

# Can Consultants Execute Change?

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I've been quiet on the blogging front for quite a while because I was involved in a multi-year project that, to put it mildly, took up every waking and sleeping moment of my day.

As I've been winding down from that project and starting on more traditional projects, I've been thinking about the role and value of consultants. The value proposition is pretty clear in traditional consulting projects where the need is a specific expertise that doesn't exist within the organization and is only needed for a short period of time. But, I believe, there is another time where consultants can bring real value --- extended projects where companies are executing a transformation or growing to the next level.

I had a client a few years ago who wanted to start sales through the channel. It was a relatively young company, so it didn't have an entrenched culture that made its expansion into channels a cultural transformation. It just (!) needed to build an organization from scratch and insure the business was ready to support the resulting growth.

The first time it tried, it hired an experienced channel manager. A gentleman ready to move from Director to VP with years of great experience growing and managing VARs. It didn't work out. He did a great job managing the few partners the company had, but they ran into all sorts of problems in legal, finance, marketing and tech support because those organizations hadn't been restructured to support channels.

The next time they tried, they hired C level exec from a Fortune 500 company. It was a huge investment for them. She quickly assessed the challenges they faced operationally and began making much needed changes. While the internal support of channels improved a great deal, they still were unable to recruit the number and quality of partners they needed. They ultimately parted ways, mutually agreeing she wasn't the right fit.

That's when I met them. While I ultimately did help them recruit the permanent team they needed, we recommend they look at the role as being a two phased role. The reason the first two attempts failed was less about the competencies of the executives they hired, than it was the skill to develop a channel organization from scartch and jump start growth is very different than the skill needed to manage incremental growth.

In this instance, the AZtech team brought all the experience the company needed to prepare operationally and programmetically for channels as well as the experience recruiting and jump starting partners. Once the internal work was complete and we had a proven playbook for recruiting partners that would deliver revenue within 90 days, the company hired a VP of Channels who went on to generate almost \$100M in net new channel revenue in the three years before it was acquired.

There are times a business needs very a seasoned professional or team to create or transform. But those professionals are rarely the right people to manage the steady state of the resulting organization. Rather than risking disruptive, and potentially

expensive, turnover, a consultant could be a better fit.

What do you think? Was our experience the exception that proved the rule or can a consulting organization deliver the expertise needed to execute a change strategy so the business can invest in the talent it needs for long term growth?