

# Image building and value creation through qualification and certification in management consultancy

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## Objectives:

**To present international sets of standards, relevant to the profession of management consultancy and its clients, in particular, the ‘CMC® (Certified Management Consultant) seen internationally as a mark of consistency and excellence in the practise of management consultancy as well as the European Standardization on Management Consultancy, a “Service standard” that can be viewed as another development in the evolution of the standards concepts worldwide.**

There is a growing need for clarity about what can be expected from a management consultant. Clients increasingly insist on more transparency with regard to what management consultancy actually involves and how management consultants work. Successful management consulting is always based on two aspects: First of all, the consultant must have the knowledge and experience to serve the client's needs. Secondly, the relationship between consultant and client should be based on mutual trust. Clarity in the way management consultants works, and how the process of consultancy develops, can lead to a successful outcome.

The need for clarity resulted in the fact that Consulting has become an international professional community with its standards, ethics, education, qualification, codes of conduct and professional institutes. The consulting competency is no longer the “magical secret” of the chosen few in an organisation but skills necessary for the support of making everyday business operate effectively.

Today clients want to get more value and other value for money from consultants and management consultants have to adhere to that, if they take their job seriously and contribute to the client's corporate governance. Clients do no longer accept the “one size fits all”-approach or standardized solutions, they rather seek tailor made solutions and long term utility of implemented concepts. This means:

- Shift from “advising” to “implementation”
- Reduced “time to solution”
- Productivity and return on investment
- Innovative and global thinking
- Professional competency
- Qualification standards.

This leads to the following questions:

- What are the required qualifications of management consultants? How can qualifications contribute to the consulting industry's reputation?

- What is the contribution of standards to use and provide consulting services reliably, with no more than a reasonable risk?
- How can qualifications be standardized and/or certified in order to contribute to the consulting industry's reputation?

### **The Role of Standards in Management Consultancy:**

Standards can be recognized as useful tools that increase transparency in the exchange of goods and services and hence client's confidence. Standardization is a main factor in efficiently trading B2B services, saves time, budget and other resources during service delivery and thus shows the high quality of management consultancy services to the customer, mainly by

- improving the service delivery performance through using standardised procedures
- providing a basis to compare service offers and to decide on the best service partner
- facilitating internal processes for offering, delivering and accounting management consultancy services.

Standardization need neither restrict competition nor inhibit innovation. Criticism in this respect may underline that standardization takes too long, and is an expensive and useless process because it is not possible due to the individuality and nature of management consultancy services themselves. Such opinions are thought to derive from misunderstandings and lack of dependable information.

An appropriately prepared standard will encapsulate currently accepted good practice in a manner that does no more than make it universally understandable and uniformly applicable. This gives innovative management consultancy providers the freedom to introduce new practice with the intention of developing excellence in management consultancy provision and achieving competitive advantage, secure in the knowledge of the benchmarks against which their service improvements will be judged.

Standards in management consultancy require equitable participation of beneficiaries and providers supported by a broadly based cross section of stakeholder representatives.

This article will look at two internationally recognized standards in management consultancy.

### **Background information on the Qualification Standard CMC:**

The international CMC® quality standard was established by ICMCI (The International Council Of Management Consulting Institutes), because feedback from clients indicated that they regard competency-based certification of management consultants as important.

The CMC draws on a set of core standards for management consultants that defines the minimum profile of competencies and is recognised globally between member institutes and associations of ICMCI. The CMC competency framework sets out the core mandatory elements and requirements pertaining to character, qualifications, experience, independence and competence. CMC encourages continuous professional development by striving for high standards, rather than 'controlling' or 'constraining' individual consultants. It recognises the validity of national differences, and the continuing evolution of management consultancy practice.

Today the CMC is actively accepted and used by 44 ICMCI member countries as an international standard to signify experienced management consultants. More than 10.000 management consultants worldwide have agreed to accept the international competency qualification and minimum standard. The development and promotion of the CMC mark and its international protection against misuse are fundamental to the future of the whole consulting industry. Thus, CMC is about increasing access to learning and continuing professional development.

### **Background information on the European Standard on Management Consultancy:**

The Lisbon Accord and the issue of a Draft Services directive demonstrated that the heads of Government wished to establish a “borderless” market for goods and services and to address this issue with vigour and determination. As part of this programme, CEN (the European standards Body covering the EU and EFTA countries) has decided to establish a set of “service standards” for the nominated services. This programme has started and with management consultancy being so prominent in the Draft directive, and being the least well entrenched of the liberal professions, management consultancy is seen as possibly the first professional service for which a standard will be drafted.

“Service standards” can be viewed as another development in the evolution of the standards concepts. They are entirely driven by the customer viewpoint. The concern is how the purchased service fits into the buying organisation, how they decide to need and procure an external service, i.e. how to select, to manage and to judge potential service providers. The intention is to use best practice in specification, sourcing, delivery and quality of business-related services.

The preparation of a service standard on management consultancy will evolve quickly. The consultation will occur on a Europe wide basis (including EFTA) through the central process, but also every national standards body must consult the market in its territory. The agreed standard on management consultancy is then mandatory for all CEN member countries and must supersede any existing national standards.

Having a service standard on management consultancy which in effect defines the competency required of clients (in procurement, in deciding when and how to use management consultants, and in the undertaking a management consultancy assignment) is considered to be a tremendous advancement for the role of the professional bodies and a positive contribution to the success of the management consultancy profession and all those who practise in it.

### **Conclusion:**

Effective management consultancy centers towards identifying the main elements needed to assure quality and excellence as follows:

- Developing Best Practices
- Meeting Company and Stakeholder Needs
- Improving Stakeholder Satisfaction.