

# Skill Development for Consultancies

## *A Step-by-Step Guide*

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### **Contents**

Introduction .....	2
Step 1: Define Capabilities Needed to Deliver Your Strategy.....	2
Step 2: Define Role Expectations and Career Paths.....	3
Step 3: Measure Current Skill Gaps and Identify Priorities .....	4
Step 4: Develop a Training Plan .....	5
Continuous Improvement.....	6
Example Workplan for Skill Development Implementation.....	7
Continuous Improvement Framework .....	8

## Introduction

Developing the skills of your consultants is crucial for delivering exceptional client value and achieving business growth. This guide provides a comprehensive approach to creating a robust skill development pathway for boutique consulting firms with around 100 employees.

## Step 1: Define Capabilities Needed to Deliver Your Strategy

**Objective:** Identify the critical capabilities your firm needs to excel and differentiate itself in the market.

**Actions:**

1. Review Strategic Objectives:

- Understand the firm's vision and strategic goals.
- Identify key client needs and service offerings.

2. Identify Critical Capabilities:

- Determine the skills and behaviors necessary to achieve strategic goals.
- Focus on core consulting skills, client delivery, business operations, and business development.

### Example: Identifying Critical Capabilities

For a consultancy focused on digital transformation, the critical capabilities might include:

- Technical Expertise: Proficiency in emerging technologies like AI and blockchain.
- Client Relationship Management: Building and maintaining strong client relationships.
- Project Management: Delivering projects on time and within budget.
- Analytical Skills: Using data analytics to drive insights and solutions.

## Step 2: Define Role Expectations and Career Paths

**Objective:** Establish clear expectations for each role and create flexible career paths that align with both firm needs and individual aspirations.

### Actions:

#### 1. Define Role Expectations:

- Detail the responsibilities and expected skill levels for each role from Analyst to Partner.
- Use a competency matrix to map out skills required at different levels (Base, Good, Excellent, Master).

#### 2. Create Career Paths:

- Develop career paths that accommodate different strengths and career aspirations (e.g., technical, client-facing, operational).
- Ensure paths are flexible and allow for lateral movements based on interests and firm needs.

### Example: Creating a Competency Matrix

Role	Writing & Communications	Analytical Execution	Project Management	Client Relationship Management
Analyst	Base	Good	Base	Base
Consultant	Good	Excellent	Good	Good
Senior Consultant	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Manager	Excellent	Master	Excellent	Excellent
Partner	Master	Master	Master	Master

### **Step 3: Measure Current Skill Gaps and Identify Priorities**

**Objective:** Assess the current skill levels within the firm and identify areas for improvement.

**Actions:**

1. Conduct Skill Assessments:

- Use performance review tools and processes to gather baseline data.
- Perform assessments at firm-wide, peer group, and individual levels.

2. Identify Skill Gaps:

- Analyse assessment results to pinpoint priority skill gaps.
- Focus on gaps that are critical for achieving strategic objectives.

**Example: Conducting a Skill Assessment**

A mid-year review might reveal that while the team excels in technical expertise, there are gaps in project management and client relationship management. This could be addressed by targeted training and coaching in these areas.

## Step 4: Develop a Training Plan

**Objective:** Create a structured plan to address skill gaps through a combination of training, coaching, and on-the-job experience.

**Actions:**

1. Design Training Curriculum:

- Develop a curriculum tailored to different roles and career paths.
- Include formal training sessions, coaching, and real-world project experience.

2. Create an Annual Training Calendar:

- Schedule training sessions, workshops, and coaching engagements.
- Ensure the calendar aligns with project timelines and business cycles.

3. Implement Training Programs:

- Utilize both internal and external trainers.
- Provide structured self-directed learning opportunities.

### **Example: Designing a Training Curriculum**

For a Senior Consultant aiming to become a Manager:

- Technical Training: Advanced data analytics tools.
- Project Management: Certification in PMP or Prince2.
- Leadership Skills: Workshops on team management and client negotiation.
- On-the-Job Experience: Leading a high-impact project under the mentorship of a senior leader.

## Continuous Improvement

**Objective:** Ensure the training program remains relevant and effective through regular reviews and updates.

**Actions:**

1. Conduct Regular Reviews:

- Review training effectiveness bi-annually.
- Gather feedback from participants and trainers.

2. Update Training Programs:

- Adjust the curriculum based on feedback and changing business needs.
- Introduce new training methods and technologies as appropriate.

### **Example: Conducting Regular Reviews**

Post-training surveys and feedback sessions can help identify areas for improvement. For instance, if participants find a particular workshop less engaging, it can be restructured or replaced with a more interactive format.

## Example Workplan for Skill Development Implementation

### **Week 1-2: Initial Workshops**

- Brainstorm critical capabilities and finalize the capability structure.
- Introduce the development of the expertise matrix.

### **Week 3-6: Competency Matrix and Career Paths**

- Define role expectations and map out career paths.
- Update review processes and create templates for assessments.

### **Week 7-9: Skill Gap Analysis**

- Conduct firm-wide skill assessments and analyze results.
- Identify priority skill gaps and finalize the training curriculum.

### **Week 10-12: Finalize Training Plan**

- Develop detailed training plans and schedule annual training activities.
- Implement training programs and set up ongoing coaching sessions.

## Continuous Improvement Framework

**Objective:** Embed a culture of continuous improvement to sustain skill development efforts.

**Actions:**

1. Regular Feedback Loops:

- Implement structured feedback mechanisms to continuously refine training programs.
- Conduct focus groups and interviews with consultants to gather in-depth insights.

2. Performance Metrics:

- Define and track key performance indicators (KPIs) for training effectiveness.
- Use metrics such as training completion rates, improvement in skill assessments, and impact on project outcomes.