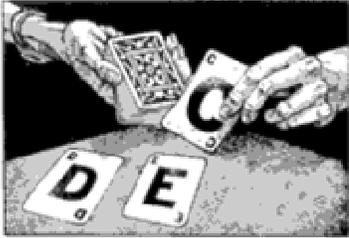


Treat consultants with due respect

By David Bicknell

On Dec



Put yourself in the position of one of the top consultants, working your way around suppliers with an £Xm contract up for grabs. It has already been a trying time, and you

really only have two suppliers in mind: one is the world's largest computer company, the other is the third largest.

You have spoken to Honeywell, ICL and Unisys, and been impressed with the way their consultancy teams have responded to your call. But their offerings are not quite right.

So you call the 'monolith', thinking "surely the computer company will be the one we're really after". Unfortunately, you can't get hold of the right person, and after about 26 transfers of your call round the company, you're rather fed up. Still, they do eventually find someone for you to talk to, and the response is adequate.

Then you call the other company, the namesake of this column. You immediately get put through to the 'consultancy desk', where the people seem to know just what you are talking about. In fact, you muse, they are even quite well-informed, for staff of a computer supplier.

After a long conversation, you conclude that this company's kit is probably going to be sufficient for the job. Now you come to write your report and recommendations to the user. You say that there are really only two companies you can recommend. Both have equipment that will do the job; both represent the peak of the industry's talent.

But, quite naturally, in your report you can't avoid putting over to the user the view that the smaller of the two seemed more in tune with the requirements, and had a better grasp of what was going on.

A few weeks later, you learn that the user has gone for Dec kit, and decided against IBM. Could it be that one computer company has got its consultancy act together while the other has not?

The above is only a scenario, but according to consultancy sources, DEC's approach to consultancy queries is impressive (as is that of Honeywell, Unisys and ICL).

They add that sometimes it is very difficult to get hold of the right person at IBM, and anyway didn't someone suggest they had disbanded their Chiswick-based team?

So next time you see that Dec has won a contract against IBM, remember it may just have something to do with how long the consultants were kept waiting.

Reprinted from Computer News, April 23, 1987

Laurence Lyons was Consultant Relations Manager at DEC UK from 1986-1988 where he defined and ran the consultant programme interfacing all Big Eight management consultancies at partner level and leading niche boutiques across Europe.

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DOING BUSINESS WITH DEC

A Guide for Management Consultants

