

# Using B-Schools as consultants

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Think of B-schools and one conjures up images of sprawling campuses and its lush green lawns, bustling quadrangles, with bright young students strolling or dotting the landscape in clusters, chatting, laughing or busy reading up. Yet, behind this all lies a more important element. The faculty which drives these places of learning; one where scholars are groomed to take on the world's competition.

In India, as well as globally, B-schools are under pressure to follow the research paradigm in the development of knowledge and insights for dissemination in the classroom. But academicians also know that the true test of their research and knowledge comes from actual real-life experiences. No wonder then that we speak of three cornerstones of a B-School professor's competence – teaching, consulting and research – which when balanced out create the holy trinity of knowledge and wisdom that works.

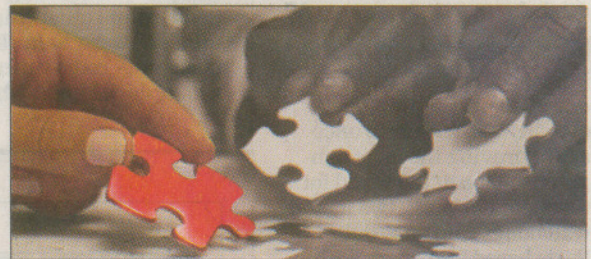
Nandan Nilekani of Infosys was heard saying that "The text books in management are right!" Academics would no doubt agree, even more so consultant academics who try to take the implementation of management processes and strategy closer to the ideals as in text books: ideals that strive

for conceptual clarity, for the perfection of logic and common sense and for practicing of that which is preached.

It is a vast knowledge base ranging from management strategy and practice to specialist knowledge domains that these professors bring with them. This in effect has a trickle down effect in implementation. They educate, train, contribute, add value and grow their client systems. And then it's no surprise that things actually get better!

The standards of consulting are getting increasingly stringent globally. And the professors are increasingly getting their acts together. Consulting projects from B-school faculty are meeting the increasingly higher standards demanded by the global customer.

There's an added advantage for B-school consulting too. The professors have access to a highly intelligent student base. It is no rare sight where student groups have been the significant element in executing a project. This is a win-win situation for all. The client gets some of the best brains in the business with no major monetary tag attached, and the professor benefits as he is able to take on large consulting projects. The students too are exposed to learning opportunities about real-life organisations, thereby enhancing industry exposure. And, they make a little money on side.



What then of the consulting majors? There is more to it than meets the eye. Though B-school consulting is at a nascent stage, it holds great potential; the finer touches it gives makes it an added advantage. Take a professional consulting firm, the chances are that it has a methodology which is often a canned solutions approach – one with a 'one size fits all' assumption. This has its limitations. The advantage that academicians bring is that the methodology is more custom-tailored and takes full benefit of latest developments in the domain. It also unveils a multi-pronged approach. To sum up, it's simply not a case of readmade solutions to force fit on to organisational problems, but a holistic approach.

The next time you need a consultant, think twice. Maybe it's time to make a baseline for the nearest B-school.

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