

# What the clients say

Consultancy work is always a strategically sensitive affair and customers rarely want to shed light on their successful employment of business consultants. Nonetheless, we've found four willing to share the ups and downs of their experiences.



Judy Ryder, director of organisational development at Whitefriars Housing Group

## The not-for-profit view: A two-way relationship

'They didn't come in with an off-the-shelf product but instead worked really hard with us to create something that suited our needs'

Born out of a local government department and now operating as a not-for-profit organisation, Whitefriars Housing Group has had to overcome a number of rather unique problems since its formation in 2000.

Managing 17,000 homes across Coventry and the West Midlands, and having been responsible for investing around £250 million in the renovation of these properties, Whitefriars' activities straddle both the public and private sectors. As director of organisational development Judy Ryder explains, "the challenge for us coming

from the public sector was to create a corporate culture."

Over the years, Whitefriars has worked with a number of consultancies to help it achieve this goal. Innovative agency Tomorrow Today is among those now garnering considerable praise for its efforts, with Ryder saying, "they didn't come in with an off-the-shelf product but instead worked really hard with us to create something that suited our needs."

A strong relationship between consultancy and client is, according to Ryder, essential if things are to run smoothly. "I've had mixed experiences previously," she explains. "If you get an arrogant individual with an off-the-shelf solution you can run into problems. The consultants I like to work with come in and really try to understand what your organisation needs. At the end of the day, you're the one that has to implement their recommendations when they leave, so having a good relationship gives an added richness to your understanding of what must be done."

That said, Ryder does also believe that client firms can make life difficult for themselves, too. "I think a lot of people use consultants when they aren't really sure what they're trying to achieve and that's where the consultants can get a raw deal. We only use people when we know what we want them for."



Leigh Nissim, managing director of St Minver

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"BusinessesForSale was a very small, fast-grow consultancy firm to help us with a project on acc

The problem with this approach, he concedes, is that can deliver what you need. We wanted to be est level of the firm we hired, but that was never I've taken from the experience is that you need your size. If you're very small the likes of Deloit offer the level of service you require."

Nissim also believes it's important to establish commencing work. "When consultants are good you may have overlooked," he elaborates. "That additional costs you might incur from the start. Y outset. That will make the job easier for them and you give a consultant a wide and free remit they them a defined project it will run more smoothly

"And don't make it hard for them," he adds. "The consultant will need to do their job and make sur gain access."



Edmund Jahn, managing director of Harmoni Health Services

## The growing business view: Identify your skills gap

"Consultants often tell you what you already know, but haven't had time to realise"

Provider of a range of primary healthcare services in the UK, Harmoni Health Services recently evolved from being a not-for-profit organisation into a commercial business with the aid of consulting firm WCI. And, says managing director Edmund Jahn, "I think there are two fundamental things to consider when using consultants. Firstly, do they have the skills and competencies you don't? Sometimes it's good for a business to bring in people who will tell you what you don't know. After all, some things are best left to individuals with the relevant skills."

When it comes to his experiences at Harmoni, Jahn reasons that "the not-for-profit world is quite insular and, within it, you're also insulated against many things. When you have to start taking commercial risks and trying to turn a profit, however, you



Mike Hedgecox, customer and store director of UK electrical at Currys

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