

Should I hire a consultant?

DEAR WW: My company can't seem to get firing on all cylinders. We've tried teams, quality circles, you name it. A friend suggested that I hire a consultant. I'm intrigued, but I want to know what to look out for.

Hired Gun?

WORKING WOUNDED

Bob Rosner



As our family's chief cook, I pay attention to recipes and cooking tips. Recently, an article caught my attention because of both its recipes and the offbeat ways they were prepared. These included: a magical way to prepare tortillas using your clothes iron, cooking road kill on your car's carburetor and, a real crowd-pleaser, dishwasher fish.

In the hands of a talented chef, I guess, irons, engines and dishwashers can be effective. But most of us are better off sticking to the tools designed for the job. It's no different with consultants. The more we pick a person with the right experience, the less likely

we are to get burned.

The tips below should help you decide 1) IF you need a consultant, and 2) how to get the most out of one. For more, check out Mariam Naficy's "Fast Track" (Broadway, 1997).

Do you need a fresh perspective? Quality guru, Ed Deming, said that true innovations seldom come from within an organization. "Outside eyes" are often needed to take an organization to the next level. Therefore, perspective is probably the single most important thing that a consultant can bring to you and your organization. You shouldn't be surprised when your consultant

provides insight, you should expect it from him.

Can a consultant provide specific data or expertise? You pay a premium with most consultants, at least in theory, because they've been there and done that. So it's important to screen your consultant at the front end to be sure she's had experience with organizations going through the same challenges as yours. The last thing you want to do is pay your consultant for her on-the-job training.

Can a consultant deliver your bad news? Many organizations use consultants to do the dirty work during layoffs or cost-cuttings. Although it's important not to abdicate your decision-making, there can be a value in having the hired gun take some of the heat when there's a tough decision to be made.

Can a consultant change your organization? Effective consultants should be able to

outline a specific plan to get you from where you are to where you need to be. Don't be shy: ask the consultant to outline the process your organization will need to follow and be sure that it's specifically tailored to your company, not one-size-fits-all.

Can a consultant help you rise above company politics? No company's immune from politics—especially when trying to implement change.

A consultant can—and should—offer suggestions that aren't tainted by territorialism, history, or political alliances.

The beauty of cooking dinner on your engine is that by the time you arrive at your destination, dinner is ready. Pick your consultants carefully and you won't end up as road kill.

Here are the results from a recent workingwounded.com/ABCnews.com online ballot: What has been your experience with consultants?



ILLUSTRATION BY DIONISIO BUCCAT

—I just wish I had one, 13.5%

—They have saved me a great deal of time, 21%

—They take your watch and

tell you what time it is, 65.4% (Mr. Rosner is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail him at bob@workingwounded.com.)

Philamlife becomes first Asia Pacific company to receive 10th Excellence in Education award

PHILAMLIFE is the only company in the Asia Pacific region to win a prestigious Excellence in Education Award for the 10th time from the Life Office Management Association (LOMA). This impressive accomplishment will be honored at LOMA's 2004 Asia Pacific Conference and Conferment, where the award will be presented to Philamlife senior vice president and director for corporate HR Anthony B. Sotelo, FLMI and Philamlife executive vice president Jesus G. Hofileña, FLMI, LLIF.

Mr. Hofileña, representing Philamlife president and CEO

and AIG-Philam Group chairman Jose L. Cuisia, Jr., will open the conference with a presentation on "Knowing What To Know: Education as an Essential Enabler." He will discuss Philamlife's experience and insights in accomplishing strategic goals while pursuing enterprise vision and building key capabilities in today's complex and fast-paced business environment.

LOMA designations will also be officially conferred at the conference. Conferment is one of the highlights of the event for designees whose ambition and discipline defines profes-

sional excellence.

Closing the conference will be Mr. Khong Bee, senior vice president and head of customer service at the Great Eastern Life in Singapore. LOMA's 2004 Asia Pacific Conference and Conferment will open today in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Founded in 1924, LOMA is an international association through which more than 1,250 insurance and financial services companies from over 70 countries engage in research and educational activities to improve company operations.

Pinay honors the Filipina ...

From page B18

"It is funny, though, how a person's path through life always leads back to his or her life's purpose," Daly muses. In the midst of her discovering the Worldwide Web, she stumbled upon a mail-order-bridal site. She discovered that Filipinas in the Internet are held with such low esteem. Search engines for the word "Filipina" brought results for mail-order-bridal sites, pen-pal service sites, Filipina personal webpages looking for partners and porn sites. The sites that portrayed and represented Filipinas as they really are were few. Even a Greek dictionary defines the word "Filipina" as a domestic helper. This spurred her to create her web

site.

Beyond cyberspace

Many Filipinas are continuously being inspired and empowered by the site but it has also become a vehicle of growth for its own creator. "Somehow, my work has effected spiritual exploration and growth in my own life," says Daly.

In the 2000 Fil-Am Women's Network (FAWN), Daly received a Babaylan Award for her work with newfilipina.com. The award brought her to a realization that she was finally able to answer the questions and explorations of her early years. Through the site, she was able to cultivate

leadership, community and healing.

Because of the enthusiastic support and encouragement, the site also expanded to a formal not-for-profit organization, NewFilipina, Inc., Filipina empowerment through multimedia.

Presently, she is busy organizing next year's FAWN conference at New York City. Calling herself a "laptop activist," she works at home trying to connect people and life changing ideas and opportunities together through the Internet. A former workaholic, Daly is still trying to run a full household but is now more settled and relaxed for she knows she has finally found home.

Ateneo's learning session on achieving work-life balance

JUGGLING work and family is certainly a difficult balancing act. How do people cope? How can organizations help workers achieve work-life balance? The Ateneo Center for Organization Research and Development (Ateneo CORD) Trendwatcher Series on June 25, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. features a research on working parents and a case

study on Petron's Work-Life programs. Venue is Petron Mega-Plaza in Makati. For more information contact: Ateneo CORD, 2/F Höffner Building, Social Development Complex, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City 1108 at (632) 426-5931, 426-6282 or 426-6001 loc 5263.

Working Mom launches Mother of the Year Awards



From left: Joanna Ongpin Duarte, Sandy Prieto Romualdez, Ces Oreña Drilon, An Mercado Alcantara, Boots Anson Roa

WORKING Mom magazine launches the Mother of the Year Award, a nationwide search for Filipino women who have made an impact in their respective fields while raising a family.

The contest was launched at the 4/F of Shangri-La Plaza last May 14, culminating in a photo exhibit of campaign materials designed by Omping Remigio, creative director of Campaigns and Grey. The images of women who worked behind-the-scenes during World War II—sewing uniforms, assembling parachutes—capture the message that working mothers are the silent heroines who have made significant contributions to history at large, and the personal history of all whose lives

they have touched. To quote the tagline of the campaign, "Great things were done because a mother worked."

The contest reflects Working Mom magazine's overall mission of supporting women as they balance the needs and demands of their career, family and personal growth. Each issue of the magazine encourages readers to recognize and honor themselves; through the Mother of the Year award, it invites the country to join us in paying tribute.

Working Mom's message, and the contest it is currently promoting, is especially crucial as more and more Filipino women join the workforce. In recognizing the exemplary

achievements of career women, it hopes to inspire those who follow. Working Mom will distribute the Outstanding Working Award to women in the industries of advertising, healthcare, media, financial institutions, as well as entrepreneurs. Categories include the Pioneer Working Mom, for those who have blazed trails and made the success of other moms possible and have balanced work and home for the past 20 years; the Accomplished Working Mom, for those who flourish in their industry while successfully raising her family, and whose eldest children/child are 18 years of age; and the Enterprising Working Mom and the Gen X and Gen Y moms.

Get away to find yourself

IT HIT me, and hit me hard one day in the middle of lunch. There I was, smack in a center table of Dish at the ABS-CBN compound, with the Star Questers and perfectly-made up newscasters flanking me, and pretty young things gyrating silently on the multiple TV screens above head. Good Lord, I thought. Where the hell am I?

When you begin to have thoughts like that, then you know it's time to move location and change perspective—even if only temporarily.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh once said that working moms are the great "vacationless" class. She's right, in a way, but only if you choose to stay "vacationless." The key to getting a good vacation is dropping the guilt, listening to your inner child, and taking the chance once it presents itself to you.

Thank God, then, for friends like painter Hermes Alegre, who—like his name suggests—is a true messenger of joy. Sensing the loneliness and exhaustion in my voice, he invited me over to his new base

in Daet. "Makakapagmuni-muni ka dito," he assured. "Malala ka na."

Which is how I ended up for five days in Bagasbas, Camarines Norte. I'm not ashamed to say that yes, I escaped from my work, my kids and my increasingly surreal ABS-CBN milieu. A working mom needs that sometimes, or else work productivity falls, time with the kids turns into a chore, and other relationships fail to flourish.

Being still

There's not much to do in Daet, nor in Bagasbas, except laze on the beach, gorge on Bicol Express and *pinangat*, boogie board, and surf (which I tried in vain to do—and journalist that I am, ok, I admit I threw in a little bit of work, interviewing the surfing community and dragging along Harvey Tapan to take photos). But because it was a self-imposed assignment, I was in control of the tempo of things. That it rained more than half the time slowed down the pace as well, and let us

WORKING MOM

Gina Abuyuan-Llanes



saunter, rather than speed, through the story, as we're used to with our other travel assignments.

"So, what did you do in Bagasbas?" I imagined people asking me when I got home. My answer would be the two things that should define each holiday: "I laughed a lot and ate a lot."

I was also blessed with time to be alone in my thoughts, a few minutes of which I tried to catch in my notebook, on May 30:

Now this is a lazy Sunday afternoon. It's 1:03 p.m. and I'm in Bagasbas beach. It's an overcast day but all the better, because we—Harvey and I—can sit outdoors on the boardwalk, outside Mama Dor's *sari-sari* store-cum-eatery,

and have some coffee without being bothered by the blazing sun.

The sound of the waves, as described by Harvey, is perfect: It's like a rustle more than a rushing; a rolling of wind and water together rather than a crashing of the elements. You can still hear each other talk with this type of sound of waves. But we choose not to.

A dog trots lazily by. The footsteps of passersby rasp on the boardwalk, intermittently. A surfer sleeps on a bench beside us. There are no tricycles—wait, one passes by. Two. No cars, no large families clamoring for a barbecue. Even the sun takes its time, peeking out from behind the clouds, then, leaning back in, stretching out the kinks in its rays, and yawning. Yawning, before it furls its light back behind the clouds. His time to shine—like all of ours—will come. But not now. Not just now.

Now is for sipping coffee and being silent. Thoughtful. Maybe even idle. A time to

stare. Harvey whistles a tune. We continue with our coffee, unnumbered. Unbothered. And still.

Good vacation

When you accept that you're on vacation—that you're away—then you begin and learn to relish it. Lying on a bed of coiled rope, the rain dripping down the thatched roof of a surfer's shack, I remembered how I once struck a similar pose on a bed of bunched up blankets several years ago. Like-minded nomads in dreadlocks and unwashed clothes sat/sprawled nearby. I felt I was immortal and that I could live on words and dreams alone. I closed my eyes and smiled at the memory.

Before you became a mom, you were someone else. You were beach bum, artist, the girl with the 22-inch waistline. A good vacation, spent in solitude, will remind you of all these things—and you will be struck not by melancholia, but with a sense of achievement, of pride. I was all that then, I

am all this now; and what's best about being all this now is that I have the power—and am empowered!—to go back when I choose, and return without a hitch.

I had lunch in Dish again the other day. The same people sat around me, chatting in the same voices, saying the same things.

Good Lord, I thought. Thank you for bringing me back.

A good vacation, most of all, will bring back your passion for your current reality. It will make you want to step in those high heels again, chase deadlines again, and mentor writers again, all with the rough-and-tumble grace of the whitewater on the shore; and might of Bagasbas waves in a storm.

(Gina Abuyuan-Llanes is editor in chief of Working Mom magazine. For more about how to play as hard as you work, get the June issue of Working Mom, with Tweetie de Leon-Gonzales on the cover. Feedback is welcome at gina_llanes@abs.pinoycentral.com.)