



# Cultivating a Consulting Business Mindset



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## What is an ideal client?

When you are a consultant, you have to have the right knowledge and skills to be successful as a consultant. But you also need to right mindset to make good choices.

What is mindset? Mindset is your attitudes, beliefs, and habits of thinking. Essentially, it is how you've set your mind to look at the world around you and yourself in it.

Mindset matters tremendously to building a successful consulting business. It's not just about reducing stress or feeling better. It is about seeing the market for your consulting services and yourself in it clearly so you can take the right action.

The good news is that mindset can be changed! So if you have a mindset today that is getting in the way of your success, don't worry! You can do something about and get on the right track.

If you are like many new consultants, you may have two common mindset shifts you need to make:

- Getting comfortable with business development and selling what you do to clients
- Understanding that there is enough business out there for you and you can get it.

## Selling is About Helping

Let's start with the first mindset shift. Maybe you have questions or concerns about business development and about selling yourself as a consultant. Maybe you can't imagine yourself as a "salesperson." Maybe you've had someone try to sell themselves to you and it was, well, icky.

Here's the thing about business development and selling: at the heart of it is knowing that there are a lot of people, companies, and organizations that truly need your help as a consultant and wanting to help them.

Maybe it's just that they need the expertise that you have. It might be that they have some great people working for them, but they don't have somebody who has the particular expertise that they need. You can come in as that expert and help them accomplish the things that they want to accomplish.

Maybe they need someone who can bring a fresh perspective. Someone who has a broader or new way of looking at things that they are struggling with or has seen how others like them have solved those problems.

Often clients just need more "hands on deck"—that is, someone who can be an "extender" to their staff so they can get the things done that they need to do but don't have enough people to do it.

Sometimes they just need a consultant to come in who is going to speed things up.

Sometimes the client just needs to sleep at night. They're stressed out. They have too much to do and not enough time or ability to do it. They just want somebody to come in who is going to help them so they can take things off their worry list and sleep at night.

**If you are a consultant who's head—and heart—are in the right place, you can shift your mindset to recognize that business development and selling your services is just about trying to remove any obstacle in the way of you being able to get to a client and help them.**

This way of understanding business development and selling can give you the inspiration and the clarity to take the right actions to get out there and start getting business so you can help clients.

To help you shift your mindset and get the new mindset to stick, I encourage you to think about—in a detailed and nuanced way—an example of who you want to help. I don't mean who your ideal client is or who you want to get business from. I truly mean who you want to help. That will help you feel better and more at ease about doing the things you need to do to get business. That is what will help you get and maintain a positive consulting business mindset.

### **Banishing Perceived Scarcity**

Let's talk about the second mindset shift. Maybe you're worried that there just isn't enough business out there for you, especially now! This is called perceived scarcity, and it afflicts many new consultants. You may believe that the negative assumptions you have about what your ability to build a profitable consulting business are true and that you can't do anything about it.

The truth is that that is just a perception. It is a belief that there is a fixed reality that can't be changed, but it is not a true reflection of reality.

The reality of most markets is that there is enough business out there. Yes, even now. Unless you're in a really narrow, specialized field that is already flooded with consultants, which is not true for most consultants, there's room for more consultants, especially fantastic ones. The other reality is that your ability to get clients is largely based on the things that you do. And you can control over the things you do.

### **Time to Shift Your Mindsets**

So let's focus on shifting those mindsets and replacing them with better, more reality-based mindsets. This tool will help you:

- Define who you want to help, which is at the heart of having a positive consulting business mindset
- Help show to yourself that there is enough business for you, and you can take action to get it

Answer the questions below in the space provided. For some questions, you will have to ask other people in your market to provide you with information.

#### **A. Getting comfortable with business development and selling what you do to clients**

*Focus on who you want to help*

For this exercise, write your answers to these questions:

##### **1. Who is an example of a person I want to help and what do they do?**

*This can be a real person, a composite of people you know, or a made-up example. Feel free to name them, even if you made them up! Note that the more detail you provide, the more likely you are to have an emotional response about the person. The bigger the emotional response you have (e.g., empathy), the more you will want to do business development so you can help them.*



**8. What are their Monday mornings like?**

**9. What are their hopes and dreams?**

**10. What are the things that they're actually trying to accomplish or trying to make happen in their company or organization?**

**11. What type of help do they need?**

**12. What are the types of things that I could actually do to help them?**

## **B. Understanding that there is enough business out there for you and you can get it.**

*Focus on realizing that there work for you in my market and can you get it.*

For this exercise, test and expand what you know about your potential market. Start with identifying at least 3 people in your market who you will talk to about needs in the market. It's best to identify people who you can get a call or meeting with and will give you accurate information. That would be people who have a good understanding of the market, will give you honest answers, and are positive/can-do people.

*Note you are not doing a full-scale market analysis. This is just to help shift your mindset if you have any perceived scarcity about work for you in your market.*

Write down the names of the people you will talk to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **When you reach out to them, you can say:**

"I am curious about what types of help companies [or organizations] in the [X] market need or often seek from consultants. Would you be willing to give me 30 minutes of your time to share your perspective with me?"

### **When you meet with them, you can ask:**

- What type of help do companies [or organizations] need most in this market?
- What are companies [or organizations] using consultants for in this market?
- What are the knowledge, skills, or activities that you see people look to consultants for?
- What attributes do companies [or organizations] look for in consultants?
- What aren't companies [or organizations] getting enough of from existing consultants?
- What would be the best way for a new consultant to position themselves in this market?

**After the meetings:**

Type or write what they said all in one place. Then circle anything that you have knowledge, skills, or attributes related to.

*Be generous with your circles! In the next module, you will define what you can offer clients much more precisely.*

**After you celebrate your circles:**

Now consider any obstacles you may face in getting clients. In the left column in the table below, write at least 3 things that you would have to overcome or do to get to the client and get a contract to help them? This may be having to learn things that you don't know how to do today, such as business development, or logistical issues, such as getting psychically in front of clients in your market.

After your write down your obstacles in the table, use the right column to write down possible actions you can take to overcome each obstacle. Write down as many actions as you can.

*Don't worry about getting these exactly right. This is about shifting your mindset not developing an action plan. And, remember, you are going to learn how to overcome a lot of common obstacles and then take action to get business in this course!*

<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Possible Actions to Overcome Obstacles</b>



After you do this exercise, you should see that there are clients in your market that want something that you can offer and you have ideas about how to overcome obstacles that get in your way of getting to clients and helping them.

## **2 BONUS EXERCISES!**

If you want to take this exercise a few extra steps, there are some bonus exercises below. These exercises are based on some research that suggests that writing down and then verbalizing a vision of what you want to do can help shift your mindset more deeply and help you achieve your goals.

### **Bonus 1**

Take the person that you said you wanted to help and wrote about in the first half of this tool. Now write a couple paragraphs about what you would do to overcome those obstacles and work with them. Feel free to be creative and elaborate as much as you want. This is your vision for helping who you most want to help!

### **Bonus 2**

Take what you wrote and share it. Show it to someone you trust and say what you wrote out loud!