship experience
- Attend career fairs to make full-time employment connections with specific employers.
Apply for full-time positions as early as possible and tailor cover letters to each company and position.
Follow up with employer contacts from past career fairs, information sessions, and informational interviews.
Strengthen your interviewing skills by practicing case interviews with partners and meeting with your assigned advisor for a behavioral mock interview.

**RECRUITMENT DETAILS**

How Consulting Recruitment is Unique
Case Interviewing
Cases are usually scenario-based, problem-solving activities designed to uncover competencies along various dimensions. This style of interviewing requires candidates to work through business cases similar to those they may face as a consultant.

Networking
While networking is important across all industries, this is especially true for consulting. Successful candidates invested more time networking with consultants through formalized coffee chats and informal phone calls or meetings. It is important to start this process early so once the official recruitment season starts, you already have engaged with the firm and it is a matter of re-engaging with them.

Consulting Entry Points
The power of a consulting organization is their people. They use very organized processes for their recruitment and typically work through career services offices. This often requires that a student be available to participate in OnCampus Recruitment activities and interviews. In addition, consulting opportunities at the entry level beyond formalized recruitment are very rare.

**Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Recruitment: Networking Opps (group &amp; individual)</th>
<th>Recruitment: Career Fair, Info Session, &amp; Workshops</th>
<th>Application/Interviews</th>
<th>Offer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Time</strong></td>
<td>Spring &amp; Summer Prior to Graduation</td>
<td>Early October</td>
<td>Early - Mid October</td>
<td>Late October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internship</strong></td>
<td>Fall of Junior Year</td>
<td>Early – Mid January</td>
<td>January – February</td>
<td>Late February</td>
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**What to Expect**
First Round Interview
- Pre-Interview event
Conducted on-campus via On-Campus Recruitment
Two 30 minute interviews:
1 case & 1 fit OR 2 cases

Second Round Interview
Conducted at employer site
Half – full day
3-5 interviews:
combination of case and fit
Panel/Tour/Lunch

Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firms that Recruit at Northwestern</th>
<th>Position Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McKinsey and Co.</td>
<td>Business Analyst</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bain and Co.</td>
<td>Associate Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Boston Consulting Group</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deloitte*</td>
<td>Business Analyst</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy &amp;</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.E.K.</td>
<td>Associate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pricewaterhouse Coopers*</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZS Associates</td>
<td>Business Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egon Zehnder</td>
<td>Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accenture*</td>
<td>Consulting Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bates White Economic Consulting</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oliver Wyman</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treacy Consulting</td>
<td>Analyst</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTI Consulting</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navigant Consulting</td>
<td>Associate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mercer</td>
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</tbody>
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*denotes University Career Services Sponsor

NU-SPECIFIC

Consulting Specific Student Groups
ISBE Analytics (Institute for Student Business Education) - Working with multiple clients each quarter, ISBE Analytics conducts campus-wide surveys to gain insight about social trends, researches the student body’s satisfaction with various Northwestern services, and investigates other issues important to Northwestern students.

CASE (Consultants Advising Student Enterprises) - a student organization at Northwestern University dedicated to providing pro bono consulting advice to Northwestern-based organizations.
SCNO (Students Consulting for NonProfit Organizations)- A community service organization that provides free strategic consulting services to local non-profits.

NCS (Northwestern Career Sponsors) – Open to juniors, Northwestern Career Sponsors provides a senior mentor to support your pursuits of a consulting or financial services career.

**NU Classes**
SESP 295-0: Theory and Practice of Community Consulting
Campus Catalyst (BIP)
Courses from the following academic disciplines can help develop a foundation of skills to use in consulting organizations: Economics, Business Institutions Program, Industrial Engineering, Integrated Marketing and Communications, Learning Organizational Change

**Resources**
CONSULTING FOCUSED
- The McKinsey Way
- The Boston Consulting Group On Strategy
- Where Value Hides

BUSINESS ACUMEN
- The Economist
- Business Week
- Fortune
- Wall Street Journal

CASE PREPARATION
- Case in Point
- Crack the Case
- How to Get into the Top Consulting Firms
- Say It With Charts

**ALTERNATIVES TO CONSULTING CAREERS**
Consulting is a competitive industry to break into. Pursue your search with gusto, but be prepared to consider alternative opportunities. Other industries that align with the skill sets used in consulting include:

- Analytics
- Corporate
- Marketing
- Market Research
- Start Ups