

Thinking of Becoming an Independent Consultant?

This is a short self-scoring questionnaire of how successful you are likely to be as an independent consultant (it does not address internal or large firm consulting).

By Ian Jacobsen, CMC, FIMC

The following statements describe key ingredients for success as an independent consultant. They provide a checklist of factors to consider. Rate the accuracy of each statement as it describes your current situation.

1 = not accurate

5 = very accurate

- | 1. | I have a clear statement of the purpose/mission of my proposed business. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
|-----|--|---|---|---|-----|
| 2. | I possess a high level of current knowledge/skill in my chosen specialty. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 3. | I can describe in fifteen seconds how clients will benefit from my services. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 4. | I have well-developed contacts with people who are my potential clients. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 5. | I have done research that indicates a clear market for my services. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 6. | I have a network of people with good contacts to refer me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 7. | I have a marketing plan to reach prospective clients. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 8. | I thrive on project work and meet promised deadlines. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 9. | I know my own strengths and vulnerabilities, and those of my competition. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 10. | I can easily earn and maintain trust and cooperation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 11. | I can differentiate my services from my competitors. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 12. | I treat information as confidential when it is provided in confidence. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 13. | I sincerely believe that the client's needs must come first. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 14. | I communicate sensitive information constructively and persuasively. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 15. | I will turn down an assignment if I am sub-marginally qualified for it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 16. | I explain difficult concepts understandably, either orally or in writing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 17. | I can estimate accurately the time to complete a project's tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 18. | I have at least six months of savings to sustain me if business is lean. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 19. | I approach problems creatively and with an open mind. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 20. | I can live with wide fluctuations in income. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 21. | I listen attentively and open-mindedly, and summarize issues accurately. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 22. | I own, or have access to, the tools I will need for consulting. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 23. | I have provisions for meeting my insured benefit needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 24. | I have the support of my spouse/SO for being an independent consultant. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 25. | I quickly grasp new concepts and situations, and read "between the lines." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 26. | I have the self-discipline to work independently. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 27. | I see the "big picture" as well as the important details. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 28. | I am comfortable and competent in dealing with organizational politics. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 29. | I have a trusted colleague to whom I can turn when I need help. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 30. | I believe in myself and in the services I plan to offer. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 31. | I am not considering consulting primarily to escape from a job I don't like. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 32. | I am comfortable and competent in negotiating about rates and payments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |

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Scoring Your Responses

By Ian Jacobsen, CMC, FIMC

The statements contained in the preceding quiz describe key ingredients for success as an independent consultant. They provide a checklist of factors to consider. In the quiz, you were asked to rate the accuracy of each statement as it describes your current situation.

1 = not accurate

5 = very accurate

Please use the following ranges to calculate your profile.

Answer Key

Add the ratings of the statements. Divide by 32 to get your average score. If your average is

- Between 4 and 5, with no 1 or 2 ratings, you have a good chance of success.
- Between 3 and 4, with no 1 or 2 rating, you have a fair chance of success.
- Below 3, or if you have some 1 or 2 ratings, you face definite obstacles.

You can compensate for some 1 and 2 ratings; others are more difficult to change.

Note: The even-numbered items are critical ingredients for which a 4 or 5 rating is highly desirable for success!