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Consulting Skills for Evaluators: Getting Started

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Consulting Skills for Evaluators: Getting Started

This interactive two-day workshop is designed for evaluators who are thinking about becoming independent consultants or who have recently begun their consulting practice. The workshop will provide participants with an opportunity to explore some critical consulting topics. Participants will see if they have the skills and characteristics required to be a successful consultant. Marketing, proposal writing, and building client relationships will be discussed and many practical tips and examples will be shared. Important management topics including managing time, finances, and ethical issues will be discussed. Opportunities will be provided throughout the workshop for participants to work both independently and with colleagues to problem solve and to develop an agenda for their own personal action. At the end of the workshop, a round-up session will address participant issues as time permits.

Learning Objectives

1. Participants will determine if consulting is an appropriate career choice for them.
2. Participants will learn how to break into the evaluation consulting market and how to stay there.
3. Participants will learn strategies for managing their professional evaluation practice and plan some next steps.

Our agenda will be based on the identified needs of this group.

Before we begin:

There are four sets of skills that are essential to long-term success as an independent evaluation consultant. They are all equally important:

- Personal attributes
- Entrepreneurial skills
- Consulting skills
- Management skills



My Current Ratings

Currently, I would rate my consulting skill sets as follows:

	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low	Don't know/ Not applicable
	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
Skill sets:						
1. Personal attributes	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Entrepreneurial skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Consulting skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					

If these four skill sets are equated to the length of the four pillars holding up my consulting practice, would it stand? What areas do I need to grow to develop a balanced practice?



Personal Action Planning

1 PILLAR 1: PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES—HAVING WHAT IT TAKES

1 Attitudes

Not everyone is born to be a consultant. It is a demanding and frustrating job that never ends. Just when one project is over you are on a plane to another job. Or when you are congratulating yourself on a job well done, the client calls to complain. The following nine attitudes will allow you to keep your sanity and perform with consistent excellence (Greiner and Metzger, 1983):

1. *Ethical Standards*

Your projects affect the vital interests of a variety of stakeholders. They will try to curry your favor. Your ethics have to remain scrupulous in a job that can't cater to one side or another.

Think about: *What codes of ethics, guidelines, principles or standards guide my evaluation practice?*

2. *Empathy and Trust*

Clients are usually reluctant to reveal their private concerns to a stranger and are particularly suspicious of consultants hired by their senior manager (board, funder, etc.) To bridge this gap of inherent mistrust, you need to communicate empathy for others, be understanding and respectful of differing points of view and be seen to be trustworthy.

Think about: *How can I demonstrate that I am empathetic and trustworthy?*

3. *Positive Thinking*

Clients react negatively to cynical and sarcastic behavior from consultants. An upbeat attitude is essential for the client to feel confidence in your recommendations.

Think about: *How can I bolster and maintain my positive world view?*

4. *Flexibility*

Each project requires daily adjustment to changes in the client's situation. Some of these changes will affect your project progress. Flexibility and personal initiative are essential to react rapidly.

Think about: *How can I respond to change and keep my evaluation study on track?*

5. *Team Player*

Rugged individualism will not go over well. Close cooperation is required with all of the groups involved (including your own team) in order to get the job done. Loners have no place in consulting—it is a people business.

Think about: *How can I convey the message to my client that I am a team player?*

6. *Self-fulfillment*

Clients rarely show their gratitude and often take personal credit for positive outcomes while blaming you for any failures. You have to flourish as a result of your own sense of accomplishment.

Think about: *How can I sustain my commitment to this tough profession?*

7. *Mobility*

Airlines love consultants. If you want a 9-5 job with dinner at home, don't choose this profession. You have to be clear on your priorities and ensure that everyone knows where you are all the time. Keep a tidy life.

Think about: *Which techniques can I use to balance my personal and professional life?*

8. *Energy*

Long hours, plastic hotel rooms, greasy meals, and demanding clients can all take a toll on your emotional and physical well-being. Preventative self-care is essential.

Think about: *How can I manage my energy levels?*

9. *Self-awareness*

You are not in the limelight but rather take a backstage role in which you have to act with intelligence and reflection. A low-key, thoughtful demeanor is what the client wants. Your public and private behavior is grist for the mill—you need to recognize your own personal strengths and limitations. This is sometimes described as “low ego needs!”

Think about: *How can I manage my ego needs in the consulting context?*



Discussion: *What are the top three attitudes for a consultant? Why?*

1 **Attributes**

Consultants need to have a number of general attributes, no matter what field they are in. Evaluators probably need more of everything than other consultants do because our work is so challenging—doing applied research in the real world! We need the following (Barrington, 1992):

1. *Continual knowledge acquisition*

- Training
- Certification
- Professional development

Think about: *What areas do I need to upgrade currently?*

2. *Diagnostic Skills*

- Objectivity
- Curiosity
- Analysis
- Inductive reasoning

Think about: *Which of these diagnostic skills am I good at? Which need work?*

3. *Solution Skills*

- Imagination
- Courage
- Synthesis
- Teaching ability

Think about: *Which solution skills have I used recently? Where could I improve?*

4. *Communication Skills*

- Sensitive listening skills
- Exceptional writing ability
- Oral presentation skills
- Intervention skills
- Humor

Think about: *Which communication skills have I used successfully? Which ones need development? How can I work on these skills?*

5. Negotiation Skills (Fisher and Ury, 1991)

- Separate the people from the problem
- Focus on interests, not positions
- Invent options for mutual gains
- Insist on using objective criteria

Think about: *When have I needed negotiation skills? How did I handle that situation? What could I do better next time?*

6. Survival Skills

- Keep fit
- Strengthen support systems
- Stay current
- Foster self-reflection
- Get involved in the community
- Keep an escape hatch open

Think about: *Have my survival skills been taxed lately? If so, why? What can I do to make sure that I flourish?*

7. Political Skills

- Know the players
- Know the policy environment
- Know the political dimension
- Know the power of communication
- Know the importance of timing

Think about: *When have I had to be aware of political tensions? How comfortable was I in that situation? What can I do to improve my skills in this area?*



Discussion: *What are the top three attributes for a consultant? Why?*

1 **PILLAR 2: ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS—GETTING STARTED, GETTING WORK**

Nothing can focus the mind like talking about money. Therefore, a good way to make some hard decisions about your proposed consulting practice is to talk about overhead, desired salary, and daily rates.

1 **My Overhead**

In reviewing the following topics, it will be possible to consider some of the topics that you will need to address in order to start your own business. You are now a small business person or entrepreneur and this may take a bit of a mind shift for you.

Here is a long list of possible categories for your monthly and annual expenses. Think carefully about each item to see if it is a potential cost for you. If not, delete it from your list of projected expenses:

- Accounting fees (preparation of tax return and other accounting expenses)
- Advertising, web page
- Automobile costs
- Bank charges
- Books and reference materials
- Business services
- Business taxes
- Communications (telephone and fax lines, cell phone, long distance charges, cable/internet charges)
- Conferences, courses, and professional development
- Donations
- Equipment leases or monthly purchase payments
- Interest on loans
- Insurance (pro-rated over 12 months for health, life, general liability, theft, automobile—if used for work and professional liability)⁶
- Legal services (e.g., contract review)
- License renewals (prorated over 12 months)

⁶ Note that health insurance costs vary widely depending on where you live.

- Loan payments
- Marketing, entertainment, and promotion
- Membership renewals
- Office rent
- Office supplies
- Printing costs
- Postage, courier, postal box rental
- Repairs and maintenance
- Retirement savings
- Subscriptions/journals
- Taxes pro-rated over 12 months (business income tax, social security, pension plans, sales or service tax)
- Travel (not covered by contracts such as going to conferences)
- Storage
- Utilities
- Salaries, wages, & benefits (not yours)
- Miscellaneous/contingency
- Miscellaneous or contingency.



Group Work Session: Estimate annual expenses or overhead costs for an independent consultant for a typical year. Note that this budget does **not** include your salary!

Monthly and Annual Overhead Expenses Worksheet

Item	Needed (Yes/No)	Estimated cost (monthly)	Estimated cost (annual)
Accounting fees (preparation of tax return and other accounting expenses)			
Advertising, web page			
Automobile costs			
Bank charges			
Books and reference materials			
Business services			
Business taxes			
Communications: - Telephone - Fax lines - Cell phone - Long distance - Cable/internet			
Conferences, courses, and professional development			
Donations			
Equipment leases or monthly purchase payments			
Interest on loans			
Insurance: - Health - Life - General liability - Theft - Automobile - Professional liability - Other -			
Legal services (e.g., contract review)			
License renewals			
Loan payments			
Marketing, entertainment, and promotion			
Membership renewals			
Office rent			
Office supplies			
Printing costs			
Postage, courier, postal box rental			
Repairs and maintenance			
Retirement savings			
Subscriptions/journals			

Item	Needed (Yes/No)	Estimated cost (monthly)	Estimated cost (annual)
Taxes:			
- Business income			
- Social security,			
- Pension plan			
- GST expense			
- Other			
Travel (not covered by contracts)			
Storage			
Utilities			
Salaries, wages, & benefits (not yours)			
Miscellaneous/contingency			
Total			

As an example and for the purpose of our calculations here, my office and administrative costs (excluding my salary and any sub-contractors' fees) in a home office setting were just under \$38,000.00 for the 2009 year.

1 My Salary

Of course, you are not going to do all this work for free. You expect a reasonable income to support your lifestyle but if you are just starting out as a consultant, you may not know what "reasonable" is. Let's look at it this way. What do you need to maintain, your personal and family expenses? The support of your family members, including your spouse or partner, is essential for all aspects of this career choice, and this may be a particularly good time to review your family budget and other sources of income.

In the 2004 survey (Jarosewich et al, 2006), typical hours worked by full time evaluation consultants were as follows:

- A range between 200 (less than 4 hours a week) to 3,592 (just under a 70-hour work week for 52 weeks);
- Median total hours worked was 1,910 (equivalent to 40 hour work weeks with four weeks of vacation, holidays & personal days);
- 25% of full-time, self-employed consultants worked 1,440 hours (or less than 30 hours per work week, assuming four weeks of vacation, holidays & personal days);
- 25% worked, on average, between 30 and 40 hours per week.

Hourly rates were as follows:

- A range from \$40 to \$219 an hour, with a median of \$100 per hour.
- The reported hourly rate for Ph.D.s (average of \$114/hour) is significantly higher than that of masters level consultants (\$93/hour), [t(78) = 2.46, p = 0.02]

- Full-time self-employed evaluators billed at a significantly higher hourly rate than part-time ICs – an average of \$105 and \$88 per hour respectively, [t(122) = 2.22, p = 0.03]
- A regression analysis examining predictors of self-employed consultants' personal incomes found that the three significant predictors of personal income are:
 - gross business revenue,
 - number of billable hours worked, and
 - number of employees .
- The 2003 median personal income for this group was \$75,000.
- The evaluators who drew the largest personal income from their business were solo consultants who worked from home and had low overhead expenses, used only subcontractors and was able to absorb a greater percent of the billing rate as personal income.
- The evaluator with several employees probably works fewer billable hours while simultaneously using some of the billing rate to pay for such things as office rent, communications systems, and non-billable employee salaries (for example, a bookkeeper).
- **Evaluators with the largest personal incomes tend also to have larger business revenue, more billable hours worked, and fewer employees.** Due to a lack of clear linear relationships in several cases and a relatively small number of cases that contained all variables (N = 68), results should be used with caution.

For the purposes of our exercise, we will use \$75,000 as a starting salary.

1 My Profit

Talking about profit can be tricky, because, as Kubr (2002, p. 615) suggests, it is not always easy to call a spade a spade. Consulting is a business service and it is provided to clients for a fee. It is okay to make a profit! However, some professionals may feel that it embarrassing to discuss selling services or charging fees, and some clients, especially the less experienced ones, may feel that you do not deserve to make a profit at their expense. So the whole topic has to be discussed with some delicacy. In fact, profit is a natural part of the professional services market and your firm has to finance its existence and its growth from your earnings. The bottom line is that if you want to stay in business, you have to make money.

In common practice, a profit margin of 10 to 30 percent is generally acceptable, so see what you are comfortable with and plan for it. If you make it, celebrate your success. If you don't, find out what happened and make some changes. In our example we will use a start-up rate of 10%.

1

My Chargeable Days

Using a formula developed by management consultants (Kubr, 2002), your chargeable time in a typical year looks like the following:

Activity/Time	Weeks	Work Days
Total time	52	260
• Annual vacation	4	20
• Public holidays	2	10
• Sick days	1	5
Time available	45	225
• Administration & P. D.	2	10
• Marketing/ research	5	25
Chargeable Time	38	190

Note. From *Management Consulting: A Guide to the Profession* (4th ed., p. 683), by M. Kubr (Ed.) (2002). Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Office. Copyright 2002 by Copyright Holder. Adapted with permission. Excludes weekends.

This table suggests that about 73% of your time is chargeable (or 190 out of 260 potential working days). Does that fit for you or would you change the formula? Kubr (2002, p. 684) cautions that the independent consultant who takes care of his or her own marketing and administration may well only achieve a utilization rate of 55-65 percent because of the need to spend between 20-25 percent of time on marketing. In a start-up scenario like yours, you need to add time to figure out what to do next. So let's begin with a relatively safe 125 billable days or a 56 percent recovery rate for your first year.

1

My Daily Rate

Armed with all this financial information, at last you can determine your daily rate. We will use the above examples for demonstration purposes, using the consultants' fee calculation formula as described by Burns (2001).

Fee Calculation Process

Step	Calculation	Estimated Amount
Step 1	Determine desired salary	\$75,000
Step 2	Determine overhead costs	\$38,000
Step 3	Total costs	$\$75,000 + \$38,000 = \$113,000/\text{year}$
Step 4	Cost for 125 billable days	$\$113,000/125 = \904.00 base daily rate
Step 5	Profit @ 10%	$\$904.00 \times 0.10 = \90.40
Step 6	Final daily rate	$\$904.00 + \$90.40 = \$994.40$ Round it up to \$1,000.00
Step 7	Hourly rate	$\$1,000.00/8 \text{ hours} = \$125.00/\text{hr}$

You can achieve a lower ratio by having lower overhead expenses or by working more billable days. Find out what your competitors are charging as well as other colleagues. Remember that your success, in part, depends on being able to set fees within the range that your client will support. It is an art as well as a science.



Personal Action Planning

Use this worksheet, figure out your daily and hourly rate.

My Daily Rate Calculation Process

Step	Calculation	Estimated Amount
Step 1	Desired salary=	
Step 2	Overhead costs=	
Step 3	Total costs= (Step 1 + Step 2)	
Step 4	Cost for 125 billable days= (Step 3 divided by 125 days = \$ your base daily rate)	
Step 5	Profit @ ??%= (Step 4 total x ??% =)	
Step 6	Final daily rate= (Step 4 + Step 5 = \$ your daily rate—round it up if needed)	
Step 7	Hourly rate= (Step 6 divided by 8 hours = \$??/hr.)	



What aspects of this calculation process have surprised me the most? Why? How can I deal with these issues?

1

Getting Work

The 2004 survey indicated that a typical breakdown of evaluators' activities was as follows:

- Conducting evaluations and providing client services—63% of their time
- Generating new business—15% of their time
- Managing business operations—15% of their time
- Professional development—less than 10% of their time

For all consultants starting out, the biggest question is:

How do I get work?

Survey respondents who were self-employed and who had operated their business for at least a full year ranked as the *most effective* methods of marketing:

- Referrals or word of mouth (59%)
- Repeat business (30%)

They also identified as the *least effective* methods of generating new business:

- Responding to Requests for Proposals (RFPs) (16%)
- Websites (14%)

Earlier, an Independent Consultants' Topical Interest Group (TIG) survey (1994) had found that TIG members got their contracts in the following ways;

(Informal) Direct Request/Sole Sourcing	74%
(Formal) Requests for Proposal, Tenders	26%

So it looks like formal marketing activities are decreasing over time and informal ones are increasing. If over 75% of work comes from informal methods and direct requests, let's explore this wonderful option.

1

The Informal Way

Work that comes through an informal route generally comes in one of a number of different ways: networking, referrals, repeat business, or strategic alliances. I have used them all with success.

1. Networking

There is lots of information out there on networking. According to Speisman (2009)⁷, **networking is about being genuine** and authentic, building trust and relationships, and seeing how you can help others. Here are some tips on networking prospects.

- ***Be a visible professional***

Hold volunteer positions in organizations. This is a great way to stay visible and give back to groups that have helped you.

Visit as many groups as possible that spark your interest. Notice the tone and attitude of the group. Do the people sound supportive of one another? Does the leadership appear competent? Many groups will allow you to visit two times before joining.

Go to networking opportunities. Ask yourself what your goals are in participating in networking meetings so that you will pick groups that will help you get what you are looking for. Some meetings are based more on learning, making contacts, and/or volunteering rather than on strictly making business connections. Always carry business cards!

Consider:

- Professional associations (e.g., AEA)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Volunteer organizations
- Public hearings
- Social media

- ***Have something to say***

Become known as a powerful resource for others. When you are known as a strong resource, people remember to turn to you for suggestions, ideas, names of other people, etc. This keeps you visible to them.

Be able to articulate what you are looking for and how others may help you. Too often people in conversations ask, "How may I help you?" and no immediate answer comes to mind.

Ask open-ended questions in networking conversations. This means questions that ask who, what, where, when, and how as opposed to those that can be answered with a simple yes or no. This form of questioning opens up the discussion and shows listeners that you are interested in them.

- Be a good listener

⁷ Stephanie Speisman is a Success Coach who coaches groups and individuals in business networking skills based on her booklet "99 Tips for Successful Business Networking." Contact info: (301)469-8015, successcoach@erols.com, www.strategiesforchange.com

- Be informative
- Be yourself!

- **Follow up**

Follow through quickly and efficiently on referrals you are given. When people give you referrals, your actions are a reflection on them. Respect and honor that and your referrals will grow (Speisman). You only have two days to be effective (Godbout, 2000):

- E-mail
- Call
- Send cards (e.g., congratulations)
- **Never ignore opportunities**
 - What goes around comes around
 - Big oak trees from little acorns grow
 - Not—*I start my motor for \$10,000!*
- **Practice good ethics & protect privacy**
 - It's a challenging economy and a difficult business environment—show that you understand that.
 - Never gossip. Loose lips sink ships!
 - Select a code of ethics and live by it.
- **Maintain relationships**
 - Christmas cards/notes
 - Invitations to lunch
 - Be non-intrusive but present
- **Use your social graces**

Call those you meet who may benefit from what you do and vice versa. Express that you enjoyed meeting them, and ask if you could get together and share ideas.

- Never keep score
- Be gracious even under fire.
- Say *Thank you!*
- Remember, every day you are building your reputation (even on the weekend!).



There must be some ways to network. Who do I know? How can I network with them?

2. Referrals

As Speisman says, **Have a clear understanding of what you do and why, for whom, and what makes your doing it special** or different from others doing the same thing. In order to get referrals, you must first have a clear understanding of what you do that you can easily articulate to others.

A referral validates your value. The relationship is already half-formed when you walk in and the engagement is already half-sold. It is free! And, it is likely to result in a high-quality engagement (Bergholz and Nickols, 2001, 2002).

Few things build confidence faster than hearing this:

I gave your name to Sandy Jones over at District 5. We were talking and Sandy has some similar issues. I described how you have really helped us and she will probably give you a call next week. No guarantees, but....

Referrals have a positive impact on your psyche. They improve your performance, and that, in turn, generates more referrals. Here's how to get this cycle started:

The Message

You need a clear, simple message to position yourself. You can train your current clients so that they will say the right thing about you. For example:

Chris is an unusual consultant in that he was right out in front through the implementation stage of the project. [Message: implementation carried to completion]

Pat's talent is the combination of her objectivity and her insight. She really sees things—the subtleties among strategic choices, for example—that we would have missed. [Message: objectivity and insight]

Kerry brought a wealth of cross-industry experience which was really enlightening. None of us had much experience outside our own industry. [Message: cross-industry experience]

James is a pragmatic problem solver. When others stumble, James just drives the project forward to a positive conclusion. He never misses deadlines or budgets. [Message: problem solving and project management]



Now it's time to develop and practice my message.

Think about the following:

1. I build my business through referrals and if my clients want to help me, it is much appreciated.

2. I have some specific talents that others should know about. My clients are in a position to pass on this information and if they are happy with my work, it would be really helpful if they did so.

My message is:



Practice your message with a partner until you are comfortable enough to try it out on the group.

Asking for the Referral

I had a wonderful affirmation from a client recently. He said:

I'd be delighted to act as a reference for you. I'll even tell them how delicately you persuade funders that they don't know what they're doing, and get us on the right track.

Ask for a referral at an opportune and appropriate moment. Your basic message is, "If you enjoyed the show, please tell your friends!" As Bergholz and Nickols remark, the challenge is to convey the message without sounding in need. If you sound in need, you are in trouble! Examples:

You know, Mary, I'm working toward building a real specialty in Strategic Planning. As your colleagues from other companies recite their woes in this area, you might offer them my phone number. They and I would both appreciate it.

I'm happy you're satisfied with this project, Bob. It was certainly an enjoyable one for me. Should you encounter colleagues considering outside assistance, can I count on a referral and endorsement from you?

Carol, should you know of others who could benefit from my kind of services, I'm sure both they and I would be happy to have you arrange an introduction.

Referrals are very important to me, Mike. I believe the best kind of consulting business comes that way, just as you found me. Maybe you could do a similar favor for someone else? Can you think of anyone specific who could benefit from the kind of evaluation work I've completed here?



Practice asking for a referral from your partner. Write it down here once you have smoothed it out:

3. Repeat Business

Repeat business speaks to the quality of your work and the relationship you have developed with your client. You already know what you are getting into. There are pros and cons to this way of getting business, including:

Pros

- You know the context
- You know the players
- You can hit the road running
-

Cons

- You don't want to build in dependence or be seen to be self-serving
- You don't want to get involved in the implementation of your recommendations
- You don't want to stay too long
-

Nevertheless, I get a **lot** of business this way—often through spin-off work or additional phases to the same project. Though you may just be starting out, you can still be positioning yourself to attract repeat business?



How can I position my business to attract repeat business?

4. Strategic Alliances

With increasing competition, consultants benefit from strategic alliances (Somerville, 1995). Currently, I get a lot of work this way both by structuring alliances with other larger firms and by hiring other firms to work with me.

Recent trends

- Smaller, more specialized firms;
- A small core of full-time consultants; increasing reliance on sub-contractors for short-term project demands or add special expertise;
- More sophisticated clients;
- More complex projects;

- More demands to extend into the implementation of recommendations (dangerous for an evaluator).

Types of strategic alliances

- Specialist advisors to study teams;
- *Legs* to gather information, conduct analysis and prepare reports;
- Division of projects into discreet teams;
- Virtual teams.

Benefits of strategic alliances

- Tailor skills of team to the unique need of an individual project;
- Independent consultants/small firms can pursue larger, more complex projects;
- Reduce competition through co-optation;
- Offer competitive scheduling;
- Enhance cost competitiveness by assigning tasks by skill level;
- Offer different perspectives to strengthen final analysis;
- Provide insight into the way other consultants work.
-



Whom do I know that I might form an alliance with?

1 Writing Proposals

• The Proposal Budget

Much has been written about preparing proposals and we will look briefly at both a letter proposal and a formal one. Not surprisingly, the central aspect to either type of proposal, however, is the proposed budget. By analyzing the tasks involved in completing the project and by costing them out, you will immediately see if you should continue to pursue this opportunity.

Using an Excel workbook is a great way to prepare a proposal budget.

Here is an example of the front page of such a workbook:

			Planning, Communications & Admin.	Data Collection	Analysis	Report Preparation	Total Days	Total Cost
Personnel		Rate/ Day	Days					
Project Director	GVB	\$1,100	3.00	7.00	2.00	4.00	16.00	\$17,600.00
Senior Researcher	SC	\$875	-	5.00	1.00	3.00	9.00	\$7,875.00
Research Assistant	AR	\$325	-	-	2.00	2.00	4.00	\$1,300.00
Administrative Support	AS	\$310	1.00	-	-	-	1.00	\$310.00
Total Staff Time			4.00	12.00	5.00	9.00	30.00	\$27,085.00
Disbursements								
Travel			-	5,387.19	-	-		\$5,387.19
Long Distance			-	-	-	-		\$0.00
Postage/Courier/Shipping			55.00	-	-	-		\$55.00
Supplies/Materials			-	-	-	-		\$0.00
Transcription			-	750.00	-	-		\$750.00
Total Disbursements			\$55.00	\$6,137.19	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$6,192.19
Grand Total			\$3,665.00	\$18,212.19	\$3,725.00	\$7,675.00		\$33,277.19

Behind this page are a series of pages, one for each task. Examples for Task 1 Planning, Communications & Administration, and Task 2, Data Collection are provided on the following pages.

This flexible template only took a few hours to develop and I have used it for planning many budget proposals. It is easy to change the number of days per activity and see its impact on the bottom line.

Task 1: Planning, Communication & Admin							
Task	Staff	# Days	Rate	Staff Costs	Other Items	Item Costs	Total
Project communications	GVB	2	\$1,100	\$2,200.00			\$2,200.00
Travel arrangements	SC		\$875	\$0.00			\$0.00
	AR		\$325	\$0.00			\$0.00
	AS	1	\$310	\$310.00			\$310.00
	[Initials]		\$0	\$0.00	Travel		\$0.00
	[Initials]		\$0	\$0.00	Long Distance		\$0.00
	[Initials]		\$0	\$0.00	Postage/Courier/Shipping		\$55.00
	[Initials]		\$0	\$0.00	Supplies/Materials		\$0.00
	[Initials]		\$0	\$0.00	Transcription		\$0.00
Design	GVB	1	\$1,100	\$1,100.00			\$1,100.00
Logic model, matrix & template	SC		\$875	\$0.00			\$0.00
Schedule	AR		\$325	\$0.00			\$0.00
	AS		\$310	\$0.00			\$0.00
Total		4		\$3,610.00		\$0.00	\$3,665.00
	GVB	3	\$1,100	\$ 3,300.00			
	SC	0	\$875	\$ -			
	AR	0	\$325	\$ -			
	AS	1	\$310	\$ 310.00			
		<u>4</u>		<u>\$ 3,610.00</u>			
	Travel			\$0.00			
	Long Distance			\$0.00			
	Postage/Courier/Shipping			\$55.00			
	Supplies/Materials			\$0.00			
	Transcription			\$0.00			
				<u>\$55.00</u>			
				\$ 3,665.00			

Task 2: Data Collection							
Task	Staff	# Days	Rate	Staff Costs	Other Items	Item Costs	Total
Case Study Trip to Fredericton	GVB	3	\$1,100	\$3,300.00			\$3,300.00
	SC	2	\$875	\$1,750.00			\$1,750.00
	AR		\$325	\$0.00			\$0.00
	AS		\$310	\$0.00			\$0.00
	[Initials]		\$0	\$0.00	Travel		\$1,513.67
Case Study Trip to Sherbrooke	GVB	2	\$1,100	\$2,200.00			\$2,200.00
	SC	2	\$875	\$1,750.00			\$1,750.00
	AR		\$325	\$0.00			\$0.00
	AS		\$310	\$0.00			\$0.00
	[Initials]		\$0	\$0.00	Travel		\$2,752.08
Case Study Trip to Winnipeg	GVB	2	\$1,100	\$2,200.00			\$2,200.00
	SC	1	\$875	\$875.00			\$875.00
	AR		\$325	\$0.00			\$0.00
	AS		\$310	\$0.00			\$0.00
	[Initials]		\$0	\$0.00	Travel		\$1,121.44
Total		12		\$12,075.00		\$0.00	\$17,462.19
	GVB	7	\$1,100	\$ 7,700.00			
	SC	5	\$875	\$ 4,375.00			
	AR	0	\$325	\$ -			
	AS	0	\$310	\$ -			
		12		\$ 12,075.00			
	Travel			\$5,387.19			
	Long Distance			\$0.00			
	Postage/Courier/Shipping			\$0.00			
	Supplies/Materials			\$0.00			
	Transcription			\$750.00			
				\$6,137.19			
				\$ 18,212.19			

Once you have worked out the budget to your satisfaction, you can then proceed to the preparation of either an informal letter proposal or a formal, traditional proposal.

- **The Letter Proposal**

An example follows.



BARRINGTON Research Group, Inc.

P.O. Box 84056
Market Mall RPO
Calgary, AB T3A 5C4
Phone: **(403) 289-2221**
Fax: **(403) 276-1171**
www.barringtonresearchgrp.com

December 14, 2007

John Smith
Purchasing
XYZ Health Region
Meridian Road
Anytown, AB

Re: Evaluator—ABC Health Project

Dear John

Thank you for this opportunity to submit this brief proposal to provide senior evaluator support for the ABC Health Project. With over 20 years of experience, my firm, Barrington Research Group, Inc. (BRG) is recognized as a leading Canadian social science research firm whose mission is to foster the improvement of human service programs so that the lives of program clients can be improved. We are known for our use of sound research methods, effective communication, personalized service and good business practice. I have conducted many evaluations in a health care setting, most recently working with DDD by acting as Evaluation Advisor to the EEE Evaluation.

I am interested in supporting the XYZ Health Region in this challenging and complex project and feel that I can offer specific skills of use. For example, I recently offered a workshop on linking and handling evaluation specific data at the American Evaluation Association's annual conference in Baltimore, MD and have recently written a chapter for an upcoming book published by Sage on logic models. Your Evaluation Workplan indicates that significant evaluative thinking has already been done with regard to the development of logic models and I would be happy to work further on clarifying the study design and to validate it with project sub-teams and other stakeholders.

Although I would be able to support your evaluation needs in most respects, I do not currently have sufficient capacity to collect or analyze the data required for this project. To that end, I would be happy to work with internal staff and provide guidance as needed.

Here is a brief Task Analysis based on the information provided in your Request for Evaluator Support. I would be happy to discuss it with you further.

Task	Schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Evaluation Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review background documents - Meet staff and kick off project - Revise logic models - Develop Data Collection Matrix - Prepare Evaluation Plan (including questions to be answered, key performance measures/indicators, data collection methods and analysis plans) 	January—March 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate Plan with Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with Project Manager to plan team meetings, then to debrief - Meet with eight teams, obtain feedback, discuss data collection issues and strategies, revise Plan 	January –March 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop/Select Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Search for/review proposed tools - Develop additional tools as needed - Obtain feedback from Data Analysts 	January –March 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and communicate with Project Manager 	January –March 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate the evaluation plan with the Evaluation Steering Committee 	January –March 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Process Evaluation Report 	January—March 2008 March 31, 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support integration of evaluation design into service model development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with Data Analyst team, provide mentorship and support - Support the analysis and aggregation of data collected as per the evaluation plan - Meet with Project Manager for regular updates - Prepare Monthly Status Report (attached to invoice) 	April 2008—March 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Committees/Prepare Progress Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chair Evaluation Steering Committee - Prepare Progress Reports 	Monthly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to the Medical Access Operations Committee on evaluation progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare Progress Reports 	Quarterly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Final Outcome Evaluation Report 	January—March 2009 (<i>to be verified</i>) March 31, 2009 (<i>to be verified</i>)

Three staff members would support these activities including myself, a Research Assistant and an Administrative Assistant. Resumes are attached for research staff:

A brief budget has been prepared based on the Task Analysis, as follows:

			Develop Evaluation Plan	Validate Plan with Stakeholders	Develop/ Select Tools	Coordinate & Communicate with Project Management	Report to Committees / Prepare Progress Reports	Support Internal Data Analysts/ Team	Complete Process Evaluation Report	Complete Final Outcome Report	Total Days	Total Cost
Personnel		Rate/ Day	Days									
Dr Gail Barrington Project Director	GVB	\$1,200	8.00	9.00	3.00	13.00	10.00	15.00	4.00	28.00	90.00	\$108,000.00
Andrea Rutherford Research Assistant	AR	\$400	5.00	4.50	7.00	-	-	-	6.00	14.00	36.50	\$14,600.00
Administrative Support Administrative Support	AS	\$350	-	-	-	5.50	-	-	-	-	5.50	\$1,925.00
Total Staff Time			13.00	13.50	10.00	18.50	10.00	15.00	10.00	42.00	132.00	\$124,525.00
Disbursements												
Travel			50.00	200.00	-	325.00	500.00	375.00	-	75.00		\$1,525.00
Total Disbursements			\$50.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$325.00	\$500.00	\$375.00	\$0.00	\$75.00		\$1,525.00
Grand Total			\$11,650.00	\$12,800.00	\$6,400.00	\$17,850.00	\$12,500.00	\$18,375.00	\$7,200.00	\$39,275.00		\$126,050.00

This total price of \$126,050 is exclusive of tax. Monthly invoicing would be provided accompanied by a Status Report to apprise you of project progress.

Thank you for asking us to prepare this proposal. I look forward to discussing it further should it be of interest. Please feel free to contact me at (403) 289-2221 or at gbarrington@barringtonresearchgrp.com.

Yours sincerely,

Gail V. Barrington, PhD, CMC
President

- **The Formal Proposal**

Proposal Overview

Proposal Section	Topics Covered
1. Cover Letter	Written last, pull the highlights, or review RFP evaluation criteria with relevant page numbers
2. Introduction	Background/Overview of Issues/Context
3. Evaluation Purpose, Program Theory, Objectives	Develop a model for the program theory Develop evaluation objectives or clarify them if in the RFP
4. Corporate Background	Include relevant studies/experience
5. Evaluation Team	One or two paragraphs per team member with main tasks assigned for this project
6. Evaluation Methodology	Describe methodology May prepare draft Data Collection Matrix
7. Task Schedule	Include critical dates like meetings and/or reports Use some kind of a Gant chart
8. Deliverables	Work Plan Status Reports Interim & Final Reports Executive Summary Presentation(s) if appropriate
9. References	Be sure you call them for permission (each time!)
10. Budget	Be realistic. Find out what competitors charge. Provide time for contingencies - they usually happen!
11. Schedule of Payments	Can be negotiated so state what you want. Fixed fee divided by number of payments or actual costs plus overhead.
12. Résumés	3 - 4 pages is enough, target to this project

- **Tips on Writing Formal Proposals** (Government of Canada, 2003)
- Ensure you have received all the necessary parts of the Request for Proposal document (appendices, annexes, attachments, responses to question)
- Read all documents thoroughly to ensure you understand the requirement (90% of rejections are due to the fact that the consultants did not read the document fully)
- Make a note of the bid closing date, time, and location
- Check for a bidder's conference and attend if possible
- Ask questions
- Take note of any special conditions for submitting your bid (e-mail or not? Technical and Financial Proposals separate? Time extensions?)
- Be sure you understand how the proposal will be evaluated, structure your proposal to fit these guidelines and ensure you address all criteria
- Be sure you have the "mandatory requirements" or don't bid
- Be sure to check the point-rated criteria to see if you meet the minimal requirement
- Organize your proposal in a logical order
- Be clear and concise in your response
- Make sure your solutions fit into the time frame given for completion of the work
- Address all required deliverables, including reports
- Clearly define What, by Whom, How Long
- Define your methodology
- Discuss feasibility and degree of success expected (limitations)
- Identify specific tasks and deliverables, number of people involved, level of effort
- Introduce your company, qualifications, years in business, management structure
- Introduce the team, roles, education and experience, include all resumes
- Ensure you have included all requested references with current phone numbers
- Provide a detailed breakdown of the quoted price, all costs, estimated travel costs
- Include government requirements such as certifications, business numbers, etc.

1 PILLAR 3: CONSULTING SKILLS—WORKING WITH CLIENTS

1 Five Steps in a Consulting Engagement

When you work with a client, there are five steps in the consulting process:

1. *Entry*

During this initial phase, the consultant and the client meet, try to learn as much as possible about each other, discuss and define the reason for the engagement and the approach to be taken. In the world of evaluation, this usually involves the preparation, and acceptance, of a proposal, and the development of a contract outlining the project and expectations from both consultant and client.

2. *Diagnosis*

Diagnosis should happen after the contract is awarded. The purpose of this phase is to study and understand the problem faced by the client in detail and depth. It should start with a clear conceptual framework, a restatement of the problem and purpose, and the evaluation questions. Preliminary data gathering may happen at this time, such as a literature review or document review and preliminary interviews with key informants. Data gathering methods are finalized during this phase, often through the Work Plan.

3. *Action Planning*

In this phase, the data collection tools are finalized and any access issues resolved. Participant lists developed, activities detailed, and travel plans made. This phase is variable in length and depends on the specifics of the project scope.

4. *Implementation*

This phase is extensive in an evaluation context and involves data collection, analysis, report preparation and the development of recommendations. This is where you do the work you were hired to do, but is only one of the five steps in the consulting process!

5. *Disengagement*

Every assignment must come to an end and disengagement must happen in a professional manner. The job may be completed, or discontinued, or will continue without your involvement. This has to be crystal clear for both you and your client. Determine jointly if the project is a success, a failure, or something in between. The last impression is very significant and leaves the door open for repeat business. A team debriefing should also happen at this time, even if it is just you and your “inner coach”—in order to learn from your successes and mistakes.

1 Communicating with Clients

An evaluation study can be stopped short by the realization that the client and the evaluator are operating in two solitudes and are no longer speaking the same language. Often as researchers, we get involved in such day-to-day issues as return rates, data analysis and report writing or in such esoteric issues as sample size, respondent bias or the vagaries of SPSS. Meanwhile our clients are struggling with difficult stakeholders, public relations issues, budget cutbacks and office politics, none of which we know about. Suddenly a communication problem results, which can be described as follows: *I'm OK, How Come You Aren't?*

There are a number of client-focused strategies that can help to alleviate this problem.¹³

- *Use In-Person Meetings*

It is important to get together with your client, at least quarterly, even if things are going very smoothly. Generally, the meeting should occur on the client's turf so that you can get a sense of issues they are dealing with. Sometimes, it is also useful to have your client visit your office to meet your staff and to understand why you need to be paid regularly. This can enhance your credibility as well when they see what a professional office you run. Mostly, however, the personal contact is important to keep that chemistry alive. Then, when problems arise, it is easier to *walk in each other's shoes*.

- *Deconstruct Evaluation*

Too often, as evaluators, we do not share our knowledge well. Sometimes we don't even want to. Like other experts, we strive to professionalize what we do by cloaking it in jargon about which even we can't agree, by producing intimidating statistical results for clients with math phobias, and by writing tomes of impenetrable prose for busy executives. Then we worry about utility. We have to deconstruct evaluation and make it non-scary for our clients.

- *Provide On-going Client Training*

Every client contact is an opportunity for evaluation training, not in professor-student mode, but in a collaborative, community development way that is respectful of the client's own knowledge base. Clients and other evaluation participants often bring a lot of baggage to the evaluation table often related to feelings of powerlessness or fear of more work or of unwanted information. We have to find common ground and build from there. Using a micro-teaching approach, or grabbing the teachable moment, you can provide timely, appropriate explanations or definitions as needed.

¹³The following section is taken in large part from my brief paper, *Ignorance is Bliss and What to Do About It*, presented as part of the panel chaired by Bob Wyatt entitled *War & Peace: Evaluators and their Clients*, at the Canadian Evaluation Society Conference in St. John's, NF, June 3-7, 1998.

- *Use Plain Language*

As university students we spend years learning how to write so only the initiated will understand us. Why can't an evaluation report be as exciting as a mystery novel? Don't we want to find out *who done it*, avoid the red herrings and find out how all the pieces fit together (or didn't)? Sometimes I think *safe science* is actually *soporific science*. Maybe we could take just a little more risk in our writing style and attract a few more readers. Often our reports are targeted at more than one audience, which is difficult in itself. A plain language executive summary or placing most of the data in an appendix may be a place to start.

- *Share Knowledge*

When was the last time you attended a Bar Society meeting with your lawyer or a Medical Association meeting with your doctor? Most professions hoard their knowledge. We cannot afford to. Communication is so important in evaluation (if anything is to come of it) we must do the exact opposite. We must bring our clients into the fold and get them involved in evaluation activities. Invite them to association luncheons to meet your colleagues and hear speakers on evaluation topics. Encourage them to attend evaluation conferences and when they feel confident enough, suggest co-presenting a session. Eventually, they can co-write an article on evaluation if they have the interest. Sharing knowledge does not mean that we will then be out of a job because all of our clients will become evaluators themselves; sharing knowledge means that we will talk the same language and enrich each other's perspective all the more because evaluation is approachable and not arcane.

There are many other conflict-inducing situations which can emerge in evaluator-client relationships, and some of them come from situations that are so flawed that they should have been never have been allowed off the drawing board, but in my experience, many issues relate to the communications gap we often unintentionally create. Doing a better job at planning and communications can defuse potential clashes and improve the final product which is, we hope, a solidly designed and executed evaluation study resulting in program improvement and a better quality of life for program clients.

1 **Customer Service**

As in any business in today's rapidly changing environment, customer service is your key to success. Getting new business is costly, time consuming and fraught with risk. Getting repeat business is easy, cheap and personally satisfying! Customer service is important because it is a much less costly way of obtaining business. It also makes sense, is good business practice and fosters your reputation.

- *Have a vision, mission statement and concrete goals*

Write them down. Review them often. Evaluate your success at the end of the year.

- *Know your client's expectations*

If your client's expectations are unfulfilled they will walk away from you. They will not hire you again. They will also tell ten other people that their expectations were not fulfilled.

- *Be sure your product fits your client's needs*

This is why circulating a draft report is so important. Many crises are averted at this point. Be willing to re-write, and re-write, and re-write . . . It pays off in the long run. After all, you are flexible and responsive [of course, the research findings don't change, but the language and terminology may].

- *Be sure your product is outstanding*

This is where you out-do the competition. You have to be the best!

- *Be sure your systems and resources support your product*

An old program or a slow computer can kill you. And haven't you noticed how the photocopier always breaks down when you need it most? Leave enough time for emergencies. Have two or three back-up courier systems. Always pay them first!

- Be sure the people you hire share your vision

They are the key to your success. Empower them and they will empower you.

1 **Build Client Capacity**

Clients and other stakeholders bring a lot of baggage to the evaluation table:

- ✓ Feelings of powerlessness;
- ✓ Fear of negative outcomes;
- ✓ Lack of trust;
- ✓ Heavy workloads; and
- ✓ Lack of information.

Find common ground and build from there. Do a **needs assessment** or an **evaluability assessment** as a way to get the issues on the table. Try to build trust.

Use a micro-teaching approach and provide timely, appropriate information about evaluation as needed. A collaborative, community development, adult education approach is respectful of the client's own knowledge base.

Emerging trends in adult education can be used in evaluation processes:

- ✓ The adult learner is now seen holistically, not just as an “information processor.”
- ✓ The learning process is more than the acquisition & storage of information—it is transformative and helps change our lives.
- ✓ Context-based learning shapes the learning that takes place. It situates the learner in real-life activities, using real tools & real social interaction. It is demonstrated in communities of learners & learning organizations.
- ✓ Informal/ incidental learning has led to the validation of mentoring & coaching.
- ✓ Intuitive learning/ emotional intelligence has led to the use of metaphor & storytelling or the narrative process as legitimate ways of collecting data. Support Knowledge Transfer in your evaluation plans and activities.

1 Working Ethically

AEA Guiding Principles

Check the website of the American Evaluation Association for their Guiding Principles for Evaluators. Refer to them often and quote as needed. In summary, they include: ¹²

- A. Systematic Inquiry: Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries about whatever is being evaluated.
- B. Competence: Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.
- C. Integrity/Honesty: Evaluators ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.
- D. Respect for People: Evaluators respect the security, dignity and self-worth of the respondents, program participants, clients, and other stakeholders with whom they interact.
- E. Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare: Evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the general and public welfare.

The Program Evaluation Standards

In addition, you should have a copy of The Program Evaluation Standards, 2nd Edition. How to Assess Evaluations of Educational Programs. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. James R. Sanders, Chair. Sage Publications. Thousand Oaks. 1994. These are also currently being updated. In summary, they include a list of standards related to:

- Utility
- Feasibility
- Propriety
- Accuracy

¹² American Evaluation Association, <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/aeaprin6.html>
Workshop 6: Barrington

Fair Play

Fee-setting is a matter of honesty and trust as well as a matter of measurement and control. Consultants' associations spend a good deal of time setting parameters for ethical practice with regard to billing. Clients need to be properly informed about fees and methods used to calculate fees. It is important to be up-front about fee rates and the written proposal should not come as a surprise.

Charging for time that is not worked is unethical. You should be able to provide a paper trail about your actual time on task (e.g., your day timer is a good place to start). Always be aware that you could be asked to prove the amount of time you say you have expended. Nor should you be embarrassed about this – it is the client's right to know. Usually, however, they don't ask and trust that you have integrity. If you are in a situation where you fear that costs have been greatly overestimated, you should sit down with your client and re-assess the job. Being honest will pay in the long run.

Double billing must also be avoided. If, for example, you work for more than one client during the same trip, expenses should be pro-rated. Clients will appreciate your efficiency.

1 **Becoming Culturally Competent**

Culturally responsive evaluation:

- Is based on an examination of impacts through lenses in which the culture of the participants is considered important.
- Is based on the belief that there are no culture-free evaluators, educational tests, or societal laws. Too often nonverbal behaviours are treated as “error variance” in observation and are ignored.
- Multiethnic evaluation teams and cultural guides can increase the chances of really hearing the voices of underrepresented stakeholders/ groups.
- Stakeholders can play a critical role in culturally responsive evaluations and their questions must be heard and addressed. They should be involved in discussing what constitutes acceptable evidence before conducting the evaluation.
- Evaluation results should be viewed by audiences as not only useful, but truthful as well.

An example of a culturally responsive evaluation meets the following criteria (Hood & Hughes, 2002):

- All stakeholders were involved in its design
- It treats all program participants as equals
- It honors the different ways of knowing that are held by different cultural groups
- It is valid from a multi-cultural perspective (that is, more than one culture)
- It avoids descriptions that put certain cultural groups in a negative light
- It describes social issues in a culturally appropriate way
- It reflects the reality of this specific program
- It is sensitive to unspoken tensions or labels (such as racism)

1 Pillar 4: MANAGEMENT SKILLS—KEEPING IT GOING

1 Managing Time

You need the following tools in order to manage your time effectively:

- A Day-timer that you use religiously to record your time spent on either billable or non-billable business-related activities. You need to do this in quarter-hour chunks. Thus your day might look as follows:

8:30 – 9:00	Office administration	.50
9:00 – 10:30	Client meeting (Project 1)	1.50
10:30 – 10:45	Accounts	.25
10:45 – 11:00	Marketing	.25
11:00 – 12:00	Content analysis (Project 2)	1.00
1:00 – 3:30	Report preparation (Project 3)	2.50
3:30 – 5:00	Interview (Project 2)	1.50
7:00 – 9:30	Travel (Project 1)	2.50

- A software program to enter your hours. This may or may not be linked to your billing system. Ours was developed in-house on Excel and we have been using it for a number of years.
- An accounting software program to record actual costs (your salary pro-rated by quarter hour chunks) against specific projects. This is called project accounting.
- A project proposal to compare actual costs against proposed costs. Are you making money yet?
- A countdown column to see how much time is left in the project.

With all the court cases recently related to consulting contracts with no deliverables evident, no record of how time was spent, etc., your accountability for use of time is critical. It is also a comfort to know that if anyone ever asks you, you have the records to support your claim.

[See Time Sheet Summaries in the Appendix.]

1 Managing Money—The Cash-flow Wars

Getting a contract is less than half the battle. Most of the battle has to do with:

Cash-flow, cash-flow, cash-flow!

- When was the last time you looked at your balance sheet? Do you have a balance sheet? An accounting program? A bookkeeper or accountant?
Did you know that only 1 in 4 business owners review their accounting records carefully? (Toncre, 1986)
- What is your current bank balance? How is it different from last month's balance?
Less than 5% of business owners know present cash positions or changes in the last cash period!
- What is your anticipated revenue for this fiscal year? Do you have a fiscal year/year end?
Less than 2% have ever used a cash flow projection!

If you want to run a successful business, you need to know the answers to these questions – every day!

- **Tips for Managing for Accounts Receivable**

1. Don't extend credit to any client who has a poor track record in paying bills.
2. Have slow-paying customers pre-pay 25–33% of the total invoice up front.
3. Have progress payments. Where possible, bill in regular monthly installments. I link these to a monthly status report and clients seem to like having the updates. (Value added for them, cash benefit for me). If not possible, go for monthly billing.
4. Be reasonable with your clients, but take a business attitude. Expect payment after 30 days and if the invoice is not paid, start calling. This is hard to do but you get used to it! Do you want to stay in business or don't you?
5. Find out who signs the cheque requisitions for your funder. Get to know them. Find out the name of the clerks in Accounts Payable at your client's office. Get to know them too. They hate to look bad and if your account is lying on your client's desk, it may be more effective to have them call your client rather than having you call – again!
6. Bill on time.

7. Fee-setting is a matter of honesty and trust as well as a matter of measurement and control. Consultants' associations spend a good deal of time setting parameters for ethical practice with regard to billing. Clients need to be properly informed about fees and methods used to calculate fees. It is important to be up-front about fee rates and the written proposal should not come as a surprise.
8. Charging for time that is not worked is unethical. You should be able to provide a paper trail about your actual time on task (e.g., your day timer is a good place to start). Always be aware that you could be asked to prove the amount of time you say you have expended. Nor should you be embarrassed about this – it is the client's right to know. Usually, however, they don't ask and trust that you have integrity. If you are in a situation where you fear that costs have been greatly overestimated, you should sit down with your client and re-assess the job. Being honest will pay in the long run.
9. Double billing must also be avoided. If, for example, you work for more than one client during the same trip, expenses should be pro-rated. Clients will appreciate your efficiency.

- **Tips for Managing Accounts Payable**

1. Pay bills when they are due.
2. When strapped for cash, pay those vendors first who support your key business functions (e.g., courier).
3. Develop an expense control system that anticipates expenditures before they are incurred. This can be part of a cash flow spread sheet. Compare cash in and cash out for the month and manage accordingly. The financial position of a small business can change in a month. You can't afford to be dealing with old information.
4. Control inventory. Purchase wisely. Limit capital investments until you can afford them.
5. Avoid the trap if at all possible of only paying creditors after being paid yourself. This one is hard to get out of.

- **General Cash Tips—Bootstrapping**

1. Never (repeat, **never**) start a project without a contract!
2. Always develop a Work Plan with the number of days per task clearly agreed to by the client. The monthly Status Report can also keep the client apprised of where you stand in relation to total time use. This way there are no surprises. I have had clients call me and say, "I see you need more time. Should we re-negotiate?"
3. Get to know your client. The best way to get business is repeat business. Have them visit your office. That way they can see where some of their money goes (e.g., rent,

staff, coffee). If your relation with your client is good enough, you can discuss anticipated cost-over-runs honestly – as long as it is beforehand. Their needs may have changed, if so, yours will as well.

4. Get to know your bankers really well. Train them about your business and keep them updated. Try lunch, a Christmas card, a thank-you note. Operate on a policy of no surprises. It is better to have a loan that you pay off smartly than to have no loan at all. Bankers sell loans; if you don't buy one they aren't as interested in you. Having a loan also gives you a credit record. BUT remember you are a consumer – don't get intimidated. Shop around.
5. Develop systems. Use your consulting skills on yourself. Here are some examples of systems I use in addition to my accounting system:
 - Time Sheets (on a spread sheet program) and monthly/year-to-date summaries
 - Project Cost Summaries (on accounting program)
 - Proposal Tracking Sheets
 - Weekly/Monthly Goals
 - Cash-flow Projection/ Actual (12 months ahead)
 - Budget
6. Invest extra cash – even if it is only for a week. Better yet, invest 10% of every incoming check.
7. Set a profit goal for the year. Set a long term goal (e.g., I want to buy my building by the year 2015.)
8. Focus on productivity issues. How can you do things smarter, faster and better? This includes the whole area of motivating and retaining staff.
9. Get in the habit of checking your bank account on line each day and use it to pay routine bills.
10. Consider on-line payroll services.
11. Invest in accounting support. If you are too busy to mind your business, get someone to help you do it.
12. The worst problem facing small businesses is that they are **cash poor**. Find ways to acquire sufficient working capital so you won't have to turn away business because you can't afford it.
13. Consider a deferred revenue account to hold money paid in advance of work performed.
14. Set goals and measure them. That shouldn't be hard for you!

No matter how interesting the project, taking care of business comes **first**.
Every day!

Your company's financial strength provides the security you need to help you function effectively in the evaluation consultant role. A comfortable cash flow will enable you to work on the technical side without the distraction of phone calls from your creditors. This is a control issue as well so that we have the greatest freedom to make the decisions affecting our future—which is why we are planning to go into business in the first place.



Personal Action Planning

1 Managing Risk—Ownership Structures and Contracts

1 Understanding Ownership Structures

1. Sole Proprietorship

A sole proprietorship is the simplest form of business structure. It is a business that is owned and operated by one person. To set it up, you only need to obtain whatever local licenses are required to operate a business in your city or county and then get down to work. According to the U. S. Small Business Administration (2010), the vast majority of small business owners start out as a sole proprietorship. You need to register a legal business name so that you can complete any government forms, applications, licenses, or permits that are required or to receive an employer tax identification number if you want to hire staff.

In many states you can operate your business under your own personal name with no extra words attached, so for example, Mary Smith can operate a business called 'Mary Smith' but as this is likely to be confusing, she will probably want to register her business name as 'Mary Smith Consulting'. This is known variously as a 'trade name', a 'Doing Business As (DBA) name', or a 'fictitious name,' depending on where you live. Typically, you register this business name with the county clerk's office or state government agency.

Advantages of being a sole proprietor

1. Ease of Formation.
2. Low Cost.
3. Simple Requirements.
4. High control.
5. Ownership of profits.
6. Easy termination.

Disadvantages of being a sole proprietor

1. Unlimited liability.
2. Taxation issues.
3. Harder to borrow money.
4. Only one decision maker.
5. Employee perceptions.
6. Impact on benefits.
7. Duration depends on the health of the owner.

2. Partnership

A partnership is usually defined as an association between two or more people to carry on a business in common by combining their skills and resources and by sharing their profits, losses and liabilities. It is created by agreeing to either a verbal or a written contract. It is important to note that a partnership is described as a 'relationship' between the individuals. It is not a separate legal entity. Each partner shares the net income of the partnership and this is taxed as personal income. The partnership structure is common in management consulting.

Because relationships are the key to a successful partnership, and because the financial rewards and liabilities can be significant, choosing a partner is a serious business but in my view people tend to be naïve about partnering and think that a 'gentleman's agreement' and a handshake is all that is required. Those who have difficulty working together, have different conceptions of professional service and ethics, or do not trust each other for any reason should avoid becoming partners (Kubr, 2002, p. 764).

Advantages of a partnership structure

1. Ease of formation.
2. Pride of ownership.
3. Availability of more resources.
4. Division of labor.
5. Freedom from government control.
6. Employee perceptions.

Disadvantages of a partnership structure

1. Unlimited liability.
2. Managing conflict.
3. Partnership agreement problems.
4. Taxation and benefit issues.
5. Unstable duration.

3. Corporation

A corporation can be established and owned by one or more individuals. It has two fundamental characteristics. First of all, it is a legal entity and exists separately from its owners. This means that at law has all the rights and responsibilities of a natural person. Secondly, it has a life of its own and does not cease to exist when ownership changes or an owner withdraws from the business or dies. It can be taxed, it can be sued, and it can enter into contractual agreements. The owners are the shareholders. They elect a board of directors to oversee major policies and decisions. Size is not an issue. It is possible to be a sole one

owner, sole shareholder, and sole director in a small incorporated business. Whether large or small, owners have no personal liability for the obligations and debts of the corporation.

In the United States there are several variations on the corporation developed mainly for tax purposes. Their complexities are such that consulting with a tax advisor is essential. They include:

- A regular "C" corporation (a designation used by the US Internal Revenue Service or IRS) used to have lower tax rates than individuals but this is not true anymore. Money left inside the corporation is taxed as profit and then is taxed again as income when an owner takes it out as dividends.
- A subchapter "S" Corporation has not a separate structure but is really just a tax election. While it is not recognized in all states, it is a popular structure for small businesses in the U. S. The shareholders can pass through earnings and profits directly to their personal tax returns, thus overcoming the double-tax problem of the regular C-Corporation. Further, the shareholders can offset business losses incurred by the corporation against their income. Any shareholder that performs work for the corporation has to be an employee, receiving wages which meet standards of 'reasonable compensation.' This requires you to set up a payroll system and pay for Social Security and Medicare. In an S-Corporation you do not have to pay self employment tax and can claim some earnings as a dividend (at a lower tax rate) instead of as payroll. At some point in the future, you may wish to convert an S-Corporation to a C-Corporation and this process is quite simple. However, you cannot revert back for several years once the "S" election is reversed.
- A Limited Liability Company or LLC is a relatively new type of hybrid business structure that is now permissible in most states. It is very popular for small business start ups because it is easy to set up and offers the pass-through tax advantages of a partnership with the liability protection of a corporation. Annual fees are required and any modification to the structure requires an additional fee. There is a time limit to the duration of an LLC but it can be continued by a vote of the members at the time of expiration. LLCs can have foreign investors and thus can take advantage of the fast-growing international business market. Most states allow for a single owner LLC but the tax implications may be the same as those for either a sole proprietor or partner. You are liable to pay a self-employment tax on the full profit of the LLC up to a certain level.

Advantages of a Corporate Structure

1. Limited liability.
2. Tax advantages.
3. Financing is more readily available.
4. Management and employee flexibility.
5. Greater credibility.
6. Continued life of the company.

Disadvantages of a Corporate Structure

1. Taxation.
2. Legal and administrative costs.



Personal Action Planning

1 **Advisors**

You need several advisors to run your business and you need to educate them about what you do and have good relations with all of them. You need at least the following:

- Accountants – a bookkeeper and a CPA
- Lawyer/Attorney –needed to set up your corporate structure; boilerplate contracts
- Bank Manager – to obtain your line of credit
- Insurance Broker – to find you two kinds of insurance, general liability and professional/errors & omissions



Personal Action Planning

1 **Contracts & Agreements**

Once your proposal wins, there are two cardinal rules to remember:

- Never start work without a contract.
- Attach the Work Plan to your contract (or at least refer to it in the contract).

Often, the Plan is attached to the agency's formal contract as "Schedule A." In this way, we try to obtain ownership from the decision makers and key stakeholders for the evaluation process. When study *drift* starts to occur later on, we can refer to the plan and determine whether the new expectations were part of the original design. If not, we can comfortably say that these new demands were not part of our contract but that we would be happy to add them if the contract is revised (in terms of time and money). Another option is to ensure that the contract has a *change order* clause.

The important thing is to always have a contract before you start to work. Always! Many clients have their own contract forms. Be sure you read them over carefully before you sign, and again, run them past your attorney. Whatever he or she charges, it is worth it in the long run.

You also need to develop a sub-contract to use whenever you hire a sub-contractor to work with you on a project.

In addition, and this is becoming more important all the time, every employee, student, contractor or volunteer working for you should sign a confidentiality agreement. It protects not only your client, but also you!



Personal Action Planning

1 Keys to Success

The 33 Keys to Independent Consulting

The following statements describe key ingredients for success as an independent consultant. They provide a checklist of factors to consider in making your decision. Rate objectively the accuracy of each statement as it describes you in relation to your current situation. (5 = a very accurate description, 1 = a wide gap between the statement and your situation.)

- 1 2 3 4 5 I have a clear statement of the mission of my proposed practice.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can describe in ten seconds what my proposed services accomplish.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I possess a high level of knowledge/skill in my chosen specialty.*
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have done research which indicates a clear market for my services.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I know who my prospective clients are.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have a marketing plan to reach prospective clients.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I know my own strengths and vulnerabilities, and those of my competition.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can differentiate my services from my competitors.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have well-developed contacts with people who are potential clients.*
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have a faithful network of people with good contacts to refer me.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I sincerely believe that the client's needs must come first.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I will turn down an assignment if I am only marginally qualified for it.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can estimate accurately the time required to complete a project's tasks.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I thrive on project work.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I meet promised deadlines.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I approach problems with an open mind.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I consistently strive to experiment and learn my work.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can write persuasive proposals and reports.

- 1 2 3 4 5 I am more inclined to listen than to talk.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can listen non-defensively to criticism and learn from it.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I grasp quickly new concepts and situations.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I treat information provided in confidence as confidential.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can easily earn and maintain trust.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can communicate sensitive information constructively and persuasively.*
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can explain difficult concepts understandably to a variety of people.*
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have at least six months of savings to sustain me when I have no income.*
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can live with wide fluctuations of income.*
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have the support of my spouse for becoming an independent consultant.*
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have a mentor/confidant to whom I can turn when I need help.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have the self-discipline to work independently.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I am not considering consulting primarily to escape from a job I don't like.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I am comfortable dealing with organizational politics.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I am not easily discouraged.*

Scoring

Add the ratings and divide by 33.

- If your average is between 4 and 5, with no 1 or 2 ratings, you have a good chance of success.
- If your average is between 3 and 4, with no 1 or 2 ratings, you have a fair chance of success.
- If your average is below 3, or if you have some 1 or 2 ratings, you face barriers that may prompt you to reconsider whether independent consulting is for you. (Some 1 and 2 ratings can be changed by actions on your part, while others are more difficult to change.)
- Statements followed by an asterisk signify critical ingredients for which a 4 or 5 is almost essential for success.

From "Thinking of Becoming an Independent Consultant?" Ian Jacobsen, CMC. The Journal of Management Consulting. Vol 6, No. 3, 1990.

1 Round Up and Action Planning

At the beginning of this workshop, I rated my independent consulting skills. How do they rate now?

	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low	Don't know/ Not applicable
	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
Skill sets:						
1. Personal attributes	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Entrepreneurial skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Consulting skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Any changes? What do I need to do next to improve my skills?



Personal Action Planning

When I get home, I will do the following five things:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Workshop Evaluations

- AEA Workshop Evaluation Form
- BRG Workshop Evaluation Form

Thank you!

Thank you for being a great group! Feel free to contact me in the future to tell me about your progress as an independent consultant!

All the best!

Gail V. Barrington, PhD, CMC

gbarrington@barringtonresearchgrp.com

1 **Profile of Gail V. Barrington, PhD, CMC, CE**

Dr. Gail Barrington is a well-known Canadian program evaluator who has made significant contributions to the profession through her evaluation practice, writing, teaching, training, mentoring and service to the field of evaluation. She founded her consulting firm, Barrington Research Group, Inc. in Calgary, Alberta in 1985 and has conducted more than one hundred program evaluation studies at the federal, provincial and grassroots levels. Her evaluation studies range from health promotion and health services to education and training, research, and knowledge exchange. Her recent work on evidence-based evaluation has led to the development of more rigorous evaluation designs and she is currently advising a number of organizations about the adoption of this approach.

She is a Credentialed Evaluator and a Certified Management Consultant as well as a certified teacher. She instructs a Master's level course on the evaluation of health services and systems for the Centre for Health Studies at Athabasca University. For many years, Dr. Barrington has conducted workshops on evaluation topics, most recently at the Claremont Graduate University Summer Professional Development series in Claremont, California and at the Summer Institute in Atlanta, Georgia, jointly sponsored by the Centres for Disease Control and the American Evaluation Association.

She has been an active member of CES and AEA since 1985 and is the current chair of the AEA Leadership Priority Area Team. She is also a member of the newly instituted Canadian Evaluation Society Credentialing Board. She is currently preparing a book on consulting skills for Sage Publications and hopes that it will be released in 2011. She is a member of the editorial board for *New Directions in Evaluation* and co-edited Issue #111 on Independent Evaluation Consulting in 2006. In 2008 she received the Canadian Evaluation Society award for her Contribution to Evaluation in Canada.

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Appendix

1 Sample Time Sheets

Summary of Time Sheet

Name: Name Date: August 16-31

# Calendar Working Days:	<u>11.00</u>	HOLIDAYS		
Total Time Worked:	9.93	Total	# Taken to Date	# Taken Remaining
Difference/Overtime:	(1.07)	30	14	16
Brought forward	(13.59)			
Total Accumulated Overtime:	<u>(14.66)</u>	74.5		

Total Time Per Non-Billable Project: **% of Total Time Worked:**

	Days	
Office Management	0.50	5.03
Marketing	0.00	0.00
Non-Profit	0.23	2.35
Professional Development	0.00	0.00
Travel	0.00	0.00
<u>Total Non-Billable</u>	<u>0.73</u>	<u>7.38</u>

Total Time Per Billable Project:

Project Title	Project Tasks (Days)	Total Time Worked:	Travel Time (Days)	TOTAL
AU 100-10-17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
BVC Consulting	0.60	6.04	0.00	0.60
BWESO3	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CRHA-100-10-03	8.47	85.23	0.00	8.47
MCF-100-10-01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
SM-100-10-02 Science Metrics	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tom Baker	0.13	1.34	0.00	0.13
<u>Total Billable</u>	<u>9.20</u>	<u>92.62</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>9.20</u>

Non-Billable Projects															
Name: Name		Date: <u>August 16-31</u>													
Date	Office Administration					Marketing		Volunteer	Professional Development						Non-Billable Totals
	Admin.	Plan'g	Acc'ts	Pers'nl	Office Mgmt	Proposal	Other	Time	Courses /Seminars	Conf. (Att)	Conf Prep. & Pres.	Tech. Read'g	Art. /Publ.	Orient-ation	
16															
17	0.50				0.25										
18								1.00							
19	0.25														
20	0.25							0.75							
21															
22															
23	0.25														
24	0.25														
25	0.25														
26	1.25														
27	0.25														
28	0.25														
29															
30															
Hours	3.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.00	1.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.50
Days	0.47	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.73
Category Totals (Days)	0.50					0.00		0.23	0.00						

Billable Project:		CRHA-100-10-03								
Name:	Name					Date:	August 16-31			
	Evaluability Design	Interim Report Preparation	Meetings	Data Collection	Analysis	Final Report	Communications & Administration	Travel	Total	
GVB	2.44	8.90	-7.01	-7.73	2.23	28.10	5.37		32.30	
AR	(0.60)	0.00	-0.10	0.00	-1.06	20.00	0.00		18.24	
ZM							2.99		2.99	
Remaining	1.84	8.90	(7.11)	(7.73)	1.17	48.10	8.36	0.00	53.53	
16										
17					6.25	4.75			11.00	
18					0.50	3.75			4.25	
19						6.75	0.25		7.00	
20							0.50		0.50	
21						2.50			2.50	
22									0.00	
23						3.25			3.25	
24			2.00			3.75			5.75	
25						1.00			1.00	
26						6.25			6.25	
27			2.25			2.75			5.00	
28						6.25			6.25	
29									0.00	
30						3.75			3.75	
31						7.00			7.00	
									0.00	
Hours	0.00	0.00	4.25	0.00	6.75	51.75	0.75	0.00	63.50	
Actual Days	0.00	0.00	0.57	0.00	0.90	6.90	0.10	0.00	8.47	