

# a sideways LOOK

News from Elevation Learning

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## Significant events in consulting in 20 years

- 1989 Consultancy Skills Training founded by Calvert Markham and Ken Dietz  
IBM promotes its consulting business in its "know how" campaign
- 1990 Fujitsu buys 80% ICL
- 1994 Stoy Hayward became part of BDO International
- 1995 eBay founded
- 1997 Google founded
- 1998 Price Waterhouse merges with Coopers & Lybrand to form PricewaterhouseCoopers
- 2000 Andersen Consulting separates from Arthur Andersen to become Accenture
- 2002 Logica and CMG merge to form LogicaCMG  
ICL becomes Fujitsu Services  
IBM acquires PricewaterhouseCoopers  
Enron scandal; collapse of Arthur Andersen
- 2004 Institute of Management Consultants merges with Chartered Management Institute  
GreySpace Consulting launched as consultancy arm of Consultancy Skills Training
- 2007 IMC merges with Institute of Business advisors to be known as Institute of Business Consulting (IBC)  
Consultancy Skills Training rebrands as Elevation Learning
- 2009 Elevation Learning celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday

## Celebrating 20 years!



Many small businesses fail after only a short time, so reaching our 20th birthday is an achievement in itself. Like many small consulting practices, however, I suspect that for much of the time we have not seen ourselves as a business - more a team of like-minded individuals, working with clients of the same ilk, on topics of shared interest and benefit. And throughout this period our interest has been in developing consultants' skill. Consultants are a challenging group of people to train, but with that challenge come both stimulation and the opportunity of working with like-minded professionals.

Although the business environment has moved on (in our world for example, the technology of email and computer projection have replaced laborious letters and hours of painstaking foil preparation) the skills needed by consultants to perform effectively remain much the same. The capacity to engage convincingly with clients, address problems and add value through well managed projects is perennial.

In retrospect we might of course have done things differently along the way; we certainly didn't have a 20 year time horizon when we started. But we obviously have been doing something right: our clients and consultants stay with us for years and we would not have survived without them. Our thanks must go to them, as well as to our faithful support team.

We were one of the first organisations to specialise in training consultants - and there aren't that many doing it even now. But the number of consultants and people in consulting roles continues to increase, so we foresee that we will be around in 20 years' time too!

### Calvert Markham

*"...it is this knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm that is at the forefront of Elevation Learning's success. The company and its team of associates is dedicated to maintaining a high level of expertise and understanding of the industry, which they take great joy in passing on to clients and the wider community on a regular basis."*

From Caroline Lumb and Lynda Purser at the Institute of Business Consulting (IBC)

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# Elevation Learning - The story...

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Robert Fonteijn and Calvert Markham are the two directors of Elevation Learning, founded as Consultancy Skills Training on 1st November 1989.

The idea of forming a business that specialised in training consultants came about in 1989, when ICL asked Calvert Markham and Ken Dietz to train some of their client focused team in management consultancy skills. Both had a track record in this work and the name of the new company would reflect exactly what it did: Consultancy Skills Training.

Word spread fast, and assignments from the likes of IBM, Logica, and Coopers & Lybrand (now PWC) soon followed. To help with delivery, Ken and Calvert gathered a team of first class associates around them: like-minded peers, 'graduates' of major consultancy practices but now all independent practitioners, with extensive experience in the development and training of consultants.

"In the early days the business grew without our even trying," Calvert explains. "We had a strong network between us, delivered what the clients wanted, and it happened organically. We had no ambitions to build a large business and we simply responded to opportunities as they arose. And our training had a significant positive impact on individuals' performance - something that we know we continue to achieve today."

Robert Fonteijn joined the team in the early 1990s when it became necessary to deliver training in French. A Dutchman living in France, Robert brought a valuable international perspective to the business and soon was invited to join the board of directors. He now heads up the international business. Over the years, this has grown significantly, and now accounts for 30% of the company's revenue. Robert observes, "Many economies are less mature than that in the UK and so our training can accelerate business performance development through enhancing the capabilities of local consultants. Likewise, there are many industry sectors that now want to capitalise on their know-how by engaging with their own business customers through consulting, in the same way that IT firms started doing 20 years ago." As a result, the team's travel itinerary in recent months has included trips to Kazakhstan, Nigeria, China, India and Turkey and many other long haul destinations, as well as local work in Europe.

So what accounts for Elevation Learning's continued success?

"Our business model enables us to be nimble, responsive and flexible, and it has held us in good stead," Calvert says, "but more importantly we have a great reputation because we really deliver for our clients. It's not unusual for course participants to say to us 'that was the best training I have ever experienced in my life.' That's a huge statement."

Calvert thinks renewal is important. "One of the big changes for us occurred a couple of years ago, when we changed our name from Consultancy Skills Training to Elevation Learning. This recognised that an increasing amount of our work was for organisations that did not define their work as classic consultancy."

"We also have a great team. Our consultants are among the best at what they do and we also have an excellent support team who have themselves formed great relationships with our clients. We all get on well together because we share the same professionalism, values and client-centred attitudes."

So, what does Calvert see next for Elevation Learning? "There is an ongoing demand for consulting skills and we will be expanding to other countries and sectors. At the same time, we will be developing more advanced ways of delivering training - for example, through distance learning - but we expect that high quality skills training will always involve some class based learning."

*"I am now retired and still remember with considerable warmth regularly working with and developing the skills of a very wide range of clients. I take pride in the expertise that the business we set up brings to the world of consultancy and the benefits we have delivered to the many consultants we have trained. I wish it well for the next 20 years!"*

Ken Dietz, co-founder of Consultancy Skills Training Limited

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## Reflections on the history of management consultancy and implications for the future

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Predicting future trends is an uncertain business, particularly in a sector such as management consultancy, noted for its innovation and multiplicity of providers. But a historical analysis of management consultancy helps us to understand its present and to identify some possible directions for future change.

Consulting has developed through a series of consecutive waves with their own distinctive products, knowledge-bases, strategies and organisational configurations. These are manifest in leading consultancy firms throughout history, which have provided distinctively different services and adopted radically different organisational configurations, operational models and conceptions of management consultancy. For instance the first consultancy firms, such as Bedaux or Arthur D. Little (dominant between 1930 and 1950) were staffed largely by qualified and experienced engineers who used their professional knowledge to help clients to improve the operational efficiency of their production processes. A second wave of management consultancy from the 1950s onwards was centred around American strategic consultancies such as McKinsey, which advised corporate headquarters on high level issues such as strategic reviews, organisational restructuring processes, international expansion and the integration of mergers and acquisitions. Their services were grounded in and legitimised by an extensive range of (often) proprietary management models, methodologies and frameworks; whilst staff were largely recruited out of prestigious MBA programmes.

Finally, the third wave, which hit the shores of the consultancy world from the late 70s onwards, centres on the large global information and communication technology (ICT) focused consultancies such as Accenture or Cap Gemini. Such firms span traditional boundaries between advice and implementation as they support the ICT needs of large, multinational and increasingly de-centralised organisations. These firms adopt much more bureaucratic structures and standardized patterns of operations. Work execution is guided through formal step by step guidelines and coordinated through advanced knowledge management and project management techniques, thus reducing the autonomy of individual practitioners, who tend to be graduates from a wide range of subject-areas.

Of course, these waves overlap; consultancy firms often display a broad range of characteristics, activities and orientations. Yet, this idea of waves provides a structure which captures some of the key historical trends in this field linking change to broader external factors, such as technological innovation or political developments.

So what does this tell us about the future? The analysis of historical trends in this industry challenges widely held assumptions that management consultancies are at the forefront of the development of more decentralised and collegial modes of organisation, and of more empowered working relationships. Indeed an historical analysis points towards the increasing routinisation of work through standardised guidelines and procedures and the development of an increasingly formalised labour process. Whilst consultancy in many ways emerged from the application of Taylorism to client organisations, it seems that some of principles of scientific management are gaining an increasing hold on the consultancy industry itself.

**Dr Daniel Muzio**

Daniel Muzio is a Lecturer in Employment Relations at Leeds University Business School. This paper is based on research he has done jointly with Prof. Matthias Kipping and Prof. Ian Kirkpatrick.

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## Storms and sunny spells

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### Principal Consultant, Philip Taylor reflects on his long association with Elevation Learning

In 1995, I heard someone called Calvert Markham talking about consultancy - the first person I had heard whose ideas coincided with my own apparently maverick views. This was irresistible and the start of nearly 15 years of working together in CST and Elevation Learning.

Technology has changed of course over this time. Hard to remember now the loose acetate slides but we abandoned these reluctantly as they allowed us to react to a group, change the sequence and write on the slides... or drop them in an embarrassing heap.

Country-house training centres often had poor mobile phone reception in those days, a blessing for tutors trying to hold their audience. This led to strange sights: someone standing on a garden bench; others pacing up and down at the end of the lawn waving their hands in a bizarre tennis match.

Still common in the 1990s was a fad for trickery on company training courses (not ours) that found an accidental victim. A participant admitted after three days of cold showers that he had assumed they were a test, rather than the reality, a plumbing failure.

Strangely, we have all grown less formal - fewer suits, more jeans - and more serious. Where I use to be asked to name the best pub for an evening's excursion, now it's the best website for learning more about NLP.

Recently one participant, who perhaps would prefer the old ways, was in trouble with his colleagues when he crept in at 11:30 on the second day of a course. It transpired he had sneaked off for a night at a girlfriend's house but his discreet plan had been defeated by a broken clutch.

Real team spirit came one stormy day at Latimer House when a cedar crashed down on the power lines. The lights went out, but we had a few torches, cold supper appeared, and everyone voted to carry on.

The web generation are learning with us now. They have changed the mental setting of a participant from "receive" to "send and receive"; they want to find out for themselves, contribute to the solution and take nothing at face value. Luckily that's just how we like it at Elevation learning.

# It's been a team effort...

Over the years we have built up a team of unparalleled experience in developing consulting skills. We have an enduring and warm relationship with them as we do with our clients.

Below we highlight the longer-serving members of the team. Apart from Calvert and Robert, the following have been with us for over five of our twenty years - some for more than ten, and one for fifteen!



Apart from Robert, Philip Taylor is our longest serving colleague, joining in 1994. Philip practises predominantly in the manufacturing sector and brings his experience to improve supply chain performance. As such he travels widely and we find his experience and credibility are invaluable to both clients and to us. He runs our Core Consultancy Skills course and also leads many of our writing skills programmes



Wyn joined Elevation Learning in 1995. She is our Operations Manager and runs the production side of our courses, books facilities, co-ordinates travel, is responsible for our accounting, HR and generally makes sure things run smoothly. She is also a technical specialist and this comes in very handy when someone has to deal with our IT support people!



Ed Moffatt joined the team in 2002. Ed has strong commercial and academic credentials but, for Elevation Learning, he has spent considerable time developing our client relationships in the public sector. We have found that public sector organisations require specialist consultancy skills development programmes, and Ed has led many programmes in this area.



Diane Davies joined in 2001 as our sales and marketing co-ordinator. If you have called the office, the chances are that you have spoken with Diane; she is our first point of contact with many clients and knows the consulting environment very well. She also has a knack of knowing which of our team would best serve a clients' requirements. Diane is our ear on the ground and has, over the years, provided sound advice as to what courses we should be creating or running.



Anthony Rees joined the team in 2003 and has a strong commercial background and impeccable consulting credentials. Along with Cynthia Pexton-Shaw, he has taken ownership of our flagship public courses - Core Consultancy Skills and Selling Skills for Consultants. Between them, Anthony and Cynthia have mentored more than 100 people through their IBC Certificate in Management Consulting Essentials qualification.



Cynthia Pexton-Shaw joined in 2003 and has taken joint ownership of our public Core Consultancy Skills course. Additionally Cynthia plays a significant role delivering client programmes focussed on the "personal impact" space - whether it is about positive image, communications or positive attitudes.



Monica Hernanz also joined the team in 2003 and, as a professional psychologist, particularly enjoys developing programmes which focus on relationships between people - such as leadership, gaining consensus, influencing or negotiating skills.

Elevation Learning has an established portfolio of well proven consultancy development programmes:

- Core consultancy skills
- Writing skills
- Selling on
- Selling skills for consultants
- Presentation skills
- Client engagement skills

To talk about how we can help you, please call Diane Davies on +44 (0)20 8642 9568 or visit our website for further information - [www.elevationlearning.co.uk](http://www.elevationlearning.co.uk)