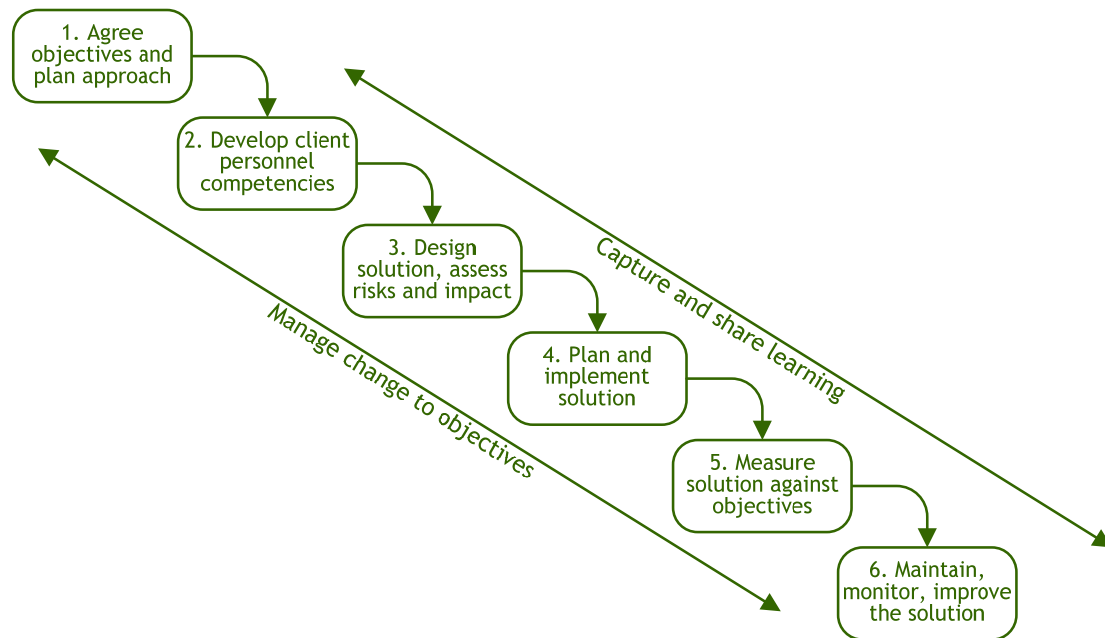# BPIU *Made to measure* Consultancy

All consulting projects differ from one another but the underlying process to achieve a successful outcome is usually the same. Our approach to consulting is based on the following 6 basic steps:

1. An identified need which flows into an agreed client objective

Fundamental to a successful consultancy project is to have a very clear client objective for the project and if possible a single objective. Multiple objectives can raise conflicts between objectives and may cause compromises which jeopardise the successful outcome of the project.

It is also important for the consultant to have a clear and transparent objective for the project, for example

- to deliver a successful outcome for the client
- to ensure that the client does not need to rely on the consultant once the project has been completed

It is also important to agree and plan the approach to achieving a successful outcome for the project. From our experience for a solution to work and remain in place after the consultant has left site, the solution must be designed by the client personnel with coaching from the consultant. This means that most consultancy projects will need to be supplemented with training for client personnel and often client top management.

Within the project objective will be an agreed time scale and budget for completion of the project.

2. The development of client personnel competencies if appropriate

For client personnel to develop appropriate solutions, with the support of the consultant coach, any necessary training must identified and agreed. Often it is possible to combine training with developing actual material that will form part of the solution, for example in the design and management of risk of business processes.

Our range of training solutions allows us to training client personnel under almost all needs and eventualities.

3. The design, assess risks and impact of the solution by client personnel supported by consultant

This is perhaps the most difficult concept for a client to comprehend as often the reason to seek help from a consultant is the lack of own resources in terms of personnel with the correct competencies.

However it is one of the most important factors in ensuring the success of a project, refer to reasons why management system projects fail below, and although it may seem to be a more expensive way to tackle the need in the long run it will always turn out to be the cheaper solution and will ensure the client is not forever dependant on the consultant.

This approach has three very beneficial aspects. Firstly it up-skills client personnel giving them the confidence to take the right decisions; secondly it ensures that the solution is created by personnel who have an in-depth knowledge of the problem and thirdly it creates ownership of the solution by those who will have to live and work with it.

The assessment of risks and impact of any solution is a fundamental part of any change project as it is clearly not in the client's interest to simply move the problem to another part of their organisation.
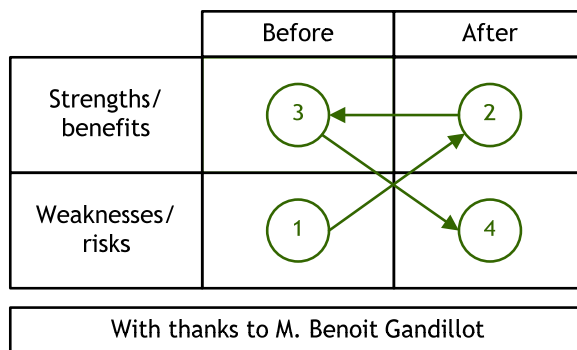
4. Plan and implement the solution

In most cases the deployment or implementation of the solution needs careful planning and if it effects the way of working it may require the training of personnel in new ways of working. It may also be necessary to assess any likely resistance to the solution or new ways of working and plan techniques to mitigate such resistance.

Change can often be effectively achieved by:

1. Explaining the weaknesses in the current approach
2. Demonstrating the strengths and benefits that the solution will deliver after implementation
3. Reminding people of the strengths and benefits of the original approach
4. And accepting that there may still be weaknesses after the solution has been implemented and thy need to be identified and addresses

This can be usefully set out in the following diagram:

	Before	After
Strengths/ benefits	3	2
Weaknesses/ risks	1	4
With thanks to M. Benoit Gandillot		

5. Measure the solution against project objectives

Following the successful implementation of an improvement project there is a widespread tendency to sit back and congratulate ourselves on our achievement and to completely forget what our original object was.

It is, of course, an important part of any project to measure the outcome against the original objective to ensure that it has been met or exceeded.

6. The maintenance, monitoring and, if applicable, the improvement of the solution by client personnel.

Most improvement projects require some level of maintenance by client personnel and perhaps, more importantly, the monitoring of the ongoing outcomes to ensure they remain consistent with the project objectives.

As a result of this monitoring and perhaps also the activities of step 5 it may be necessary to improve the solution and the same attention to detail as was given the original solution must be given to any improvements that are proposed.

The management of change to project objectives

For various reasons and at different stages of the project, the objectives may be changed. Such changes must be carefully assessed and managed to ensure a successful outcome.

Capture and share learning across the client organisation, as applicable

There is a tendency for improvement projects to be conducted in a *silo* environment and without the realisation that valuable learning has been created which might be useful to other parts of the client organisation.

Throughout the project attention must be paid to who else might benefit within the organisation from what has been learnt and communication channels established.

Why management system design and improvement projects fail

All projects relating to the design or the improvement of a management system must be based on the knowledge of why management systems fail.

Management system design and improvement projects fail for a variety of reasons and it is important that any project recognises the primary reasons for potential failure and takes them into account. From observation of management system failure over the last 45 years we have concluded that the following reasons are the most prevalent:

1. The management system is not designed *to be used by managers and process owners*

2. The management system is not used to manage the way we deliver our organisational objectives

3. Top management do not understand the value of systems management and therefore are not committed to nor use the management system

4. Business processes are not designed by managers and process owners resulting in lack of ownership

5. Documents are created that muddle *process* and *instruction* thus creating long and complex documents that are unusable

6. The system is referred to as the 'quality management system' rather than the 'management system' giving the impression that quality is something outside the management system and is done by 'quality'.

7. There is inadequate deployment of the system leading to lack of use and understanding of requirements

8. A *blame and culprit* culture will divert an organisation's creative energies towards self-protection rather than improving the way we work

9. If there is no accountability to work within the management system it may simply be ignored

So for any consulting project to have a long term effect it must address these potential modes of failure.