

A consultants dilemma

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What is really interesting about such situations is that senior managers, when faced with the prospect of leading such change will reach out for consultants to help to provide some sense of certainty in what is perceived as an ambiguous and high risk situation. Thus a paradox arises, how to increase the tolerance of the leaders to ambiguity so that they can find the opportunities in such situations whilst at the same time allowing them to move forward into a new world with some confidence without creating dependency. Of course many consultations would argue (in private) that they actually want to create dependency and keep the customer coming back for more - profit over ethics. Asking such consultants at the start what their exit strategy is can be enlightening! Many will create the appearance of certainty and comfort for organisational leaders as this increases dependency on the consultants. A consultant who states that their aim is to increase tolerance to ambiguity must at the same time be increasing independence in their client. Increased independency necessarily means that the client learns to solve their own problems. If they can solve their own problems they don't need a consultant.

Some leaders however are so risk averse that they actively want the comfort of the certainty peddled by the consultants without realising the dangers of dependency inherent in such a situation. Needless to say it is a rare consultant who points this out to a prospective client.