

**Q&A Column**  
**Author: Mark Swartz**

**Email Subject Line: Turning Your Expertise Into Consulting**

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**Headline: How Do I Become A Consultant?**

**Summary:**

Question: I have been working in sales for more than 15 years and have achieved way above average results. I know that there are all sorts of people out there putting on seminars, writing books and getting paid for sales training. My question is, how do I get started on this path, given that I'm so used to being an employee?

Akshay V., Vancouver, B.C.

**Landing Page copy**

**Headline: How Do I Become A Consultant?**

**Dear Mark,**

Question: I have been working in sales for more than 15 years and have achieved way above average results. People are always telling me that I should start to teach others how to sell the way I do. I'm starting to pay attention. I mean, there are all sorts of people out there putting on seminars, writing books and getting paid for sales training. My question is, how do I get started on this path, given that I'm so used to being an employee?

Akshay V., Vancouver, B.C.

**Dear Akshay,**

It can be incredibly tempting to contemplate a life of consulting, especially when you see what some companies are sometimes willing to pay outside "experts" to come in and give their sage advice, be it on increasing sales effectiveness, team building, leadership, or whatever the problem du jour is.

Before you quit your day job, however, you might want to ask yourself if you're suited for this kind of career path. Some questions to consider:

- Do I have proven expertise in an area that people or employers are willing to pay for?
- Do I enjoy marketing myself to others?
- Is a 'feast or famine' cash flow situation manageable for me?
- Do I have a customer service mentality and the ability to run my own operation?

If you've answered "yes" to all of the above, you may just have what it takes to do well as a consultant. Because as anyone who is making money this way can tell you, it's not merely what you know; it's mainly about how you market yourself.

How to take the first few steps? How about writing an article in your area of specialization (e.g. sales, finance, information technology), and submitting it for publication to a relevant trade magazine, or to a website, that deals with your field?

Then check out any upcoming conferences or trade shows in your industry or profession. They often look for new speakers on topics of interest to their members. (Hint: if you aren't very experienced with speaking in public – which can be scary for many people – think about trying out Toastmasters to help you learn the fundamentals.) This will establish your credibility and get your name out there.

Of course you're going to need a website that promotes you as an expert. Nothing expensive or overly fancy, mind you. Just one that you can refer people to via your new business card and brochure (or the one page flyer that tells folks what you do).

Then it's a matter of contacting potential clients and pitching for their business. One great way to get your first paying gig: stay in contact with the employer you're leaving, and try to have them hire you for an initial consulting engagement. Put on a seminar, create a manual for them, or work with their staff one on one. Whatever it is they pay you for, you can now tell others that you're in business!