

# Is consulting right for you?

## The Salo Guide

- I wish I could break free from my job and office politics.
- I wish I had more time for family and friends.
- I want new challenges and more interesting work.
- I want to use my skills to make a bigger impact.
- I want a job that fits around my life, instead of fitting my life around my job.

Could consulting be right for me?



### Considering consulting? You're in the right place!

At Salo, we match consultants in finance, accounting, and HR with organizations that need their expertise. As a result, we meet with hundreds of people each year who are just like you—contemplating the switch from a traditional job to a consulting career.

Consulting has a lot of advantages, such as flexibility, variety, exciting projects, and new experiences. But as enticing as consulting sounds, we know taking a leap into the unknown isn't easy. For many people—especially those in traditional job functions like finance, accounting, and HR—walking away from a “good corporate job” is daunting (even if you don't really like your job).

### This guide will get you started

Our guide is designed to make considering consulting less intimidating. We've organized the guide around the three types of questions prospective consultants ask most:

- **Emotional considerations:** Am I consultant material?
- **Financial considerations:** Can I support my lifestyle as a consultant?
- **Professional considerations:** Will consulting help me reach my career goals?

Different people have different priorities, so pick the section that intrigues (or worries) you the most and start there!



# Emotional Considerations

Focus on what's important to you



When it comes to the emotional aspects of considering consulting, two questions matter the most:

1. Is consulting right for me?
2. Am I right for consulting?

Let's tackle them both.

## 1 Is consulting right for me?

Ultimately your career choice needs to match your values and life priorities. It's no secret that there are trade-offs when you choose consulting over a traditional, full-time position, especially when you're just starting out. But being able to venture into a new career as an expert—a solo practitioner—can be invigorating for people who have spent their past careers in traditional roles.

To find out if consulting is right for you, start by asking yourself, “*Why am I interested in consulting in the first place?*” or “*How would consulting improve my life?*” You're on the right track if you're looking for:

- Flexibility—choosing when, where, and how much I work
- Changing my work/life balance or spending more time with family/friends
- Focusing on the kind of work I love
- Choosing projects that help me build my skillset and resume
- Getting new experiences and building new relationships

Then ask yourself if you're ok with:

- A level of ambiguity around your work and finances
- Not having prestigious long-term position or a high-status job title
- Marketing and selling yourself and your skills
- Changing locations and teammates regularly

We often find that once people have been consulting for a while, they feel more fulfilled in their careers. More importantly, they have a stronger understanding of what truly matters to them. Some people decide they prefer a full-time role. Others determine that the freedom, flexibility, and engaging consulting projects outweigh any corporate-employee perks. Either way, most report that consulting has enriched their professional profiles and provided valuable experience.

### ACTIVITY

#### WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU

Create a hashmark on each line. If your answers skew toward the left, consulting might be right for you.

Flexibility	Predictability
_____	_____
Ambiguity	Certainty
_____	_____
Self-direction	Guidance
_____	_____
Variety	Consistency
_____	_____
Independence	Belonging
_____	_____



## 2 Am I right for consulting?

If you're wondering, "Do I have what it takes to be a consultant?" You're not alone. Almost every prospective consultant asks that at some point. Sure, there will be a learning curve as you start consulting, but that's true in any new job. At Salo, we focus on senior professionals with finance, accounting, or HR experience; but there is a wide variety of consulting opportunities for all kinds of skillsets.

### Qualifications for the job

When you're a consultant, there's no defined job description—each engagement is different. To be a successful consultant, you'll need to be a:

- **Problem solver:** Consulting is all about solving business challenges. Clients will depend on you to move their business forward in innovative ways. The reward? You'll know your work helped the client thrive.
  - **Subject matter expert:** Clients will expect you to bring the knowledge—literally. Every day you'll share your skills, past experiences, and best practices with the client team. And, unlike traditional roles (where senior experts are managers), you'll get to do the juicy jobs yourself.\*
  - **Adaptable advisor:** At client organizations, you'll encounter new types of leadership, technologies, collaboration methods, ever-changing requirements, and unexpected obstacles. You'll have to figure out how to make a difference in each environment.
  - **Driven learner:** The best consultants are curious and voracious learners—continuously and intentionally learning new skills, building new competencies, and gaining new experiences.
  - **Fast relationship-builder:** As a consultant, it's essential to quickly build trust and credibility with key members of the client organization. Once you demonstrate your value to the team and start collaborating, the real magic happens.
- \*There are consulting gigs that include managing a team, but it's not the same as nurturing a team consistently over time.*

### What if I've never been a consultant before?

Clients love consultants with prior full-time experience. If you've spent your career "on the inside," you've likely acquired a wide range of technical skills—and people skills—required to succeed in similar environments. Those experiences will make you a better consultant.



### CONSULTANT SPOTLIGHT:

When doctors found early-stage cancerous cells in a CFO's lungs, it made her think about what to do with her life. After spending her career in finance, she wanted to explore more options. When she learned about consulting, she thought it was a great idea, but was unsure about giving up a guaranteed salary and benefits. But her entrepreneur fiancé urged her to give it a try. Years later, she is cancer-free and enjoying a rewarding consulting career.



## Emotional considerations: Focus on what's important to you

### ACTIVITY

#### BUILD YOUR SALES STORY

Thinking about rewarding or “peak” work experiences from your past can help you craft your sales pitch—the way you explain your skills, experience, and the impact you can make to clients. In each of your last three jobs or roles, what were the most rewarding projects or experiences you had? Find common threads between these peak experiences to create a compelling story.

Job/role 1

Peak experience	What made it rewarding for you?	How did it help the organization?

Job/role 2

Peak experience	What made it rewarding for you?	How did it help the organization?

Job/role 3

Peak experience	What made it rewarding for you?	How did it help the organization?

Have peak experiences outside of work (e.g., volunteering or board work)? Note those here:



# Financial Considerations

It's time to reimagine career stability



Let's face it, no matter how much you like your job, the primary reason you go to work is to get paid. Whether you need to support your family or your international travel habit, compensation is critical. Luckily, consulting is a financially rewarding choice for experienced professionals. Let's take a few minutes to cover all the basics about consulting and finances.

## Salary:

**Yes, you can make the same as a full-time job (maybe more)**

For highly skilled professionals, working as a consultant often brings higher pay than traditional employment. Many Salo consultants—senior experts in HR, finance, and accounting—say their pay and benefits at Salo exceed their compensation at previous permanent roles. However, it's important to remember that the more you work, the more you make. If you plan to take off a couple months of the year, your salary will reflect it. Be sure to incorporate planned time away and some unplanned downtime between projects when creating your financial goals.

## Benefits:

**There are lots of ways to get benefits**

At Salo, we treat our consultants like full-time employees, offering benefits like health insurance, 401(k) retirement plans, and paid time off. And, there are the added benefits of consulting—like the ability to take summers off if you want. (One of our consultants took a whole year off to take care of his newborn daughter, then jumped back in right where he left off!)

Even if you're not with a talent firm like Salo, there are ways to get coverage. Maybe you have a spouse or partner who can add you to their plan. Or, with a little research, you can find a plan from the government or a private insurer.

## Job security:

**The need for consultants is skyrocketing**

As the last few years have shown us, no company or career is 100 percent safe. Companies can restructure or reduce jobs at any time. With offshoring, outsourcing, and relying on contractors; companies are increasingly reliant on running their business with fewer full-time employees—and more outside experts.

In fact, even before the pandemic, professionals who made more than \$100,000 a year were the fastest-growing part of the gig economy.<sup>1</sup> In the post-pandemic world—with its skilled talent shortages and the need for agile teams—skilled consulting is growing even faster. Finally, as an independent consultant, you're the boss. You make the rules—you get to choose when, where, and how much you work.

## Finding clients:

**You'll have to do some marketing (hint: Salo can help)**

All consultants need to market themselves. The more people know about your skills and experience, the more interesting (and plentiful) your engagements will be. There are lots of ways to market yourself—from LinkedIn posts to industry networking.

Marketing is one of the biggest advantages of working with a talent firm, like Salo. It's one of the quickest and most reliable ways to get a network of clients. Finding work for consultants is what we do. We have the connections, processes, and marketing engine to help you find work you enjoy.

1. PYMNTS.com, Gig Economy Index, April 2019





# Professional Considerations

Don't just advance your career, accelerate it



We get it, you're a go-getter. (We like that about you.) Your career is an important part of your life and identity. Chances are you have questions about what consulting is like and how consulting will impact your career/future career prospects. We've got answers.

## What's consulting like?

Every consulting career is different because every consultant has the power to choose the projects they take on. When you're a consultant, you're in charge!

## What kind of work would I do?

This depends on your skillset, preferences, and goals. Only one thing is certain: variety. You could have a variety of project types, industries, organizational structures, or all of the above. You get to tailor the work to your interests.

## How will I find clients?

There are lots of ways to market yourself—from LinkedIn posts and industry networking. But one of the quickest and most reliable ways to grow your client pipeline is working with a talent firm like Salo. Finding work for consultants is what talent firms do. We have the connections, processes, and marketing engine to help you find work you enjoy.

## Will I have to do [insert something you don't like]?

As a consultant, you only need to take on engagements that fit your specific preferences. You set the rules and choose the projects. So, if you don't want to [go an office/work on Fridays/work full time /wear a suit/whatever else], you don't have to. While not every client will be able to accommodate your specific needs, many clients are flexible as long as a consultant has the right skills and gels with their team.

## Will I have to travel a lot?

Assuming you live in a metropolitan area, there are usually consulting opportunities close to home. If you want to travel, those jobs are out there, too. You just need to decide how much travel works for your lifestyle. Also, many consultants work remotely.



## How will consulting impact my career?

When it comes to finding a job, appearances are important. So, how does consulting appear to employers? Most think it's great. Being a successful consultant requires a host of hard and soft skills that are coveted in the workplace. Still anxious? Keep reading.

## How is consulting perceived in the marketplace?

Many professional consultants are at the top end of the talent pool. With such sought-after skills, organizations want the pros' help however they can get it. Each consulting project adds new knowledge and systems to a consultant's background—increasing their value with each new experience. This leads to higher career satisfaction (and it's a win for their clients, too).

## What if I want a full-time position after consulting?

Being a consultant can be a high-growth opportunity for skilled workers—making them more valuable to (permanent or contingent) employers. Because you'll experience a variety of organizations and industries; you'll acquire the versatility today's companies want most in diverse environments—making you a well-rounded candidate for future roles.

## If I want a permanent role after I consult, who will give me references?

You'll have contacts from all of the organizations you worked for as a consultant. You can decide which past clients to ask for references based on the job you're trying to get. Additionally, if you work with a talent firm like Salo, the internal staff can vouch for your work. (And, the best part is, you won't even have to hide the job interviews from a current employer.)

## How it works at Salo

What types of consultants does Salo hire?

Finance, accounting, and HR professionals with more than 10 years of experience.

Do consultants get benefits while they work?

Yes, health, dental, paid time off, and more.

Is there downtime during the year?

Most likely a little bit. Plan for it and enjoy it!

Can you also work with other agencies or have your own consulting business?

Yes, many consultants do.

How long do projects last?

An average of 3-6 months, but they can be anywhere from a week to two years.

Are part-time or fractional projects available?

Yes, all the time.

Can I work remotely?

Yes, in many cases.

What geographic areas does Salo serve?

Everywhere in the United States.



## CONSULTANT SPOTLIGHT:

One Salo consultant said, "Consulting is full of built-in challenges that allow me to leverage my experience and skillset in a different way, and for many different companies. I find excitement in quickly getting up to speed on a project and bringing the best value to the client. Consulting also provides constant development, which my previous roles lacked."



# A new career is waiting for you

So, after answering all those questions, what's the verdict?  
Do you think consulting might be for you?

If so—and you're a finance, accounting, or HR professional—[connect with us at Salo](#).  
We'd love to learn more about your career goals and answer any further questions you  
have about consulting!

We can't wait to see what's next for your career!

Salo is a nationwide talent firm that's focused on building a world that works better together. When we match a talent expert in finance, accounting, and HR with an organization—we propel both forward. We call these interactions “Meaningful Experiences™.” With every interaction or engagement, it's our goal to Make it Meaningful™.

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