

Jim's Profit Accelerator 55: How to Choose a Consultant

Hank Haney, a veteran golf consultant, has 119,000-plus Twitter followers. His clients include Tiger Woods, who engaged Haney a number of times to help improve his swing. Haney has written a book about what made Tiger great and why he fell apart. Before all of that he was an all-conference golfer with a four-year golf scholarship to Tulsa University. The 200-plus touring professional golfers he's coached are part of the group that has won every major championship in professional, amateur, and junior golf. So Haney probably knows his stuff.

Here are the rules for successfully choosing a consultant:

Rule 1—Follow the Haney Rule: Choose someone whose students have been successful.

Rule 2—Look for skills that are broad and deep. Haney is skilled in all elements of the game, and focuses deeply on swing improvement.

- Avoid the siren of depth, which may miss the fulcrum of powerful change.
- Breadth provides the vital skill of sorting opportunity from daily noise. Once the opportunity is defined, depth is essential to successfully mine that opportunity.
- Financial analysis can be important, but if sales are down, the answer likely will appear from a skilled marketing and sales expert, not a CPA. And clearly if tax treatment is the opportunity, your marketing expert can't help much.

Rule 3—Use your gut. If success requires you to work personally with the consultant, or if your culture will be impacted, choose someone that you look forward to being with. There's a reason that you don't wear that shirt that's been hanging in your closet—it just doesn't feel right.

SPEED BUMP: Trust is the engine of improvement, and we usually don't trust folks we don't like.

Rule 4—Look for wisdom, not just skill. Wisdom comes from doing the work with success and failure. Consultants and coaches who understand but haven't played should be avoided. For most organization opportunities, the power is in finding a solution that can be implemented quickly, with the existing organization. There is a reason that almost all successful sports coaches played the game before they coached.

Rule 5—Avoid hourly billing. It's unethical and wasteful. It may also delay results.

- It's unethical because it forces conflicting goals: you want answers sooner, and the consultant wants a bit more time.
- It's wasteful because it focuses on activity (inputs) instead of results (output).

Rule 6—Avoid deliverables. Typical deliverables (studies, write-ups, analyses) can be interesting, and may suggest action. Until they are replaced by activity in your organization (not plans, actions), they trade an illusion of action for real change.

SPEED BUMP: Baseball hitters are measured by number of hits, not number of tries.

Rule 7—Include the minimums for success. Any consultant's work should include one or both of the fundamentals below. If it doesn't, move on. The fundamental payoffs:

- Improved profit.
- Improved personal performance.
- Sometimes personal performance can improve with therapy added on to performance coaching. They are always different, requiring different motivation and skills. Beware of consultants who claim to do both.

Rule 8—Look for user-easy tools. If your consultant's tools are obtuse, it's unlikely you'll try them long enough to master them. A consultant should be like a good physician instead of a professor: Both have broad knowledge, but usually you want action, not just information. Adaptive prescribing (what will help the patient now) is crucial, and rare.

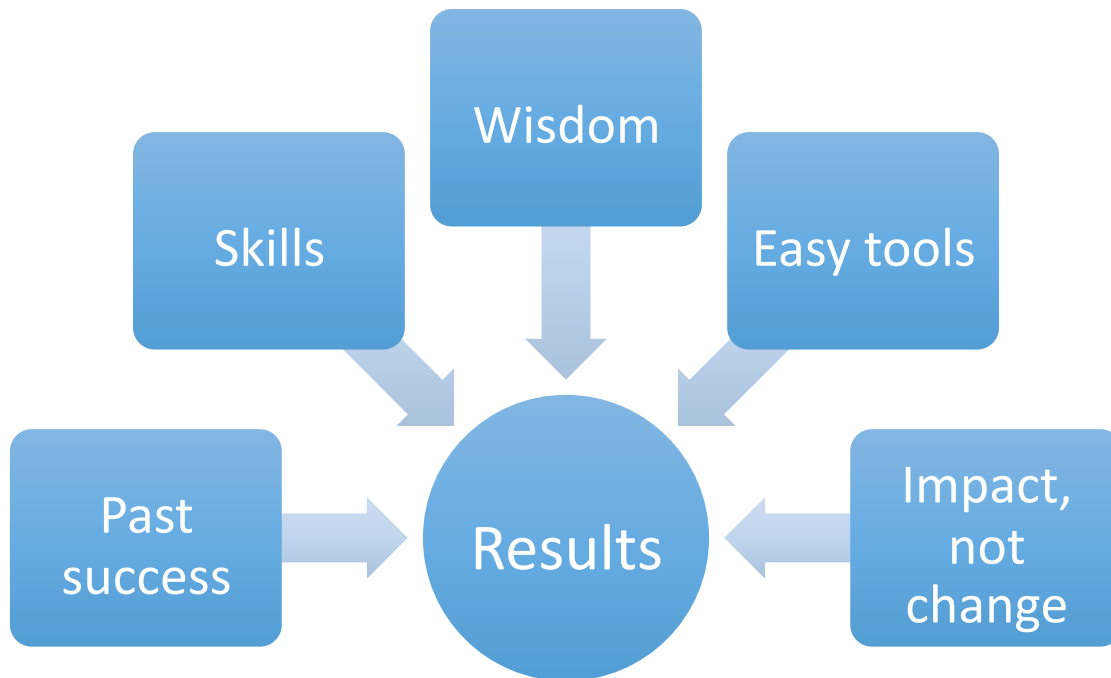
Rule 9—Look for impact, not just change. Impact often comes from fresh insight woven into an action matrix that your teams can apply for quick results. If your best mid-level manager rolls her eyes, ask her why. She either sees empty change, or she doesn't understand your brilliant initiative.

Rule 10—Ask the power questions.

- Why now?
- Why this person?
- Why this initiative?

SPEED BUMP: Business is like a golf swing: "Nobody has a perfect swing."*

Rule 11—Expect resistance. The main reason change is hard is that it's a shove into the darkness. A few love the challenge, like you. Most want limited risk instead of the thrill of the hunt. Master the resistance by demonstrating a clear initial path, instead of arguing about the merits of the journey. There's a reason that CEOs are tasked with the vision thing.



Oh, the rest of the Haney story: If you tweet Haney (@HankDHaney) a short video of you hitting a golf ball, Haney will tweet one or two brief, pointed suggestions to you. That's why he has 119,000 followers—it's a way to be coached by Tiger's coach.

ACCELERANT: If you'd tweet Haney to improve your golf game, when will you get yourself a live consultant to boost your business results?

For more information on how you can accelerate revenues and profits in your business, please call or email me.

**(Hank Haney, WSJ 7/16/15 p. D6.)*

For more information, visit www.grewco.com.

Jim Grew is an expert in CEO-level strategy and executive leadership whose clients refer to him as the Business Defogger and Accelerator. Jim helps leaders swiftly discover the hidden opportunities within their businesses and exploit them for dramatic results. Nearly three decades of success as a COO and CEO coupled with his experience running nine thriving businesses provide the foundation for his consulting work as president of the Grew Company. He presents regularly to industry groups, mentors business leaders, and shares insights on his blog, BizBursts.com: <http://bizbursts.com/>. He holds BA and MBA degrees from Stanford University.

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