

July, 2014

HOW TO SELECT AND UTILIZE A CONSULTANT MOST EFFECTIVELY

The management of any major corporation, closely held business or non-profit organization, continues to be a challenge in this lack-luster economy. And there are an unlimited number of consultants ready and willing to provide help. The problem often becomes selecting the best consultant for the situation and then utilizing the consultant effectively. Here are guidelines.

- 1. Define as clearly as you can the situation and what you want from a consultant.**
- 2. Develop a list of candidates.** Ask your own people, business associates, friends, accountants, attorneys bankers and even others in the same industry or field.
- 3. Interview several possibilities.** Discuss the situation and what you believe you need. If the consultant is interested, ask for their experience in similar situations, what the process and the end product would be and the estimated fee.
- 4. Obtain written proposals from those you are interested in.** Ask what your people must do and, what the fee would be, how it would be constructed and any expenses.
- 5. Check references by phone or in person. Never in writing.** The interview and the references checks are just as important as the written proposal. Regardless of what is in writing, you must feel that you and your people could work with the consultant.
- 6. Having made your selection, don't think you can sit back and wait for the consultant's report.** The consultant will need information and assistance from you and your people and a representative of management to be the contact and liaison.

After the project is complete and you have accepted the report or recommendations, consider using the consultant to assist in implementation and to review the results. Many clients have wasted the money they have spent or unfairly criticize the consultant by either implementing the recommendations poorly or not implementing them at all.

There are several other important points to keep in mind before bringing in a consultant.

- 1. Prepare yourself and your people for some change.** Consultants will usually cause changes in how things are being done. This is, however, why you retained the consultant.
- 2. Don't hire a consultant with the requirement that they agree with your previously arrived-at conclusions.** No worthwhile consultant would accept an engagement on those terms anyway.

We have provided strategic management and marketing counsel throughout the United States and parts of Canada for 40 years. Recent Communiques, as well as information about our services, are posted on our web site, www.robertdenney.com