Focus Shift: From Expertise to Automation? The Impact of Generative AI on Management Consulting Workflows

Maximiliane Schmidt

Dissertation written under the supervision of
Dr. Espen Andersen, Associate Professor with the Department of Strategy at BI Norwegian Business School

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Abstract

This thesis examines GenAI's impact on management consulting workflows, highlighting significant shifts in focus, time, and required skills while maintaining the importance of human expertise.

These dynamics were analyzed through 12 qualitative interviews with industry consultants from Germany and Austria at various positions, across different consulting expertise, experience, and companies.

This analysis shows that, when used correctly, GenAI can significantly enhance efficiency, especially during early problem-solving, particularly in automating routine tasks like research, knowledge synthesis, and drafting content. Partial automation of routine tasks allows consultants to redirect some of their time toward more strategic, creative, and complex challenges. This thesis highlights that consultants must expand their skillset to navigate the tool's use. Interviewees noted that core consulting skills, such as expert knowledge, critical thinking, domain expertise, and interpersonal skills, are irreplaceable. Besides investing in GenAI tools, consultancies must invest in training programs to prepare their workforce for using GenAI.

The findings show that GenAI cannot replace human expertise and experience, but can enable consultants to gain faster insights, improving decision-making if the tool is embedded appropriately in consulting workflows.

By responsibly implementing GenAI, a consultancy can remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment while giving consultants the opportunity to reduce their manual workloads to focus on delivering exceptional results in knowledge work.

Ultimately, this thesis shows how GenAI influences consulting workflows, emphasizing its role in supporting consultants and delivering value without sacrificing quality.

Keywords: generative AI, management consulting, consulting workflows, knowledge work, problem-solving

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Author*:* Maximiliane Schmidt

Resumo

Esta tese analisa o impacto da IA Generativa na consultoria de gestão, destacando mudanças na concentração, no tempo e nas competências exigidas, mantendo a relevância da experiência humana.

Os fatores foram analisados por 12 entrevistas qualitativas com consultores da indústria na Alemanha e na Áustria, em cargos, especializações, experiências e empresas diversas.

Esta análise mostra que, quando utilizada corretamente, a IA generativa pode aumentar a eficiência, especialmente na resolução inicial de problemas e na automação de tarefas rotineiras, como pesquisa e elaboração de conteúdo. A automação de tarefas rotineiras permite que os consultores foquem em desafios mais estratégicos e complexos. O estudo destaca que os consultores devem ampliar suas competências para usar a IA generativa de forma eficaz.

Os entrevistados ressaltaram que competências essenciais de consultoria, como conhecimento especializado, pensamento crítico, experiência e habilidades interpessoais, são insubstituíveis. Além de investir em IA generativa, as consultoras precisam promover treinamentos para preparar trabalhadores para usá-la.

As conclusões mostram que a IA generativa não substitui a experiência humana, mas pode ajudar consultores a obter ideias de uma forma mais rápida, aprimorando a decisão se integradas corretamente nos fluxos de trabalho.

Ao implementar a IA generativa de forma responsável, a consultoria pode permanecer competitiva num ambiente em rápida mudança e permite que os consultores reduzam cargas de trabalho manuais, focando em resultados que exigem conhecimento.

Em última análise, esta tese demonstra como a IA generativa afeta fluxos de trabalho de consultoria, apoiando consultores e entregando valor sem comprometer a qualidade.

Palavras-chave: IA generativa, consultoria de gestão, fluxos de trabalho de consultoria, trabalho de conhecimento, resolução de problemas

Título: Mudança de foco: da especialização para a automação? O impacto da IA generativa nos fluxos de trabalho da consultoria de gestão

Autor*:* Maximiliane Schmidt

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This experience has been both demanding and rewarding, enhancing not only my academic skills but also my resilience. I am truly grateful for this journey and the assistance that has supported me along the way.

Declaration of AI Use

AI tools that have been used in the work on assignment/exam:

ChatGPT (4o), DeepL, Grammarly, Turboscribe.ai

Purpose of AI use:

I have used AI while undertaking my assignment in the following ways:

• To develop research questions on the topic –**NO**
• To generate ideas – **NO**
• To create an outline of the topic – **NO**
• To explain concepts – **YES**
• To support my use of language – **YES**
• To organize data – **YES**
• To analyze data – **NO**
• To visualize data – **NO**
• In other ways, as described below:
  - Reviewing and improving own text
  - Partly an explanation for further understanding of theoretical concepts before using them in this thesis
  - Where necessary, translating and transcribing the interviews

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
Big 4	KPMG, PwC, EY, Deloitte
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DACH	(D) Germany, (A) Austria, (CH) Switzerland
DCT	Dynamic Capability Theory
GenAI	Generative AI
GPT	General Purpose Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LLM	Large Language Model
MECE	Mutually Exclusive and Collectively Exhaustive
PSA	Problem-Solving Approach
RBV	Resource-Based View
ROI	Return on Investment
RPA	Robotic Process Automation
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
VSM	Value Shop Model

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1. Introduction

"I am the most vocal, […] ruthless leader when […] telling my team […] go to our clients and tell them they have to change, but we have to change BCG just as much," said Schweizer, BCG's CEO (Raval & Foy, 2024). Schweizer's statement highlights consultancies' need to guide clients through transformation while also adapting and evolving to maintain relevance and credibility. To successfully sell and implement projects, consultancies require outstanding expertise to convince clients of their product need and that their consultancy is the best choice. The consulting industry is growing exponentially and is highly competitive (Jerónimo et al., 2019). Consultancies must be agile and flexible to adapt to changing market conditions. Due to rapid technological advancements, various innovations are shaping societies, fostering economic growth, and initiating new developments (Sharma, 2023). These innovations are especially interesting for consultancies to advise clients and assist with their implementation. General Purpose Technologies (GPTs), including Artificial Intelligence (AI), are particularly transformative due to their broad applicability and ability to drive innovation across sectors (Brynjolfsson et al., 2021). AI meets essential GPT criteria such as pervasiveness, continuous advancement, and the ability to complement other innovations (Brynjolfsson et al., 2021). Consultancies are increasingly integrating AI into their clients' solutions. For example, BCG generated $12.3 billion in 2023 and projected that 40% of its 2026 revenue will come from AI integration projects (Raines, 2024). The rapid AI advancements cause significant changes, greatly impacting worldwide industry transformation, not only in established economies and services, but also in value shops.

This transformation initiates a fundamental shift in perceiving and executing work. As Kai-Fu Lee, a renowned AI expert, noted, "AI will not replace jobs, but it will change the nature of work" (Fajembola, n.d.). Among various AI types is generative AI (GenAI), which independently generates new content, like text, images, and code. Its potential to support and enhance knowledge-intensive processes has received significant attention due to its impact on transforming industries worldwide, including consulting. The models are constantly evolving, creating new opportunities and challenges both internally and for their clients. This thesis focuses on how GenAI usage impacts internal consulting workflows.

First, an overview of the three most used GenAI models is given. In 2022, OpenAI released ChatGPT, one of the most recent significant developments in AI (Patel & Lam, 2023). It focuses on text and image generation, serving as an independent platform capable of integrating into

other interfaces. The model continuously improves as more data is provided (Kuraku et al., 2023). Several large consulting firms purchase an OpenAI license to build their GPTs. The second model, Copilot, created by Microsoft, combines a large language model (LLM) with the company's internal data (Microsoft, 2025). Copilot integrates with Microsoft's applications (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and receives customization to meet company needs (Microsoft, 2025), boosting overall productivity. Third, Google developed Gemini. Like ChatGPT, it focuses on text and image generation while integrating with several Google applications, like Google Workspace (Google DeepMind, 2025). Compared to Copilot, ChatGPT, and Gemini, these tools are rather multifunctional.

The focus of this thesis lies on GenAI in consulting. Therefore, predictive AI and robotic process automation (RPA) are not further considered.

Motivation

GenAI's fast development has created a research gap, especially regarding its impact on consultancies. The consulting industry is knowledge-intensive, relying heavily on its employees' expertise, experience, and skills. GenAI can support and automate specific tasks and workflows, such as analyzing data. Therefore, it is essential to analyze its impact on consultancies and their management consultants, including whether it can handle tasks performed by consultants and how it can provide support. Existing research (e.g., Tronnier et al., 2025) shows a need for further analysis of GenAI's impact on management consulting workflows. To address this gap, this thesis aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the evolving role of management consultants due to the implementation of GenAI.

Objectives

The research goal is to show that GenAI enhances consultants' efficiency. Therefore, this thesis examines the strengths, capabilities, opportunities, limitations, and challenges related to GenAI's use and its impact on consultants' jobs and their workflows through further research from a consultancy's perspective. Moreover, the objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how GenAI usage impacts management consulting workflows.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The following section provides a comprehensive overview, introducing the central research question: *How does GenAI impact management consulting workflows, and does it shift the focus from expertise to automation?* This thesis targets and analyzes different topics, formulated into

three hypotheses, to answer this question. Therefore, GenAI's impact on the consultancies' business model will not be considered.

Each hypothesis addresses the impacts of GenAI usage on management consulting workflows:

- H_a: GenAI tools streamline workflows by automating tasks, such as data collection, competitive analysis, and knowledge synthesis, reducing time spent on manual processes.
- H_b: Consultants who leverage GenAI for routine tasks can focus more on strategic thinking, problem-solving, client engagement, and decision-making, enhancing overall workflow quality.
- H_c: The usage and impact of GenAI differ depending on the management level, resulting in distinct use cases and effects.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprehensively analyzes GenAI's impact on management consulting workflows, beginning with a literature review to establish the current state of research. After presenting the theoretical foundation and necessary definitions, this thesis describes and subsequently evaluates the current landscape of management consulting and its consultants. This involves examining how consultants work in a value shop and can adapt to various problem-solving approaches (PSAs). Furthermore, it assesses GenAI's effects on knowledge work. Additionally, it discusses ethical issues related to GenAI adoption.

The methodology section explains the qualitative approach used. Next, the findings from the interviews are presented and analyzed. The main findings are then discussed in relation to the existing literature, providing answers to the research question and accepting or disproving the hypotheses. Finally, the thesis finishes with the conclusion, outlook, and future research questions.

2. Literature Review

This literature review was developed through two research stages. First, conducting a structured database search using various online research tools, including platforms like Google Scholar and Connected Papers. The search expanded at the university's library while incorporating content from my academic education. The initial review offered a comprehensive overview by exploring literature with different keywords (Appendix a). Papers were partly selected based on their publication date to ensure recent AI-related research.
Secondly, the snowball technique was employed to find related papers beyond the initial set. As the review progressed, the methodology underwent refinement to get a thorough and detailed understanding of the topic.

a. Definitions of GenAI and Workflows

First, it is necessary to understand AI's basis: AI is a machine's ability to interpret and analyze external data, process, understand, and eventually learn from it (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019) by recognizing complex patterns without human intervention (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023). These learnings are crucial for achieving specific goals and completing tasks.

This thesis defines GenAI, based on Stryker and Scapicchio (2024), as a type of AI utilizing deep learning to process large datasets and handle complex tasks, employing multi-layered neural networks. GenAI is an LLM addressing complex problems by generating solutions with human-like approaches and reasoning (Schneider, 2024; Lim et al., 2023).
To feed the model with data (Figure 1), humans carefully select the training data (supervised learning). Depending on the model's available data, the output differs (Lim et al., 2023). Alternatively, in unsupervised learning, the data is not pre-categorized by humans. Instead, the system attempts to identify patterns in the data and categorizes them independently (Gil et al., 2020).
Users can interact with LLMs using textual prompts (Schneider, 2024). Often, the LLM's textual output is indistinguishable from human-created output (Kirova et al., 2023).

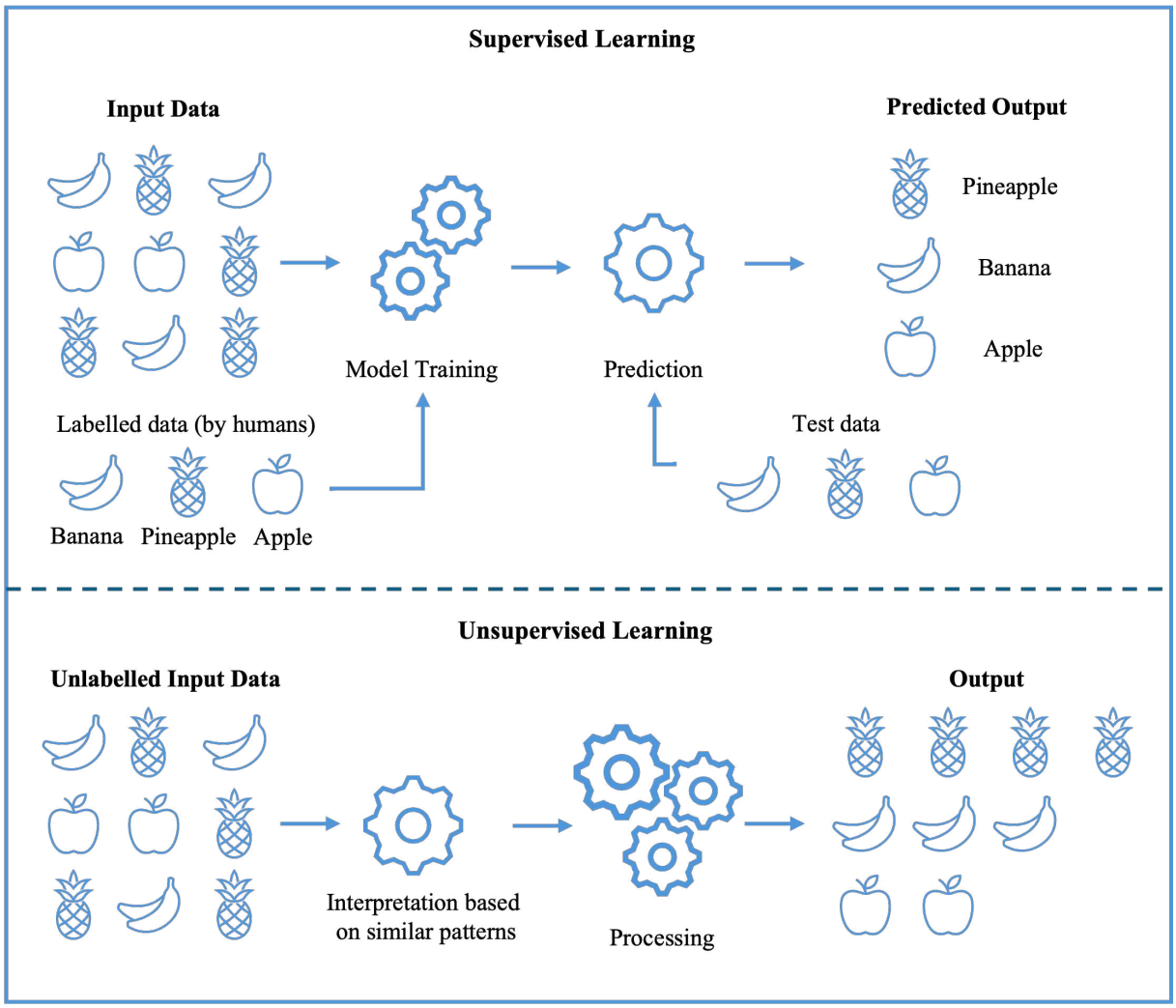


Figure 1: LLM learning (own illustration)

To fully comprehend GenAI's significance in management workflows, it is essential to define "workflows". This term refers to several steps designed to achieve a specific result in a particular area (Kortas, 2024). A workflow is typically operated within a project, defining tasks, processing units, and interrelationships. Depending on the area and requirements, each workflow has a unique structure and sequence (Settle, 2025). The steps are executed either sequentially, linearly, or in parallel. A workflow involves organizing, structuring, and making processes more efficient (Kortas, 2024).

In digital transformation, there are three primary workflow types:

- process-oriented,
- project-related,
- case-related.

The process-oriented workflow is linked to specific processes. As many processes follow a similar pattern, some workflows may repeat (Kortas, 2024). Consultancies often standardize

certain processes or use similar structures for different clients, making small adjustments for each company. For example, implementing IT systems like SAP.
The project-related workflow is similar to the process-oriented workflow but tied to a specific project rather than a process. The consultancy repeatedly uses certain project workflows, including data analysis and preparing client workshops.
The case-specific workflow applies to particular situations to address specific problems. It is not repetitive, since these workflows are tailored to the client's needs and issues, such as acquiring a new company.

Consultancies frequently rely on specialized tools to improve their workflows. For data analytics, software like Excel and Power BI are commonly used, while communication is often enhanced through platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. In project management, tools like Jira and Trello help boost efficiency.

b. Theoretical Background

Two theoretical approaches can explain GenAI's impact on consultancies and consulting workflows.
The resource-based view (RBV), developed by Barney (1991), assumes that a company's sustainable success and competitive advantage result from using valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources and their capabilities. These resources can be either tangible, like physical assets, or intangible, including intellectual property, organizational processes, or technological innovations (Barney, 1991). Through the RBV lens, GenAI functions as a strategic resource, improving and innovating a company's sustainable internal success.
The connection to the RBV clearly shows how GenAI can enhance and automate processes, which boosts efficiency and productivity across various fields, including banking, retail, and healthcare (Benbya et al., 2020).
GenAI is a valuable resource that enables automation and workflow optimization, allowing consultants to focus on other tasks or spend less time overall. Despite GenAI's popularity, not all companies have yet implemented it, which makes it a rare resource. Combining technology and knowledge surrounding GenAI for effective and efficient use creates an invaluable asset. To maximize its benefits, GenAI must be integrated into strategies, workflows, processes, and culture.
The dynamic capability theory (DCT) by Teece et al. (1997) explains a company's ability to generate and capture wealth by adapting to changing environments that are characterized by

rapid technological advancements. Firms must sense and exploit new opportunities, reorganizing resources to improve efficiency and address market challenges and opportunities. Companies need to adapt to change by identifying and then capitalizing on new opportunities. Past decisions and resource allocations greatly influence a company's flexibility. Some plans might have been based on current capabilities, which limit future options. Consequently, a firm must carefully coordinate and combine its resources and competencies. Overall, strong dynamic capabilities enable firms to exploit new market opportunities and stay competitive (Teece et al., 1997).

The DCT extends the RBV by specifying that companies must develop, renew, and integrate their resources to remain competitive long-term.

When considering GenAI through the DCT, it can significantly improve a firm's integration and reorganization of existing resources and processes. With GenAI, companies can enhance product development, customer service, and internal operations. Additionally, GenAI can help firms identify new market trends and customer preferences, enabling them to adjust accordingly.

Implementing GenAI helps employees develop new skills and knowledge. It can act as a sparring partner for quickly discussing and generating new ideas and solutions (Rowan et al., 2025; Tronnier et al., 2025). Effective usage can improve future capabilities and competitive advantages. The RBV and DCT showcase that GenAI use can lead to process optimization, enhancing competitiveness and profitability.

c. Current Landscape of Management Consulting and its Consultants

This thesis defines consultants, following Jerónimo et al. (2019, p. 1), as "knowledge brokers and knowledge integrators, recognizing their superior knowledge and experience in specific industries". To make substantial recommendations for business problems, consultants need time to study the situation and gather relevant information. Additionally, to identify new opportunities and implement changes, they require diverse skills, experiences, and knowledge from previous projects (Alavi et al., 2024).

Management consultants differ from business consultants by focusing on specific areas like process improvement or organizational structure (Dickmann, 2023). They collaborate with clients to gather information and improve performance, while maintaining strong relationships when addressing complex problems (Tronnier et al., 2025). The primary distinction between

them lies in their expertise and the detail of solution approaches (Dickmann, 2023). When referring to consultants in the following text, management consultants are meant.
Companies temporarily hire consultancies to achieve specific objectives, such as gaining specialized knowledge and capabilities they lack internally (Christensen et al., 2013), addressing management and business issues, discovering and leveraging new opportunities, implementing changes, and improving learning (Kubr, 2002). Consultants focus on achieving organizational effectiveness, meaning solutions should always consider the entire organization (Turner, 1982). The output provided is a customized solution tailored individually to each client. From the client's perspective, the gained benefits should outweigh project costs (Kubr, 2002). The consultants' value creation process is divided into individual workflows, with problem-solving being a key workflow.

Among several approaches, this thesis employs two models to explain the consultancy's value chain and problem-solving. They differ because they focus on the PSA from different angles.
First, the Value Shop Model (VSM) (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998) applies to knowledge-intensive organizations, producing highly customized client outputs. It is unlike the traditional value chain since it uses the skills and know-how of domain experts.
Secondly, the strategic PSA (Rasiel & Friga, 2002) showcases the interactive process of problem-solving in consulting step-by-step.

The VSM describes the value creation process in firms that leverage their employees' knowledge and skills to solve problems, just as consulting companies do. It refers to individual "activities related to diagnosis, development, testing, and choice of alternative solutions, implementation, and evaluation" (Fjeldstad & Andersen, 2003, p. 48). Instead of a linear approach, it supports an iterative and circular process (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998), highlighting five main activities (Figure 2).

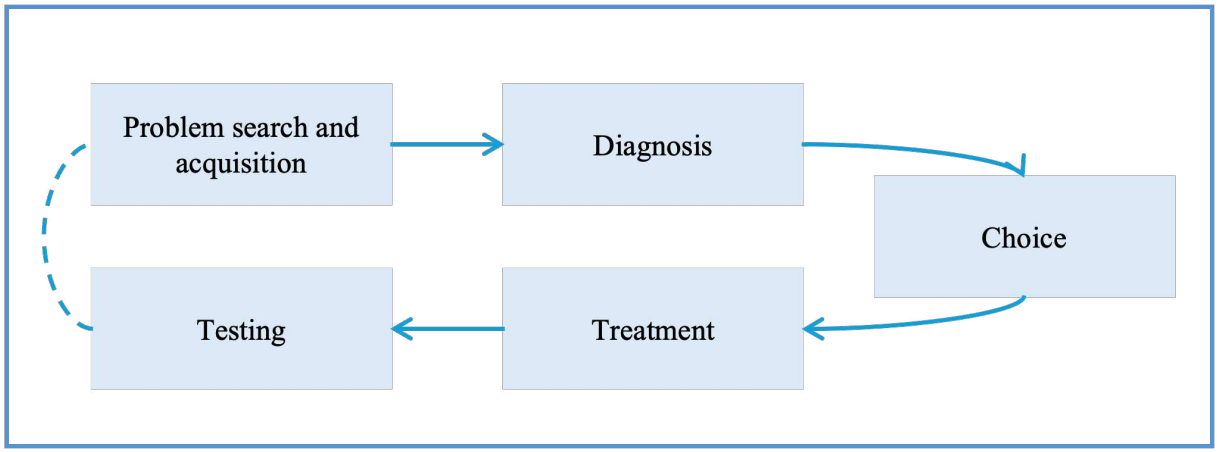


Figure 2: VSM primary activities (own illustration based on Fjeldstad & Andersen, 2003)

First, a connection must be established between the consultants and the problem. The most experienced and costly consultants should be assigned to the most complex and challenging problems. Senior staff must market their expertise at the highest possible price, aiming to acquire slightly more complex and different problems than previously. This helps consultancies learn and charge higher prices in the future. Otherwise, clients might negotiate lower prices if they know a similar project has been completed before. If the project is too difficult, the organization's reputation is at risk. Senior staff must identify which problems fit the organization's capabilities (Fjeldstad & Andersen, 2003). This skill develops through observing higher-level positions, where individuals understand the situation and customer needs. Part of their skillset is creating and combining the staff's competencies.

The VSM (Figure 2) begins with the project search and acquisition, focusing on identifying, pre-structuring, and defining the client's problem (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998). All resources are mobilised until it is resolved. In this model, the traditional role of a senior position is significant, as they handle crisis management and client communication. During diagnosis, analysis takes priority, as consultants make sense of the situation by exploring various connections. Further approaches are developed to find solutions, which require evaluation and assessment. Ultimately, a choice is made for the best-fitting solution. During treatment, consultants implement the chosen solution, which is consequently tested. If needed, consultants can re-enter the cycle and restart the problem-solving process. These steps do not follow a sequence and can also occur in parallel (Fjeldstad & Andersen, 2003).

To gain further understanding of one of consulting's core workflows, problem-solving, and internal problem processing, the strategic PSA, introduced by two McKinsey consultants (Rasiel & Friga, 2002), is presented.

The model's main steps, relevant to this thesis, are illustrated in Figure 3. Regardless of the problem, initially, consultants have limited facts. The first step is to define and frame the problem's boundaries, breaking it into parts (Rasiel & Friga, 2002). The MECE concept ensures the problem is separated into distinct, non-overlapping parts, allowing them to be solved individually while remaining connected to the original problem. Another tool to break down the problem is the logic tree, which helps frame the issue and form a hypothesis leading to the solution (Rasiel & Friga, 2002). A problem-solving roadmap helps consultants ask the right questions, saving time by avoiding pursuing wrong leads.

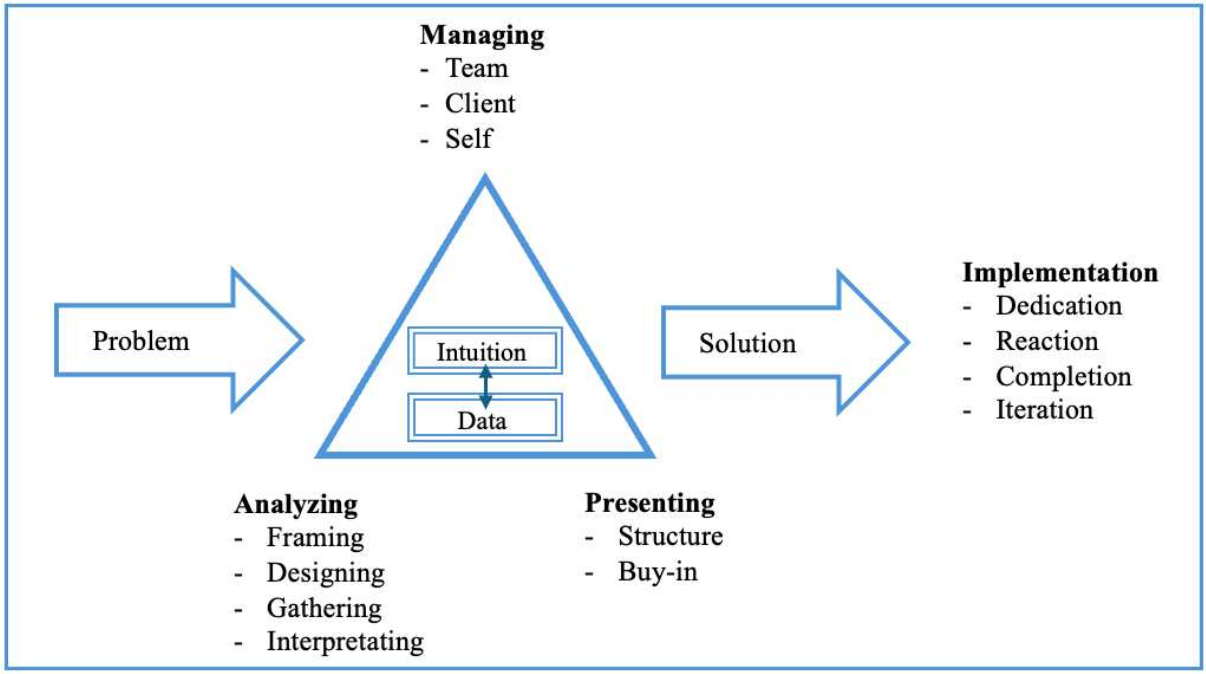


Figure 3: Strategic problem-solving model (own illustration based on Rasiel & Friga, 2002)

To gather initial information, consultants must rely on their instincts, knowledge, and expertise, which influence early decision-making. However, their instincts should never dominate (Rasiel & Friga, 2002). The triangle of analysis (Figure 3), management, and presentation is always supported by gathered data, the consultant's expertise, and human intuition.

The fact-based analysis begins by testing the hypothesis and targeting the problem's root. Designing this process involves choosing the data (Rasiel & Friga, 2002). The goal is to achieve quick wins, meaning tasks that are easy to complete but require significant problem-solving. It emphasizes quality over quantity by focusing on essential facts that contribute to the final goal.

To save time, consultants first review internal documents on similar problems. If nothing comparable is available, they gather data from external sources (Rasiel & Friga, 2002).
After finalizing the analysis, consultants comprehend the data and develop a storyline. Creating effective storylines in consulting is essential, including key messages, guiding clients toward a recommended action supported by relevant evidence. The final solution is formulated in the client's language and perspective, making it easy for them to understand (Rasiel & Friga, 2002). To ensure a successful presentation and gain buy-in, the client should not encounter unexpected surprises in the final recommendation. Early feedback generally makes clients more comfortable with the solution as they feel involved. During the presentation, clients are more likely to support it, possibly persuading indecisive ones to agree (Rasiel & Friga, 2002).
When consultants present their recommendations, they discuss the solution first to better control their explanations afterwards. Their presentation follows the one-message-per-slide rule, making the information immediately clear to the audience (Rasiel & Friga, 2002).
While presenting solutions, consultants must avoid creating unrealistic expectations to maintain credibility. It is better to consistently deliver exceptional results for selected projects than just meet basic standards across many. A dedicated team is formed for selected projects (Rasiel & Friga, 2002). Selecting the right consultants involves balancing intelligence, experience, and interpersonal skills. Both the client and the consultants require consistent communication and feedback loops (Rasiel & Friga, 2002).

d. Generative AI in Knowledge Work

Knowledge workers perform tasks that require mental effort and cognitive skills in structured and unstructured contexts. Structured tasks are well-defined, like scheduling meetings, whereas unstructured tasks lack clear definitions, involving resolving conflicts between employees (Alavi & Westerman, 2023). Activities may include complex problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making, and strategic planning. All these tasks require adaptability because of their unique nature (IBM, 2023). Knowledge companies are hierarchically structured (Ide & Talamàs, 2024). At all levels, mastering non-routine tasks demands expertise and education. This expertise can be explained through the T-model, which describes individuals' competencies, highlighting the depth of expertise in one area (vertical T-line) and general knowledge across other areas (horizontal T-line) (Hammer et al., 2021). In order to consistently make informed decisions, knowledge workers must stay updated, continuously learn, and apply best practices. Therefore, certain roles require outside-the-box thinking to generate new ideas (Hadad, 2017). Overall, knowledge workers must evaluate data and consider various factors to

make these decisions. Among others, knowledge workers include consultants, researchers, developers, engineers, and lawyers.

GenAI can enhance knowledge work instead of replacing it. These tasks include data analysis, decision support, document management, and creativity enhancement (Chui et al., 2023). This thesis only focuses on how GenAI enhances knowledge work.

Due to its transformation, how organizations manage knowledge, GenAI delivers significant value in specific knowledge work use cases (Berg & Gmyrek, 2023; Dell'Acqua et al., 2023). It helps employees access stored knowledge through prompts. Further data analytics and specific knowledge bases help structure data and build targeted knowledge pools (Sowa et al., 2021), enabling teams to access relevant information and make better-informed decisions (Chui et al., 2023). Therefore, GenAI reduces cognitive workload with structured tasks while enhancing the capacity of knowledge workers for unstructured tasks (Alavi & Westerman, 2023).
Furthermore, GenAI can act as a decision-support tool by analyzing large datasets, offering insights and recommendations (Chui et al., 2023). This allows users to explore different scenarios to make well-informed decisions, enhance creativity through idea and content creation (Chui et al., 2023), or manage multiple tasks simultaneously (Ide & Talamàs, 2024). Unlike humans, GenAI is not limited by time or knowledge. Additionally, GenAI can categorize documents by recognizing patterns, simplifying access, and, therefore, saving users time (Chui et al., 2023). However, users should be cautious because, just as humans, GenAI can produce incorrect results (Chui et al., 2022).

According to McKinsey (Chui et al., 2023), knowledge workers spend approximately one-fifth of their time searching for information. With GenAI, these responsibilities can be automated, enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. LLMs can quickly scan source material together with a human to refine research (Chui et al., 2023). In law, which is also considered knowledge work, Harvey, a GenAI, has managed to give lawyers 30-40% of their time back by automating routine tasks while reducing their cognitive load (Srinivasan et al., 2025). Consequently, attorneys have more time to address their clients' problems and strengthen relationships. A similar trend appears in consulting, where firms like PwC report productivity gains of 20-40% due to their own GenAI implementation, ChatPwC. This shows how comparable efficiency improvements are achieved in the advisory sector (The Finance Story, 2024).

Since this thesis exclusively focuses on GenAI's impact on consulting workflows, the case study by Dell'Acqua et al. (2023) with BCG highlights the broad effects of GenAI implementation. It examines GenAI's impact on realistic, complex, and knowledge-intensive tasks in consulting, including gathering information, writing detailed logical explanations, and conducting strategic analysis. The study revealed that their consultants produced higher outputs depending on the assigned condition:

- no AI access,
- GPT-4 access,
- GPT-4 access with a prompt engineering overview.

Some tasks were intentionally created within GenAI's capabilities, while others exceeded its scope. Generally, consultants using GenAI generated higher-quality results and increased productivity. However, for tasks beyond AI's limits, the output was often inaccurate and not useful, lowering performance. Consultants need to differentiate between correct AI answers and those that seem plausible but are actually wrong (Dell'Acqua et al., 2024). Their performance improved when they had access to the prompt engineering overview. All consultants received an incentive (money, status, or promotion) to produce the best output.

This study shows that consultants using GenAI outperformed those not using it on tasks within AI's capabilities. Assigned tasks within the border that were successfully executed included gathering information and refining human-generated content. When dividing the groups into top-half and bottom-half performers, GenAI improved both groups, with the latter experiencing a greater performance boost (Dell'Acqua et al., 2023).

This demonstrates that the primary question is not whether to adopt GenAI, but how to do it. Consultants must identify tasks where the model enhances their work and matches their capabilities, skills, and expertise. The qualitative interviews in this thesis address this question.

e. Ethical Issues

To utilize GenAI efficiently, consultancies must understand ethical implications. For maximizing consultants' productivity, the implementation should align with the company's ethical principles, norms, and values (Chui et al., 2022). By implementing ethical principles, companies can maintain a sense of morality (Flathmann et al. 2021), fostering a positive environment. Companies, like IBM (Appendix b), have already implemented AI ethical principles, values, and guidelines (Altenburger, 2023; Kirova et al., 2023).

Training on a large, balanced, and tailored dataset, overseen by experts (Leopold, 2023), is necessary to reduce the model's bias. Limited information may cause the model to drift in a particular direction, creating bias (Eitel-Porter, 2021; Edelman & Abraham, 2023). Unlimited access to online conversations can enhance user communication, but may also lead to inappropriate language or behavior, damaging constructive interaction (Edelman & Abraham, 2023).
The more data available to GenAI, the higher the risk of privacy breaches (Eitel-Porter, 2021). To address this, especially large consultancies are increasingly introducing their own "secure" GPTs isolated from external connections. Consequently, the information in prompts is not used for training the overall model (Reisbeck, 2023). Firms must ensure that models only access a limited amount of data to reduce the risk of breaches (Eitel-Porter, 2021).

Users must always verify information to prevent misinformation. Using GenAI responsibly requires expertise to verify generated content (Eitel-Porter, 2021).
Consultants must prompt GenAI effectively to increase the likelihood of generating true, reliable, and complete content. Therefore, consultancies offer mandatory and voluntary training for their employees (Attard, n.d.).

However, humans might become too dependent if they increasingly trust GenAI's ability to manage their tasks. This could cause consultants to stop expanding their knowledge once they discover that GenAI enables them to still perform their duties, leading to a performance decline (Elshan et al., 2022). Consultancies must balance technology with human expertise (Flathmann et al., 2021).

3. Research Methodology

This work uses a two-stage approach, a structural literature review, followed by in-depth qualitative interviews with consultants who use GenAI daily, both individually and within their teams. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative interviews are interactive, resulting in more complete and comprehensive answers (King & Horrocks, 2010). Therefore, they provide more insights into GenAI's impact on consultancies, their respective consultants, and business processes and workflows. Consequently, I was able to collect various perceptions and experiences, as well as different approaches to using GenAI.

Through personal interaction with the participants, I gained new insights that I would have otherwise not received. The interviewees were more open and willing to explain the subject further, strengthening the chain of evidence.
By conducting these interviews, I aimed to address the research question and the hypotheses proposed in the introduction.

a. Participant Selection

Given the complexity of the topic, conducting expert interviews is necessary (Patton, 2002). Selecting and justifying the participants are fundamental parts of qualitative research (Gläser & Laudel, 2010). Who is considered an expert depends on both the research question and the study field (Helfferich, 2019). I interviewed twelve consultants from various experience levels working in different companies, ranging from large consulting firms to in-house and boutique consultancies. This is essential for establishing the unit of analysis based on the companies and the consultants. This purposive method of selecting participants follows these criteria (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016): (1) currently engaged in a consulting role at a consultancy, (2) actively using GenAI in their daily work with a certain expertise, and (3) more than two years of experience.

With twelve interviewees, I was able to build a solid foundation for a qualitative analysis, providing a certain depth of understanding of the topic while portraying the diverse impact and reducing biases. All participants work for companies in Germany or Austria, with the majority maintaining ongoing operations worldwide. The participants were contacted via LinkedIn, Email, or through personal networks. None of the participants has received any compensation.

The interviewees are divided into four categories based on their position within the consultancies:

- Managing Partner (2)
- Manager/Senior Manager (3)
- Consultant/Senior Consultant (3)
- Junior Consultant/Associate (4)

To ensure a wide selection and minimize informant bias (Maxwell, 2012), interviews were conducted across all consulting levels.

b. Data Collection

The data was gathered in the following steps: selecting interviewees, designing and structuring the interviews, preparing each interview individually but using the same interview guide, executing the interviews, and transcribing them.

An interview guide (Appendix c) was created in advance to maximize each interview's output (Helfferich, 2019). The guide was created to address the research question and hypotheses, with the goal of asking open-ended questions for more insights. Initially, this guide was a topic of discussion, evolving through conversations with industry professionals and subsequently adapted based on feedback from these sample interviews.
Finally, the questions ranged from general questions about the company, interviewee's role, typical workflows, to whether GenAI has significantly improved their workflow and which areas experienced efficiency improvements. The interviews were conducted in German. For this thesis, the notes and transcripts were translated into English. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes and took place between January and April 2025. The interviews were conducted through videoconferencing. If consent was granted, the sessions were recorded for transcription.

I decided to conduct twelve interviews because, after reaching theoretical saturation, I was unable to gather new information, as different interviews continued to mention the same insights (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

c. Data Analysis Techniques

While conducting all interviews, I took notes for each, which are attached in Appendix d. They build the foundation of the discussion of the findings.

I employed the inductive coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After transcribing the interviews with Microsoft Teams or TurboScribe.ai and proofreading them, I transferred each interviewee's response into an Excel sheet. This provided an overview of all interviews, with questions and answers side-by-side. To analyze the qualitative interviews, I followed Mayring's (2014) guidelines to identify relevant keywords. These keywords constructed the basis for individual codes that were specifically formulated for each question. Therefore, the answers could be clustered (as shown in the tables in analysis and findings), which I built based on the MECE principle (Saldaña, 2013). This ensures that the categories are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive, resulting in a clear and structured analysis.

Overall, this approach allowed me to conduct the interviews with an open mindset and without predetermined answers that could potentially introduce bias in framing the questions.

d. Limitations of the Study

This research is based on a select group of consultants who can only discuss their work and companies, making it difficult to generalize the findings. Additionally, the interviews were conducted online and recorded, which introduces the possibility of the Hawthorne effect (Merrett, 2006), meaning interviewees may change their behavior if they know they are being observed, in this case, recorded. Since all interviewees are based in Germany or Austria, the findings are limited in perspective. Since the DACH region is not typically known for GenAI usage, other countries should also be included to enhance the findings. Furthermore, this study has an unequal number of participants from the same levels within each company category, which will be explained in the next chapter. Additionally, the issue of potential causality can occur. Because consulting firms operate in a dynamic environment, other factors like economic trends and corporate strategy may influence consultants' workflows.

4. Analysis and Findings

This analysis examines whether the hypotheses are empirically confirmed and whether any deviations in practice are shown through the qualitative interviews. The findings are presented in relation to each hypothesis to highlight both the specific and general impacts of GenAI usage on consulting workflows. Each hypothesis is tested individually. The findings are presented as codes in tables, which serve only as an illustration and are not meant to represent every company in the category.

Each subsection explores the insights gained from the qualitative interviews. The table shows the anonymized individual and company-specific results (Table 1). The companies are categorized as follows:

- Tier 1: McKinsey, BCG, Bain & Company (2)
- Tier 2: Among others: Big 4, Strategy&, Accenture, Oliver Wyman, Roland Berger, in-house consultancies, like Porsche Consulting, IBM Consulting (5)
- Tier 3: Boutique consultancies (5)

No.	Company Size (# employees)	Company category in tiers	Position	Field of consulting expertise	# years of experience
1	51-500	3	Manager	AI & Data	7-10
2	> 200.000	2	Senior Manager	IT Security & Digital Transformation	7-10
3	> 200.000	2	Senior Consultant	Financial Services	4-6
4	> 200.000	2	Associate	Technology	2-3
5	< 50	3	Managing Partner	Healthcare	10-15
6	51-500	3	Associate	Transformation	2-3
7	51-500	3	Managing Partner	Transformation	> 20
8	50.001-200.000	2	Senior Consultant	Technology	7-10
9	< 50	3	Consultant	Technology	4-6
10	50.001-200.000	2	Senior Manager	Strategy	> 20
11	5.001-50.000	1	Associate	Financial Services	2-3
12	5.001-50.000	1	Senior Consultant	Transformation	4-6

Table 1: Sample database

a. Hypothesis H_a

GenAI streamlines consulting workflows by automating routine tasks like data collection, research, and knowledge synthesis, reducing time spent on manual processes. The interview data confirms this hypothesis. At first glance, regardless of the company category and experience, interviewees across all eight thematic codes generally reached similar conclusions (Table 2). Tier 3 agrees less about the codes, mainly because the implementation and support are not as advanced as in Tiers 1 and 2. Therefore, the relevance of e.g., a skill shift (Code 5) or the mandatory training (Code 7) is not as significant as it is for the others.

No.	Code	Findings	Empirical proof (% agree) (only applies to questioned companies, no generalization for every company within categories) Tier 1 Tier 2 Tier 3
1	Automation of routine tasks	GenAI is used across all levels for routine tasks, including summarizing, collecting data, structuring or restructuring text, and rephrasing content.	100% 80% 100%
2	Efficiency gains	Interviewees confirmed that GenAI usage reduces time spent on manual tasks, like research, conceptual documents, and initial drafting.	100% 100% 100%
3	Reliance on GenAI for research	Many interviewees reported relying on GenAI for research instead of traditional Google searches.	100% 60% 60%
4	Future enhancement potential	Interviewees acknowledged GenAI's future time-saving potential in high-value tasks, like providing better design suggestions for presentations, generating automated update reports, and improving budget tracking.	100% 60% 80%
5	Skill shift	Participants identify a skill shift towards prompting, critical thinking, and methodological expertise.	100% 100% 40%
6	Importance of interpersonal skills	Despite GenAI's capabilities, decision-making, conflict resolution, and ethical judgment remain irreplaceable.	100% 100% 80%
7	Training	Effective GenAI usage requires training in prompting and critical assessment of output.	100% 100% 60%
8	Ethical considerations	Ethical considerations for GenAI vary significantly among firms in moral standards and restrictions.	100% 100% 100%

Table 2: H_a findings with empirical proof

All interviewees described multiple use cases where they utilize one or more GenAI to enhance and improve efficiency in their daily work for process-related workflows. The most significant impact occurs particularly in the early project stages for project-related workflows, when focusing on gathering information. Most interviewees rely on either their internal GPT, ChatGPT, or CoPilot. Two interviewees also mentioned using Perplexity for research purposes and Gemini, a direct competitor to ChatGPT.

Regarding the main GenAI use cases, one consultant (Interview No.12) stated: “The most important thing is summarizing information, whether from emails, transcripts, reports, or internal documents”. Other interviewees mentioned regular GenAI usage for repetitive tasks, such as collecting data, structuring or restructuring text, generating code, rephrasing content, and creating Excel formulas. Five of twelve interviewees utilize GenAI to get “a first draft quickly,” especially when writing emails, creating slides, or drafting conceptual documents. Interviewees described the tool as most effective for tasks that could be clearly instructed.

Others noted GenAI’s importance for their research. One (Interview No.8) even said: “I don't Google anymore, I just type everything in ChatGPT, to get the essentials directly”.

Another interviewee (Interview No.12) mentioned building a project-specific GPT by feeding it content like executive summaries and previous presentations to use it as a sparring partner to discuss project ideas and quickly access relevant information.

Currently, interviewees see the operational dynamic using the tools for more activities, which will eventually allow them to focus more on high-value tasks. All interviewees highlighted GenAI’s increasing future time-saving potential. With further developments, better design suggestions for presentations, automated update reports, improved budget tracking, and even automated regulatory checks and strategic modeling will become possible.

Regardless of GenAI’s future opportunities in consulting, skills in using these tools are essential for receiving helpful output. Several interviewees emphasized that this is only possible if they are trained in prompting effectively, describing content clearly, and critically evaluating the output. As one senior manager (Interview No.2) noted: “If my team does not know how to use the tools effectively, it will not save us time. Instead, it costs us more”.

This need for new skills suggests a shift towards prompting, critical thinking, and methodological expertise. Interpersonal skills, such as decision-making, conflict resolution, and ethical judgment, remain irreplaceable, particularly because consultants must challenge and test the generated output. Considering the T-model, four interviewees said they believe both

dimensions are intensifying, as they require stronger expertise alongside broader general knowledge. Four interviewees believe only the vertical T-line will gain in depth, indicating that domain expertise is intensifying over time. Therefore, this increased GenAI usage in consulting workflows can compensate for the horizontal line. One consultant (Interview No.4) pointed out: "AI will be able to handle general aspects of our work. But the specific details, which you cannot simply Google or look up with Chat-GPT, will become even more essential."

Several participants explicitly highlighted the importance of training by the consultancy on using GenAI, including ethical guidelines and transparent communication. However, besides consultants, GenAI also requires training with unbiased data. Depending on the firm, interviewees reported different ethical standards regarding AI training. One manager (Interview No.10) claimed: "We have very high moral and ethical standards. We verify and double-check all the information we use for training, ensuring precision and high moral standards." Two experienced consultants (Interviews No.5 & 10) mentioned specific client contracts restricting them from using GenAI in certain areas or even entirely for any project-related tasks.
Besides boosting individual productivity and efficiency, consultancies have strong incentives to integrate GenAI into their workflows. To stay competitive, they increasingly implement GenAI as part of their upscaling and upskilling programs. As one interviewee (Interview No.8) put it: "We need to use GenAI ourselves to know what we are selling to our clients".

Finally, the three main findings are:

- By automating routine tasks, GenAI enhances efficiency and productivity in consultancies.
- GenAI's effective use requires consultants to have specific skills, such as prompting and critical thinking.
- Consultancies have strong incentives to integrate GenAI into their workflows for competitive advantages.

Overall, the interview findings strongly support H_a by showing GenAI's contribution to more efficient and effective consulting workflows. However, the extent to which this potential is exploited depends on the consultant's tool expertise and the capabilities provided by the consultancy.

b. Hypothesis H_b

Using GenAI for routine tasks allows consultants to focus on strategic activities, including problem-solving, client engagement, and decision-making. The findings generally support this assumption, although the extent of the shift in their daily work varies among interviewees (Table 3).

No.	Code	Findings	Empirical proof (% agree) (only applies to questioned companies, no generalization for every company within categories) Tier 1 Tier 2 Tier 3
1	GenAI as personal assistant	GenAI serves as a personal assistant, managing time-consuming tasks, allowing consultants to focus on tasks like client relationships.	50% 20% 40%
2	Impulse generation	Many interviewees saw GenAI as an impulse giver.	100% 100% 40%
3	Confidence/ trust in AI output	Interviewees emphasized that output quality depends on prompting abilities without introducing bias and output verification. Frequent cross-checking is mandatory.	100% 100% 100%
4	Need for critical skills	Effective usage requires critical evaluation, including understanding GenAI's boundaries.	100% 80% 60%
5	Core consulting skills are irreplaceable	Core consulting skills, including domain expertise, problem-solving, relationship building, and effective communication, are irreplaceable.	100% 100% 40%
6	Custom AI solutions	Consultancies have customized internal GenAI's, including knowledge management platforms, to receive better output.	100% 100% 20%
7	Efficiency gains from GenAI integration	AI significantly enhances idea generation, analysis, data preparation, summaries, research, and storyline development.	100% 100% 100%
8	Human-in-the-loop approach	Findings suggest that GenAI provides valuable input. Consultants must interpret and act upon this information.	100% 100% 100%
9	GenAI enhances insights and impulses	Correct GenAI usage provides more personalized and accurate output, bringing higher-quality recommendations for clients.	0% 20% 80%

Table 3: H_b findings with empirical proof

The analysis (Table 3) indicates a generally similar understanding among all participants across all codes. However, it stands out that Tier 1 and 2 have a higher degree of alignment. Both view GenAI as a valuable tool for delivering exceptional client service. Due to this, and with their greater financial resources, both tiers have developed their own GenAI. Most Tier 3 companies have not yet implemented their own tools (Code 6), primarily due to financial constraints, believing they are too small, or are still developing the tool. Consequently, Tier 3 cannot utilize the tools as effectively for impulse generation (Code 2) since they rely on publicly available tools. Their tools do not provide perfectly tailored outputs to prompts with additional information from the knowledge management system. Additionally, they could not test the tools' limits as extensively as Tier 1 and 2. Therefore, more than half of Tier 3 believe GenAI can replace core consulting skills. Notably, Tier 1 has 0% for the last code because they believe their output already reaches high-quality and cannot be improved much further.

Many interviewees described GenAI as having a personal assistant who helps manage their time-consuming tasks, allowing them to focus on client solutions and strategic initiatives. Interviewees at all levels recognized that AI significantly enhances idea generation, analysis, data preparation, summaries, research, and storyline development. By supporting these manual tasks, consulting workflows can improve in quality. A common perception is that GenAI serves as an impulse giver or sparring partner rather than a decision-maker or problem-solver. As one managing partner (Interview No.5) said: “I always think it is better to start with something than with a blank page.” GenAI, functioning as an impulse provider, enhances creativity for consultants developing new ideas that were not previously in their repertoire.

The findings also show that confidence and trust in AI outputs vary significantly. Additionally, user experience and knowledge are crucial for successful AI interactions. All interviewees reported frequently verifying AI-generated results, especially seniors and managers, who mentioned receiving incorrect or misleading outputs from their employees or from the engine itself. This became evident through cross-checking or reflecting on the answers using their own knowledge. Negative experiences mainly occurred when consultants requested tasks outside of GenAI’s functional limits or when bias influenced the results negatively. Therefore, all interviewees emphasized that output quality relies on the ability to craft unbiased prompts, verify results, and recognize GenAI’s boundaries. Additionally, LLMs must be trained on unbiased datasets, meaning they do not favor any output. Overall, there is a need for strong critical evaluation skills and a thorough understanding of how to manage GenAI.

To address this issue, consultancies began building their own GPTs, often integrating knowledge management platforms. This enables secure handling of sensitive data. An internal GPT works similarly to Copilot. Neither uses the provided input for training their algorithms, while offering consultants significantly greater time-saving potential. This is due to the reduced need for data anonymization compared to using public GPTs. Additionally, these tools provide more contextually relevant answers, as they often access internal knowledge platforms, giving consultants higher confidence in the results. An associate (Interview No.4) stated: “Copilot has access to all my data, including data that I don't even know I have access to”.

To conclude, the three key findings are:

- GenAI usage enables consultants to redirect their focus toward more strategic and creative activities.
- Successful GenAI usage depends heavily on the consultant’s knowledge, experience, and skills in interacting with the tool.
- Core consulting skills are non-replaceable by GenAI. Since humans remain essential, a human-in-the-loop approach is adopted.

Overall, the majority agreed that GenAI cannot replace core consulting competencies, like domain expertise, problem-solving, relationship building, and communication skills. While GenAI can improve workflow quality by providing new insights and perspectives, humans remain central. It is necessary to follow the human-in-the-loop approach, meaning GenAI provides input, but humans still need to interpret and act on it.

Finally, the findings support H_b by showing that GenAI enhances workflow quality by reducing manual workload and providing new insights and impulses. This hypothesis should be expanded to include the potential for enhancing creativity among consultants. However, human judgment, experience, and client understanding and interaction remain essential for generating valuable insights for clients.

c. Hypothesis H_c

The usage and impact of GenAI differ depending on management levels, resulting in distinct use cases and effects. The interview findings support this hypothesis.

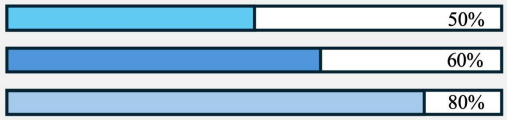
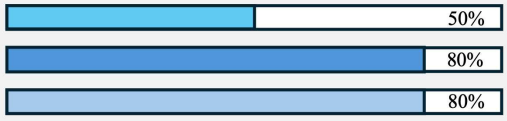
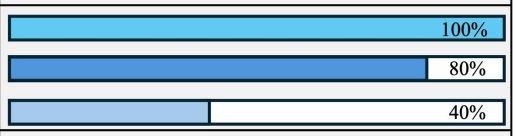
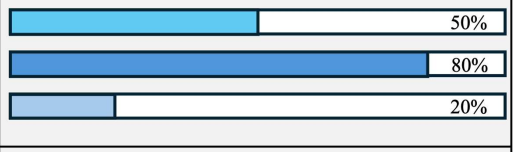
No.	Code	Findings	Empirical proof (% agree) (only applies to questioned companies, no generalization for every company within categories) (each interviewee discussed junior use cases and their own. Only this category of consultants is assessed) Tier 1 Tier 2 Tier 3
1	Impact on junior consultants	GenAI speeds up task execution, allowing juniors to engage earlier in more demanding tasks.	
2	Skill development	Due to GenAI, interviewees observed steeper learning curves and broader project exposure.	
3	Strategic use by senior consultants	Senior consultants use GenAI in addition to executing routine tasks primarily to challenge arguments, refine hypotheses, and explore new angles.	
4	Project management applications	Managers use GenAI in addition to executing routine tasks to generate executive summaries and summarize briefings. Current systems are not advanced enough for full task automation.	
5	C-level concerns	C-level consultants focus on data privacy, compliance, and ensuring AI alignment with internal policies while prioritizing long-term strategic investment.	
6	Perception of output quality	Although GenAI output appears polished, it has already produced mistakes.	
7	Evolving team structures	Several interviewees predict a shift in team structures due to GenAI, highlighting the differentiation between human skills and those of GenAI.	
8	Adaptation of training needs	Continuous employee training is essential for GenAI usage, to ensure no overreliance and maintain the consultant's role as the final authority.	

Table 4: H_c findings with empirical proof

The varying responses among the three tiers (Table 4) highlight that, depending on size, culture, and market position, each firm has a distinct approach to implementing GenAI. Since every consultant could only discuss their own level and use cases, Codes 3, 4, and 5 received different illustrations, showing the results from the corresponding level. All interviewees mentioned the impact and use cases of junior consultants, so there was no illustrative differentiation of these

findings. The perceived output quality is to have fewer mistakes (Code 6) in Tier 3 because it lacks its own GenAI implementation. They apply it to fewer tasks that require much input beforehand. The precise long-term evolution of GenAI in consulting currently remains uncertain. Therefore, opinions on evolving team structures (Code 7) and adapting training needs (Code 8) vary among the interviewees.

During the interviews, all junior consultants mentioned using GenAI to speed up their tasks. They frequently use it to clean datasets, prepare slides, conduct research, and summarize documents, allowing them to understand existing projects more easily and quickly. Additionally, GenAI helps them to work through certain tasks more independently, allowing them to challenge and, if needed, rethink their thoughts before involving a senior colleague. One associate noted: “It’s like having a sparring partner before going to my manager and presenting my work” (Interview No.4). GenAI critically reviews the junior’s reasoning and can refine or restructure it. It stood out that this increased their confidence and gave them the opportunity to engage in more substantial and challenging tasks earlier in their projects. With the help of GenAI and a knowledge management platform, junior consultants can handle tasks with a level of sophistication similar to that of experienced professionals. A manager highlighted: “Suddenly, a junior has access to all our previous projects within seconds and just like that, 20 years of experience” (Interview No.10).
Due to GenAI, three of four juniors experience a steeper learning curve and broader project exposure. This shift occurs because many routine tasks, which previously served to train juniors, can now be automated. Consequently, associates are evolving towards more meaningful tasks, previously handled by higher grades. These tasks involve managing client communication and conducting independent analyses, as mentioned by two senior consultants. This encourages a proactive learning culture while requiring specific guidance from senior staff.

Senior consultants and managers described their interaction with GenAI differently. Instead of using it for task execution, they use it more selectively and strategically, such as for idea generation, challenging arguments, or structuring complex content. Half of the interviewees at this level reported that GenAI assists in problem-solving in some scenarios, especially in the initial stages of a project. Additionally, it helps to refine hypotheses or explore new angles on storylines. A senior consultant (Interview No.8) explained: “When creating a storyline, I use our GPT to see if I have missed a critical angle or to prepare for counterarguments I had not considered.”

Managers highlighted use cases for project management activities to enhance coordination efforts. For instance, generating executive summaries or transcripts of internal briefings was considered a time-saver. Potential future opportunities to further free up time include creating weekly update reports and coordinating information streams across projects. However, all managers stated that the systems are not yet advanced enough to take over these tasks. Once GenAI systems advance further, managers would use their time for more leadership-related tasks, like mentoring and client alignment.

The C-level interviewees expressed concern about data privacy, compliance, and ethical boundaries, which typically fall within their responsibilities. Their primary focus is ensuring the usage aligns with internal policies, client contracts, and industry standards. Both interviewees perceive the tool not just as an individual productivity enhancement, but rather as a long-term strategic investment for their organization to boost overall efficiency. As one managing partner said (Interview No.7): “We need to obey the policies”. They want to ensure thoughtful integration into a firm’s knowledge infrastructure and to help all consultants as effectively as possible. From their perspective, GenAI ensures the consultancy's competitiveness in the fast-changing market and improves operational efficiency. This includes promoting internal GenAI development and encouraging employees to utilize it while discussing their experiences and strategies in roundtables or within their teams. Across all interviews, ten of twelve interviewees reported feeling a push from their consultancies towards increased GenAI usage to further boost efficiency.

Across all levels, interviewees noted that the GenAI output always sounds polished and predominantly includes the right buzzwords. However, this does not mean the created output is true. This usually becomes apparent when someone with specific expertise reviews it. One manager (Interview No.2) said: “Since we have been using GenAI, I have the feeling that some people just switch off their brain sometimes entirely.” Consequently, employees must be trained to continuously evolve their skills, independently finding solutions without overreliance on GenAI. Therefore, experienced human consultants will remain the final authority.
Additionally, interviewees highlighted that using GenAI is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Its value and application vary significantly depending on the consultant’s level of responsibility, area of expertise, and tasks. Six of twelve interviewees predicted future changes in team structures, envisioning smaller teams with fewer consultants working on projects. Two others proposed a diamond-shaped model instead of the traditional pyramid, featuring the same or

fewer juniors than mid-level consultants. Another participant mentioned that average performers are more likely to be replaced by AI, making it harder for them to stand out. Therefore, showcasing skills that differentiate humans from AI will become increasingly important.

Ultimately, the three key findings are:

- The impact and usage of GenAI differ across hierarchy levels.
- GenAI positively influences the learning curve of junior consultants, enabling them to execute more purposeful tasks.
- Team structures will adapt based on the impact of GenAI for each level.

Overall, the findings support H_c by showing that the usage and impact of GenAI vary across management levels. While associates primarily use the tool to improve their execution and learning capabilities, senior roles utilize it for organizational purposes and to supplement existing expertise. This differentiation is likely to grow as ongoing GenAI developments are expected to reshape traditional team structures within consultancies.

5. Discussion

This discussion aims to answer the research question: How does GenAI impact management consulting workflows, and does it shift the focus from expertise to automation? The findings connect to the theoretical concepts presented in the literature review, while accepting or rejecting the hypotheses formulated around them. The VSM and McKinsey's strategic PSA serve as frameworks to guide further analysis. Since problem-solving is the foundation of consulting work, it provides relevant perspectives on where GenAI contributes value and where human insights remain essential.

a. Automation of Routine Tasks through GenAI Usage

As highlighted before, the first hypothesis, that GenAI usage streamlines consulting workflows by automating routine tasks, receives strong support across all interviews. The findings revealed that consultants are using GenAI in their work, demonstrating that it is already part of their tasks and workflows. Ten of twelve interviewees highlighted that they use Copilot or their internal GenAI.

Figure 4: Main GenAI use cases based on interviews (own illustration)

GenAI increasingly supports many consulting activities. Some of the main enhancements to their productivity include automating and supporting tasks such as email writing, research, data collection, structuring, and document summarization (Figure 4). As Dell'Acqua et al. (2023) have noted, there are variations in expected productivity levels depending on the task. The interviews have shown that time savings in areas like project management and compliance monitoring are still rather emerging than transformative.

According to the RBV, GenAI is an intangible resource that, when used correctly, is highly valuable to its users. Automating tasks central to everyday consulting work can increase efficiency. From this perspective, GenAI becomes a firm-specific capability with proper customization and integration into knowledge management tools and internal workflows. For instance, connected to internal knowledge management tools, it can provide users with needed expertise by giving more insightful textual answers (Alavi & Westerman, 2023). The interviews revealed that GenAI alters the delivery process by introducing and modifying specific steps (Figure 5). This changing workflow is increasingly finding its way into consultants' workflows to make them more productive and effective. The combination of GenAI with internal knowledge management tools fulfils the RBV criteria of being valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable.

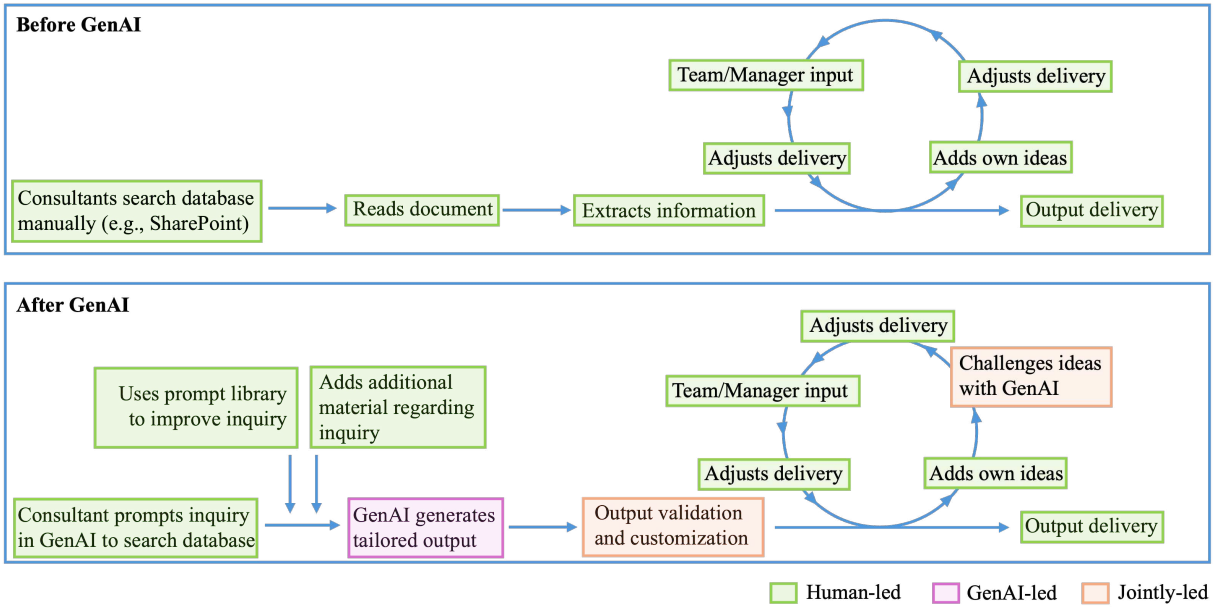


Figure 5: Before vs. after process: Consultants' GenAI usage (own illustration)

All interviewees mentioned their consultancy sees GenAI as a competitive advantage that enhances efficiency, as also noted in the literature by Rowan et al. (2025). Consequently, their organizational strategies evolve to make this advantage challenging for competitors to imitate.

Companies investing early in AI implementation, specifically in ethical standards, training initiatives, and AI governance, are building structures and resources that are increasingly hard to replicate. In this context, trust, culture, and legitimacy are crucial elements. As the findings have shown, users must stay updated by undergoing training. This ensures effective tool usage and optimal performance as supported by Alavi and Westerman (2023). When tools are connected and trained with internal data, they can produce better outputs. During training, unbiased data must be used to ensure compliance with the consultancy's ethical standards. In line with Barney's RBV, this combination of technology and firm-specific know-how forms a sustainable competitive asset (Sinclair, n.d.), especially when it aligns with company values.

Additionally, the DCT is crucial for understanding the broader organizational implications of implementing GenAI in consultancies. Adopting GenAI demonstrates the company's sense of technological potential to increase efficiency and adapt by reconfiguring internal processes and workflows. Detecting opportunities and modifying workflows and toolsets in response to implementation shows dynamic capabilities. During the interviews, consultants at all levels mentioned regularly utilizing GenAI as a sparring partner in tasks, like generating executive summaries or preparing tenders. This illustrates that GenAI has already been integrated into various activities, confirming the findings of Lakner and Roth (n.d.). However, the success of using these tools always depends on the consultants' knowledge. Therefore, as noted by the interviewees and the literature (Sinclair, n.d.), there will be a long-term shift toward AI-related skills, like prompting critical thinking and methodological awareness. This highlights DCT's central point, showcasing that the true value of technology lies not in its existence but rather in its effective utilization by knowledgeable individuals.

GenAI is becoming increasingly important in various consulting tasks (Lakner & Roth, n.d.), as shown in Figure 4. The process explained in Figure 5 can be generally applied to all the mentioned use cases. The basic process remains unchanged, but depending on the request, the materials and the extent of the loop must be adjusted accordingly. This shift requires continuous skill upgrading, cultural adaptation, and processual changes, meaning consultants must develop a mindset that embraces technological changes and lifelong learning. However, current technology cannot replace the strategic and interpersonal competencies that human consultants offer, which their clients highly value.

b. Core Consulting Skills are Non-Replaceable

Interviewees believe that automating certain routine tasks with GenAI in consulting workflows partially creates new opportunities to focus more on core consulting skills.

Viewed through the RBV lens, this reallocation of human resources supports a competitive advantage, enabling consultants to utilize their time differently. Automating low-value tasks allows them to focus on strategic thinking, problem-solving, client engagement, and communication. The findings indicate continuous time-saving improvements. GenAI's current capabilities still show improvement potential to reallocate more time to high-value tasks. With future reallocation of human capital, interviewees believe additional value can be created, enabling humans to focus on tasks that make them irreplaceable, such as critical thinking. This underscores GenAI's role as a strategic resource. The tasks on which they concentrate heavily rely on human judgment, empathy, and expertise (Hughes, 2023). These abilities are inimitable and non-substitutable by GenAI. Interviewees repeatedly described GenAI as their "personal assistant," enhancing their work rather than replacing it. The findings show that GenAI helps consultants organize their thoughts, brainstorm, and analyze perspectives they have not considered before. Alavi and Westerman's (2023) support these results. Using the tool creates new conditions to ask more, a greater variety, and newer questions (Gregersen & Bianzino, 2023). GenAI, as a strategic resource, can only unlock its full potential when data is critically cross-checked, and humans remain in control of decision-making. The dependency on human agency was highlighted throughout the interviews, underscoring that, despite its power, GenAI cannot replace the intrinsic value of human expertise. With the adoption of tools and continuous advancements, consultancies must focus on developing human skills that are essential for effective GenAI usage.

Furthermore, using GenAI enhances seizing capabilities, which were emphasized through the DCT. The interviews highlighted that consultants can act quickly in certain scenarios due to faster access to relevant knowledge. The findings of Lakner and Roth (n.d.) support that GenAI helps consultants to make decisions in less time. Consultancies are better equipped to seize market opportunities more effectively and tailor their solutions more precisely. This ability to integrate GenAI into solution-finding processes without diminishing human responsibility allows firms to act decisively in a rapidly changing environment (Rowan et al., 2025). As interviewees mentioned, GenAI's integration makes consultancies more agile and proactive, thereby positioning them more competitively in the market since consultants can increasingly focus on core consulting skills. GenAI serves consultants as a personal sparring partner,

confirming that dynamic capabilities lie not just in tool adoption but in its thoughtful integration. This creates new market opportunities for consultancies throughout all project phases.

c. Impact of the Usage of GenAI on Different Hierarchy Levels

The interviews showed that GenAI's use and impact differ across hierarchical levels. Although all employees generally access the same tools within a company, their usage varies significantly by level and task.

The RBV explains that access to GenAI tools differs among companies. The interview findings indicate that larger consultancies are more likely to have their own tools, as they face competitive pressure from others that have already implemented GenAI. Because these tools are usually tied to internal knowledge systems, they function as firm-specific, strategic assets. Large companies have greater financial and human resources to develop an internal GenAI. Additionally, since more people use it, the return on investment (ROI) is realized more quickly due to efficiency gains. Consultancies can also advise clients on implementing GenAI, providing another reason to hire.

The DCT perspective highlights different use cases at various consulting levels. GenAI acts as a resource whose value depends on its context, the person, and their role within the company. The interviewees mentioned that they perceive GenAI as particularly effective for entry-level positions for productivity gains, which aligns with the literature (Raman, 2025). Juniors expect more rotation across projects and a steeper learning curve (Srinivasan et al., 2025). During the interviews, associates highlighted that they share this view. They primarily use GenAI to speed up task execution and knowledge attainment. Consequently, they can work sooner on high-value tasks (Raman, 2025; Rowan et al., 2025), boosting their confidence. This shows that junior consultants do not decrease their efforts on tasks. Instead, they reallocate or increase their efforts due to more demanding tasks, which they might not have been able to perform without GenAI’s assistance (Memmert et al., 2025).

Senior consultants and managers reported saving less time but being able to start projects more easily and quickly, which positively impacts project costs and timelines. Unlike the literature (Ide & Talamàs, 2024), higher-level interviewees did not feel pushed toward simpler work. To ensure that GenAI offers opportunities rather than threats, managers should encourage their

employees to experiment with the tool (Alavi & Westerman, 2023; Rowan et al., 2025). This highlights the importance of ongoing effort and the need to apply it to tasks such as quality assurance and integrating AI into strategic processes (Memmert et al., 2025).
Several interviewees emphasized that, besides receiving encouragement from the consultancy, team members also demonstrate best practices in team calls and prepare everyone to avoid common mistakes. Consultants must understand which information they can paste into the engine and what qualifies as sensitive data. The literature places strong emphasis on sensitive content due to privacy issues (Alavi & Westerman, 2023).

The C-level interviewees mentioned caution from a strategic top-down perspective, highlighting concerns around ethical use, data privacy, and governance, underscoring their responsibility to ensure the tools' appropriate usage with a shared understanding among all employees. They view GenAI as a long-term investment to boost efficiency.
These activities are central to dynamic capabilities, reflecting the firm's ability to adapt to technological shifts. Restructuring the traditional consulting model towards a stronger mid-level aligns with the DCT, which says that firms constantly evolve and reshape themselves to meet changing market conditions and technological innovations.

d. Approaches in Consulting

To better understand how GenAI influences consultants' workflow in addressing client challenges, the VSM and McKinsey PSA offer valuable insights into AI's effects. Utilizing both models highlights the consequences and implications of GenAI, demonstrating its significant impact on consultants' activities.

1. The Value Shop Model

The VSM targets the deployment of consultants and resources, which are crucial in addressing client problems, particularly through developing human competencies, capabilities, and expertise. The so-called people profitability results from a consultant's qualitative contribution to problem-solving (Fjeldstad & Andersen, 2003). The interviews have shown that since GenAI increasingly handles manual, routine tasks, consultants have more time and reduced cognitive workload, allowing for a greater emphasis on high-value activities, like strategic initiatives and client relationships.
From a people profitability perspective, the value per consultant shifts due to higher capacity utilization and the enhanced relevance of their skillset. As interviewees confirmed, GenAI

automates more side tasks, core consulting tasks, and, particularly, problem-solving, receives more focus. Over time, AI-supported learning and training can further improve this. With immediate feedback and personalized instructions, consultants can enhance their personal profitability fast by learning how to refine their work (Alavi & Westerman, 2023).
Consequently, the efficiency of each consultant increases significantly. Therefore, the profitability of each project increases, as fewer human resources are needed to fulfil tasks with low involvement, while projects are still sold at the same prices.

2. The McKinsey Model: Problem-Solving Approach

With GenAI integrated into consultancies, one of their core workflows, problem-solving, must adapt with GenAI influencing all six steps. Despite its impact, several aspects remain where the human role is irreplaceable (Table 5). The interviews showed that consultants see GenAI's greatest impact in early project phases, especially for navigating unfamiliar knowledge and quickly acquiring information.
Interviewees mentioned that GenAI assists in problem framing by generating hypotheses and initial project structuring. The tool generally generates ideas faster and with less effort than humans would (Stadler & Reeves, 2023). A senior consultant (Interview No.3) said, "I often use it as a starting point to have a basic framework to build on." Although GenAI can accelerate project kick-offs, interviewees emphasized that consultants remain essential for strategic framing, providing context, and establishing relevance. This is further specified in the different model stages in Table 5, where some processes before and after GenAI are exemplified. Overall, GenAI usage enhances dynamic sensing capabilities, so consultants can rapidly identify new opportunities. Additionally, the tendency to remain too closely to previous beliefs is reduced by asking the right questions to their GenAI (Stadler & Reeves, 2023).

Furthermore, GenAI can assist in data gathering, cleansing, and synthesizing. Humans may reach cognitive limits in processing large datasets (Stadler & Reeves, 2023). Consultants can prompt the tool to analyze textual sources for specific topics, saving time on research. To help consultants with prompting, some consultancies offer their employees prompt libraries to match their inquiries (Memmert et al., 2025). One interviewee (Interview No.3) mentioned that this prompt library is integrated into their internal GPT to generate more targeted prompts for improved results.
If connected to internal sources, GenAI functions as a knowledge management platform. Interviewees mentioned that with this connection, GenAI quickly finds past projects with

similar patterns, thereby supporting the analysis. Consequently, LLMs can assist with the storyline by structuring and embedding ideas within the context (Alavi & Westerman, 2023). Nevertheless, interviewees highlighted that interpreting the data and sources requires a critical assessment. Especially since humans have proprietary information about their clients' positions and capabilities for their evaluation (Stadler & Reeves, 2023), based on this judgment, the data can be utilized further. Once bias is recognized, it must be eliminated, or the search starts again.

Model Stage	GenAI Effect	Human Role Still Needed	Changed Processes due to GenAI Effect (Selection)
Problem Framing	Faster hypothesis generation, early structuring	Strategic framing, contextual relevance	**Before:** Manually brainstorming for hypotheses, structuring frameworks **Now:** GenAI generates multiple hypotheses, drafts frameworks quickly (e.g., SWOT, Porter's Five Forces)
Analyzing	Automates data gathering, synthesis	Interpretation, judgment, overall evaluation of output, bias recognition	**Before:** Consultants collected competitor data, read lengthy reports, summarized findings **Now:** GenAI automates data gathering, extracts insights, delivers first-pass summaries
Data ↔ Intuition	Boosts data quality by challenging output, enhances access and understandability	Expertise, cross-checking, scenario evaluation	**Before:** Consultants relied on manual analysis and intuition to detect anomalies and patterns. **Now:** GenAI highlights anomalies, synthesizes unstructured data, makes patterns more visible
Managing	Automates admin tasks to boost time efficiency	Team/client engagement, empathy, conflict management	**Before:** Consultants manually wrote meeting notes, structured project plans, coordinated timelines **Now:** GenAI produces instant meeting summaries, action items, draft project schedules
Presenting	Auto-structuring, slide creation, content polishing.	Strategic narrative, persuasion, customization, client relationship, responsibility	**Before:** Consultants created slides, polished language, structured narratives **Now:** GenAI generates slide drafts, polishes content, provides visual/storyline suggestions
Implementation	Support in documentation, iteration, reporting, part of testing the implementation	Buy-in, execution ownership, final decisions	**Before:** Consultants documented outcomes, wrote reports, designed test cases manually **Now:** GenAI generates draft documentation, automates reporting, proposes test scenarios

Table 5: Effects of GenAI on McKinsey's problem-solving approach

During problem-solving, users must avoid over-relying on GenAI (Stadler & Reeves, 2023). This can cause superficial understanding, making it difficult to understand the project's foundation and explain results to clients. One consultant (Interview No.9) noted, "A complex

solution must be explained simply in your own words so that everyone understands it.". Consultants must evaluate the output's relevance and whether it guides the project in the right direction (Table 5).
Consultants must balance data findings with human intuition, leveraging expertise from previous projects to guide decision-making (Gregersen & Bianzino, 2023). Interviewees noted that GenAI can improve data quality by making it more accessible through summaries, alternative explanations, or by enabling users to challenge the output with questions that explore different perspectives that were not immediately obvious. GenAI functions as a strategic enabler, but humans must utilize new opportunities to understand and challenge the data. The interviewees emphasized the importance of skills for interacting with the tool, including appropriate prompting skills. This makes human expertise, along with critical output evaluation, essential (Sinclair, n.d.).

While solving the client's problem, consultants must manage the client, their team, and themselves. As interviewees highlighted, GenAI is limited in significantly impacting this area because it lacks the human skills necessary to manage relationships, show empathy, and sense team dynamics related to conflicts. However, it can still assist with the right input and data for process-related workflows, such as to-do lists and summaries of current progress. This reaffirms that human skills are irreplaceable, and GenAI cannot take over these tasks.

The findings highlight that correct usage improves presentation quality, enabling consultants to work more efficiently. The literature also confirms GenAI's assistance in structuring slide decks and building a narrative for the storyline (Alavi & Westerman, 2023). This is especially true for juniors, who are mainly responsible for creating drafts of these slide decks.

Moreover, the implementation phase benefits from GenAI throughout iteration cycles. Interviewees mentioned that LLMs help them prepare tenders and draft initial ideas in structuring implementations. This process involves reviewing and improving client reports based on the implementation results. With GenAI, overall documentation can be completed more quickly (Alavi & Westerman, 2023). Consultants also highlight that notes can be easily transformed into fully developed documents, and modifications can be made consistently with minimal effort. Edelman and Abraham's (2023) findings support this by mentioning an agile approach within consulting projects. GenAI also assists in comparing and analyzing targeted

results with actual results through KPIs, meaning whether the implementation is on track or if there are deviations.

Finally, interviewees emphasized GenAI's inability to participate in the emotional buy-in period, necessitating consultants to lead. Additionally, creating complex roadmaps for implementation phases and executing these steps requires human decision-making and leadership, though this may change with future advancements.

6. Concluding Perspective

a. Conclusion and Outlook

This thesis highlights a change in focus, along with shifts in timing and skills within consulting workflows, without necessarily a shift in expertise. As its title suggests, it can now be confirmed that GenAI usage in consulting indeed causes a shift in focus. This shift occurs because LLMs can execute many routine and low-effort tasks. Consequently, consultants can allocate their time differently. This change is due to the system's ability to automate tasks previously handled by humans. Over time, these tasks can increasingly be transferred to GenAI, allowing consultants to devote more time to strategic, creative, and generally more complex tasks.

However, that does not imply that increased GenAI implementation diminishes the required consulting expertise. GenAI can provide consultants with quicker and easier access to the knowledge of experienced consultants by offering documents from previous projects through knowledge management platforms, which is especially valuable for juniors. Nevertheless, consultants must deepen their knowledge to demonstrate that their expertise is relevant to client projects and deliver exceptional results to prove their value compared to GenAI.

Additionally, the findings highlight a skill shift that is becoming increasingly important. To navigate AI outputs effectively, consultants must apply a more nuanced judgment and understanding of the content produced. This ensures they fully comprehend and are able to explain the content to clients. Critical thinking, domain expertise, and interpersonal skills will become even more relevant. GenAI cannot replace these skills, as they are essential in consulting. Consultancies exhibit an environment in which GenAI, depending on the workflow, is already frequently used and will expand its usage in the future.
As development continues, these shifts might extend. Therefore, consultancies need to offer their employees training opportunities to keep pace with technological advancements and the ever-changing consulting environment.

Overall, the findings reveal that GenAI significantly impacts management consulting workflows, creating a dynamic landscape that still requires deep expertise. Rather than diminishing the need for specialized skills, it emphasizes the importance of continual skill development. The relationship between GenAI and consultants is continually evolving and points toward a future where, as Bill Gates stated, “ChatGPT will change our world" (Stadler

& Reeves, 2023). To keep pace with time, consultancies should expand their services to advise clients on GenAI implementation while incorporating it into their own firms. Consultancies that do not use GenAI will fall behind and face difficulties in keeping up with competitors. However, this will not happen overnight, as “we tend to overestimate the effect of technology in the short run and underestimate it in the long run” (Amara, 1988). In the long term, consultancies will transform and likely adopt AI agents that can plan and execute entire tasks without human intervention. This means these agents will be active participants in consulting workflows (Kleine et al., 2025; Ide & Talamàs, 2024). For standardized routine tasks, AI agents can reduce human error, allowing consultants to focus entirely on high-value tasks.

During AI agents’ deployment, quality control systems must be introduced to verify and validate the output. This would enhance the system's reliability and increase efficiency. Since human-AI collaboration enables AI full workflow participation, consulting teams will decrease in size in terms of human capacity required for each project. Consequently, fewer consultants, particularly associates, will be needed on each project. Since they typically handle repetitive and standardized tasks that AI can support. This positively affects project timelines and overall costs.

The consultancy's business model may change as clients question the time spent on tasks or decide to hire consultants later in the project. Initially, they might attempt to solve their problems independently before approaching a consultancy. Additionally, clients’ expectations, especially regarding the time invested and the quality of the content, will rise. Clients will expect consultants to use GenAI in their daily work. Therefore, consultants must deliver even higher-quality work in less time. However, the basis of the business model, billing clients for knowledge work, will not change. Only the workflows within consultancies will adapt.

Throughout the process, consultancies must determine when their investment in GenAI development no longer yields a positive ROI, meaning they should allocate their funds instead to training and education for their consultants.

Finally, although GenAI has already started bringing a transformation to the consulting industry, it will not cause complete automation. As GenAI becomes more advanced, automation will progress, allowing it to reduce the consultants’ workload by handling and assisting in some workflows, ensuring the consultant’s expertise remains dominant and irreplaceable.

AI and human consultants must collaborate in a client-focused manner. Due to their collaboration, they can achieve better results (Hughes, 2023). By responsibly integrating GenAI into consultancies, firms can enhance the client experience as well as their individual workflows, ultimately building an innovative and sustainable organization for the future.

b. Areas for Further Studies

Given GenAI's relevance in consulting and its ongoing development, further studies are necessary. As consultancies increasingly implement GenAI into their workflows, there may be a shift towards smaller, more agile teams. These transitions could accelerate consultants' career development, not just at the junior level. Individuals may take on responsibilities earlier in their careers. Training programs can be evaluated, including identifying which ones are most effective for specific consulting positions. Further research could focus on how the continuous GenAI implementation results in fewer consultants per project while maintaining or even increasing quality. Moreover, what effects does this new structure have on project outcomes in terms of quality, costs, and client satisfaction?

In the future, there may be opportunities for different knowledge sectors to enrich each other, such as lawyers learning from consultants and vice versa, about the ongoing development of GenAI in their workflows. Similarities should be identified to compare and transfer them.
Furthermore, other tools impacting consulting, such as RPA and predictive AI, need evaluation. Since this thesis employs a qualitative approach, it makes sense to review it from both quantitative and long-term perspectives to verify the findings presented.

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Appendices

a. Keywords for Literature Search (Selection)

(“generative AI” OR “GenAI”), (“generative AI” AND “consulting”), (“management consulting”), (“management consulting” AND “generative AI”), (“large language model” AND “consulting”), (“resource-based view”), (“dynamic capability theory”), (“value shop model”), (“generative AI” AND “integration”), (“knowledge work”), (“problem-solving” AND “consulting”), (“generative AI” AND “knowledge work”), (“ethical issues” AND “AI” OR “generative AI”).

b. IBM Ethical Guidelines

IBM (2022) proposes five guiding principles to establish a basis for using GenAI, emphasizing that it should supplement human intelligence rather than replace it (1). Additionally, it highlights the explainability (2) and transparency of technology to its users (3). GenAI users should collaborate with their team members to identify biases (4) and promote inclusivity (5).

c. Interview Guide

Initially, all interviewees were asked for permission to record. Afterwards, the questions were asked regarding their company, company size, position, consulting expertise, years of experience, and working location for classification and quantitative analysis purposes. After anonymization, these answers are provided in the sample database table in the findings.

Interview questions:

1. What are typical workflows in your position or your area? To what extent does your current role involve repetitive or standardized tasks?
2. Have you come into contact with AI while working as a consultant?
3. Which generative AI tools are most commonly used in the organization? / Does the company you are working for develop its own generative AI that you are using?
4. How familiar are you with them?
5. What motivated the adoption of generative AI tools in your organization? To what extent does the organization encourage or push consultants to use generative AI?
6. Have you had any negative experiences with your company's use of generative AI?
7. How does your consultancy handle sensitive client data when using generative AI tools?

8. What are the use cases for generative AI tools, and which tasks do you believe could be done by AI in the future? Where do you see generative AI's potential to replace your current work?
9. Is it possible to provide more personalized or accurate advice using generative AI?
10. In which areas has generative AI most improved your workflows? Are these improvements focused on reducing manual effort, enhancing decision-making, or both?
11. Do you think generative AI allows consultants to focus more on strategic thinking, client relationship management, or innovative problem-solving? If yes, how?
12. How confident are you in the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated insights? Should AI-driven results be cross-checked with manual methods?
13. Does your consultancy use generative AI for knowledge management within the consultancy?
14. How do you balance the usage of AI tools with maintaining a human-centered approach to consulting?
15. Has the use of generative AI tools shifted the focus of your work from manual tasks to more strategic activities?
16. Did the implementation of AI tools change the expertise required of consultants (T-model)? What new skills do consultants need to acquire to fully utilize AI’s ability to streamline workflows and enable higher-value tasks?
17. Is AI seen as a threat to management consultants, especially junior consultants, or more as an enabler of new roles and opportunities?
18. Has the organization provided any training or resources to help you integrate AI into its workflows?
19. What ethical concerns have arisen from using generative AI in advisory work?
20. Will the increasing use of generative AI reduce the reliance on human expertise for manual tasks while increasing the demand for strategic thinking?
21. How will the consulting industry and the company you work for change using generative AI within the next 5 / 10 years?

d. Interview notes

The interview notes show only the most important parts of the interviews, summarizing the key aspects.

Interview 1:

1. Involved in problem formulation, solution development, and programming. Few standardized tasks are due to the analytical nature of the work. Only process-oriented workflows repeat: data analysis, report creation, customer feedback analysis, and market forecasting. Each project is highly individual.
2. Uses GenAI daily.
3. Uses ChatGPT. Testing OpenAI via Microsoft Azure and evaluating an enterprise license. Rejected Microsoft Copilot, exploring a secure in-house GPT model ("Safe GPT").
4. Highly familiar: project-management role focused on AI integration, plus a master's in AI.
5. Established an AI competence centre; provides (partly mandatory) employee training. Internal use not heavily pushed yet, expected to rise with own safe GPT launch.
6. Few issues so far, including bias in answer or prompt, and requests beyond the capabilities of GenAI.
7. Testing currently Safe GPT that filters customer data; ChatGPT must not receive client, company or personal information.
8. Uses AI for sparring, transcript analysis, executive summaries, email drafting, customer feedback analysis, and market forecasts. Sees future potential in strategic modelling and process automation; AI cannot replace client-facing explanation skills.
9. Sees potential since AI can cluster and suggest campaigns but is limited by confidential customer data; human input remains vital.
10. Greatest benefits in idea generation, research, document structuring, and storyline.
11. Efficiency gains free time for customer communication and creative problem-solving.
12. Quickly judges quality via expertise, highlights the need for fact cross-checking, especially for less-experienced users.
13. Not yet.
14. Combines AI output with expert knowledge; human-in-the-loop ensures accuracy and high-quality work.
15. Repetitive tasks are handled faster, allowing greater focus on analysis and strategy.
16. Validation mindset, prompting skill, critical thinking, and data understanding become standard. AI widens the top of the T (faster basic understanding) by receiving initial understanding more quickly, but cannot replace deep field experience.
17. Juniors start more easily, senior partners use AI for initial idea sparring, but critical thinking must persist.

18. Competence centre offers prompting, AI basics, and compliance training; expansion planned.
19. Outputs labelled for transparency; compliance training covers proper AI use. Ethical guidelines accompany the enterprise OpenAI license.
20. Personal relationships, trust, and proprietary experience keep consultants indispensable (at least for now).
21. The service portfolio must adjust to AI strategy and implementation, consultancy needs to acquire new knowledge, and the talent war intensifies. Simpler issues may be resolved independently by clients in-house via corporate GPTs, but human capital will still drive implementation and foster client trust. Potential for fewer consultants within one team.

Interview 2:

1. Advises clients on regulatory issues, ensuring they first do the right things and then do things right.

   Responsibilities cover the whole project life-cycle from order acquisition through implementation and completion, as well as HR tasks such as recruiting, training, development, and, at times, exit management.

   Repetitive elements occur mainly in analyzing and evaluating large datasets. Communication tasks, such as ad-hoc emails and preparing presentations or slides, must be carried out repeatedly, even though each individual message or slide deck is unique. Screen job applications regularly, but every application is too individualised for this activity to feel truly repetitive.
2. Encounters and uses GenAI every day.
3. The firm offers an in-house GenAI, but rarely uses it because it is slow, trained on outdated data, and lacks creative impulses. The in-house tool provides role-specific profiles (consultant, auditor, analyst), yet usually produces overly objective answers with little inspiration. Regularly rely on ChatGPT and would like broader access to Microsoft Copilot.
4. Very familiar with generative AI, exploring it extensively both at work and in my private time.
5. The consultancy adopted generative AI to keep pace with market developments and to support the AI implementation services they sell to clients. Efficiency gains are another motive, provided staff know how to use the tools properly. Management strongly promotes AI usage, generating internal media attention rather than prescribing detailed use cases.

6. GenAI sometimes produces polished yet incomplete answers, so vital content can be missing. Experienced consultants treat AI output as inspiration, but less experienced staff struggle to judge its accuracy. Since the introduction of ChatGPT and the internal tool, noticed some colleagues relying on AI and "switching off" their own thinking.
7. Sensitive client data may be entered only into the in-house chatbot; using external generative AIs for such data is prohibited.
8. Sees AI potential wherever tasks are repeatable and standardised, such as drafting application texts, reporting, research, or generating standard slide decks. Does not expect AI to replace the interpersonal relationships and expert judgement that define consulting work. Uses GenAI mainly as an inspiration engine rather than a comprehensive knowledge base.
9. GenAI does not significantly increase personalization because our consulting advice is already highly tailored.
10. AI delivers the greatest benefit by accelerating brainstorming and shortening the research phase for new project ideas. Hypotheses and frameworks can be drafted quickly with the help of GenAI When team members lack AI literacy, the tools can consume additional time instead of saving it.
11. AI does not reduce the need to build sympathy, trust, and relationships with clients, which remain central to our value proposition. Methodology, experience, and networked thinking are more important than merely prompting or reproducing knowledge.
12. Remains cautious about AI accuracy because its answers often sound convincing, making unchecked adoption risky. Always cross-checks AI output, usually with Google or own knowledge, and values improvements in reasoning and data freshness. Transparent sources and references are increasingly important
13. Internal AI is linked to the firm's knowledge base and supports knowledge management.
14. Consulting is driven by people who generate trust, understand client needs, and communicate solutions; AI only supports these activities.
15. By saving time during idea generation, AI gives consultants more time to devote more effort to developing detailed client solutions.
16. Consultants must learn when to rely on their own judgement, how to prompt AI effectively, and how to detect bias. Tool selection, parameter tuning, and cross-checking across multiple sources are becoming essential skills. GenAI broadens generalist knowledge (the horizontal bar of the T) but also heightens demand for deep expertise (the vertical shaft) as problems grow more complex.

17. Worries that consultants may use AI as a shortcut, using AI too quickly instead of thinking independently.
18. The firm offers training on compliance and ethical prompting, especially on protecting proprietary or client information. Practical instruction on effective prompting is lacking, so the team is arranging an external course.
19. Training highlights potential bias, tries to remove bias from prompts, though this is challenging.
20. AI can assist with certain tasks, but human expertise and experience will remain the central element of advisory work.
21. GenAI already provides a clear competitive advantage, whether for coding or faster email responses. There is a need for the cultivation of robust expertise and the integration of AI sensitively, as its relevance in consulting will only increase. The field of consultancy will become faster, better, and cheaper due to pressure from clients and top management.

Interview 3:

1. Main work lies in regulatory / compliance consulting, e.g., analyzing legal texts to pick out relevant paragraphs for client projects. Consulting tasks are mostly non-standard, with only text drafting and email writing repeated, but each instance is highly individual. In the audit division, many activities are already automated, unlike consulting.
2. Uses an internal generative-AI tool every day for analyzing legal texts and compliance rules.
3. Consultancy developed its own ChatGPT-based tool that keeps all data on company servers. Includes a prompt library that offers category-specific prompt suggestions for precise queries.
4. Knows the internal tool well and uses it daily.
5. Adoption driven by efficiency gains and the prospect of better-quality text output. Mandatory AI training courses; “AI champions” share best practices, and a self-help group supports users’ questions. Management treats AI as a top strategic priority and encourages employees to discuss it with their superiors. AI is also discussed in “all-hands-on” calls
6. No notable negative experiences so far; limited use cases at the moment. The focus is on equipping staff early so they can employ AI critically when client demand rises.
7. GenAI runs solely on in-house servers; no data leaves the organization.
8. Frequently generates initial frameworks for documents and receives creative impulses from uploaded materials. Tool drafts compliance documents and could automate regulatory

checks and document filtering. Uses it as a starting point to have a basic framework to build on. Sees major potential in letting AI extract key points from lengthy regulations to avoid hours of manual reading.

9. Achieving truly personalized outputs is challenging in regulatory work because many individual factors must be considered.
10. Regularly uses AI to draft well-phrased emails, saving significant time on routine correspondence, and serves as an impulse giver.
11. Time saved on preliminary analysis can be invested in deeper client interactions, extra coordination calls, or networking. Higher positions use the time to focus more on the customer and relationship management. Relies on AI results only partially, supplementing them with cross-checks and personal expertise.
12. Confidence varies by task; always cross-checks AI output or tests it against own knowledge.
13. Internal AI has access to the consultancy's knowledge base and supports knowledge management.
14. AI processes data; clients still require human interaction and relationship building.
15. AI cuts time spent on compliance analysis, freeing more capacity for higher-value consulting work.
16. Critical questioning and validation of AI outputs are increasingly important; blind adoption is risky. Rightful prompting is essential. Junior staff need technical AI skills early, moving beyond simple Word/Excel/PowerPoint tasks. With seniority, tasks get more demanding. AI covers superficial tasks well; consultants must deepen domain expertise for complex issues.
17. Routine note-taking has shifted from juniors to automated transcription tools. Human consultants remain essential for nuanced customer relationships and for integrating diverse viewpoints.
18. Mandatory training on the internal GenAI and its use supports strategic skill development. Emphasis on IT foundations and understanding clients' systems to stay competitive.
19. Most employees pay little attention to bias; specialized project teams handle interpretability and fairness questions.
20. AI struggles with complex topics that rely on personal experience; human insight remains critical.
21. More AI tools will reduce manual work, yet strong client relationships will remain the core of consulting value, and can result in changes of team structures. The degree to which AI

is used in projects is not communicated to clients. In the long run, it might change and result in higher expectations by clients. Better cost optimizations in terms of size and costs.

Interview 4:

1. Business-case analysis: evaluate datasets, calculate capital expenditure to judge project profitability. Project management: organize merger teams, track deadlines, and document progress.
   Proposal writing: gather background material and draft offer text.
   Repetition: varies by project; some PM tasks repeat, but outcomes differ; quotations allow partial copy-and-modify reuse.
2. Yes, every day.
3. Internal GenAI plus Microsoft Copilot. Internal tool lets users tune creativity, prompt style, and context, but Copilot is preferred because it can access all personal data across Microsoft apps. Has an in-house prompt library to improve his prompting skills.
4. The daily user feels confident thanks to the firm-provided training.
5. Goal: work faster, more productively, and tap resources previously out of reach. Large upskilling program: mandatory general AI training plus optional deep-dive courses. Team culture encourages sharing hacks and lessons (negative as well as positive ones); partners push adoption to keep the firm ahead of the curve.
6. Output must be 100 % correct; current AI still produces errors requiring manual revision. When the error rate is too high, it is more efficient to complete the task without AI.
7. Company AIs are sealed off from the internet; data never leaves the firm and remains private even from other colleagues.
8. Project-meeting transcripts and summaries are auto-generated, then manually checked. Highest automation in quotation drafting: AI refines standard text blocks and company descriptions. Copilot assists in Outlook (email replies) and other Office apps; AI already makes prompting suggestions. Excel prompts are often not yet practical. PowerPoint corporate-design integration is still lacking, but is seen as future potential. AI will be able to take over the general aspects of our work. But the specific details, which you cannot simply Google or look up with Chat-GPT, will become even more essential. AI unlikely to replace consulting because it remains a “people business”; personalized service is the remaining unique selling point.
9. Personalization is a consultant’s unique selling point; AI currently produces generic language, though this may evolve.

10. AI accelerates early-stage brainstorming in a project and idea generation, saving preparation time.
11. Senior ranks focus more on direct client interaction. Juniors can refine proposals and analyses with AI before submitting them for manager review, gaining variety and faster task rotation. One more loop of verification of work before showing it to the manager.
12. Accepts AI suggestions first, then validates against experience or cross-checks; cannot rely on AI output alone. Copilot's deep data access forms a strong starting base.
13. Copilot's access to all personal work files functions as an embedded knowledge base. It even has access to files that consultants do not even know they have access to.
14. Final review must always be human. AI lacks individual expertise and contextual understanding.
15. Routine tasks (e.g., email drafting) take less time, boosting productivity and shortening project timelines. Strategy creation speeds up; operational project management tasks will still require consultant support and may even grow in demand. Focus on operational work
16. Juniors will do fewer repetitive tasks and must learn to drive AI effectively and reduce error rates. Traditional Office skills (PowerPoint, Excel, …) become less critical; deeper subject-matter expertise (the vertical of the T) becomes more vital as AI covers generalist ground.
17. Expect leaner, more agile, and faster project teams; expertise application in practice becomes the key differentiator. Therefore, the classic pyramid structure will change.
18. Mandatory, interactive training on data protection, security, and specific applications (internal tool prompting, Copilot workflows).
19. Firm-wide AI ethics guidelines apply; follow-up monitoring ensures compliance.
20. Consultants must decide when to consult AI versus drawing on personal experience; AI offers generic answers, humans provide nuanced context.
21. Operational project work will grow in importance as IT transformations remain too complex for AI alone. Consulting remains a people business. Humans deliver the final value while AI creates both opportunities and challenges. Due to AI support, fewer consultants per project. Delivery must still fit what the clients want. Leaner teams for each project because of efficiency gains. Clients might try to solve problems on their own until they realize that they need help from a consultancy (because of experience).

Interview 5:

1. Oversees project and development plans and coordinates stakeholders to create transparency and surface dependencies. Handles calculations and personnel planning (e.g., factoring in sickness periods and workforce distribution).
2. Frequently tests and employs Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT for first drafts of documents and manuals.
3. Relies on Copilot and ChatGPT; an internal generative-AI solution is in development but not yet available.
4. Uses the tools regularly.
5. AI is viewed primarily as an efficiency booster; internal meetings are held to inspire knowledge-sharing. The firm is cautious: prioritizes developing ethical concepts and an in-house AI rather than heavily promoting ChatGPT.
6. No significant negative experiences so far.
7. External AI tools must not receive client data; secure internal alternatives are being built.
8. Today: drafts personnel handbooks, structures documents, and prepares data. Tomorrow: hopes AI will generate user stories, design suggestions, and other tasks based on standard specifications. But some clients restrict consultants in their AI usage for specific projects.
9. Believes AI can deliver faster, customized suggestions if the underlying data is processed correctly.
10. AI markedly reduces effort in design work and data preparation; final decisions remain human. Notes that it is always better to start with something than with a blank page.
11. Routine workload reduction frees time for employee management, recruitment, and strategic planning, areas that demand active attention.
12. Always double-checks AI output; considers it a suggestion, not a final answer.
13. The internal knowledge platform is planned but not yet in place.
14. AI is useful for factual queries, yet personal consultation and independent thinking remain essential. AI should not be the first to consult in any situation.
15. Less time spent on data preparation allows more focus on strategic planning tasks.
16. Interpersonal abilities, conflict management, and decision-making grow in importance as AI assumes routine duties; skill-level disparities may widen.
17. Sees AI as an opportunity: juniors can become productive faster, but must avoid over-reliance on AI. Consultants must continue to think on their own.
18. Team shares knowledge informally; formal training will accompany the rollout of the internal AI tool.

19. Data protection is the main concern; strict customer contracts limit AI use, and there is a need for internal guidance.
20. Anticipates fewer staff for routine tasks but a greater need for strategic thinking and decision-making roles.
21. AI is likely to be implemented in all areas of consulting and internal operations; firms that fail to adopt it will lag. Expects full integration to become standard within roughly five to six years.

Interview 6:

1. Prepares, conducts, and follows up client coordination meetings (formulating critical questions, assembling materials, sending them in advance). Spends ≈ 60–70 % of the week on slides (PowerPoint), Excel work, and email writing, alongside meetings.
2. Began daily use when ChatGPT 3.5 launched in Nov 2022. Now uses AI every day.
3. Mainly ChatGPT plus other LLMs such as Gemini and Perplexity. No internal Gen-AI tool at present, and none planned.
4. Highly familiar; uses the tools daily and keeps up with AI-workflow content.
5. Drivers: Boost efficiency, speed up data analysis, automate repetitive tasks, and stay competitive, especially in infrastructure and railway projects. The firm actively encourages exploration, offers discussions, training, and best-practice exchanges; the aim is to complement, not replace, human expertise.
6. No major negatives; recognizes limits: AI drafts need refining and cannot match deep, project-specific expertise.
7. Client data is anonymized or withheld from AI tools to ensure compliance with privacy rules.
8. Today: condensing long reports, structuring presentations, drafting slides/emails, cleaning data, spotting trends and increasing visibility for them, brainstorming ideas, assisting in strategy development by using past data, extracting specific data, and writing down meeting notes. Future: predictive analytics by identifying risks, automated action tracking, tailor-made client reports, real-time decision support, and AI-optimized project-management workflows. Sees AI as an efficiency booster, rather than a replacement tool.
9. Expects AI to produce more personalized results once the right data and prompts are in place.

10. Gains the biggest time savings in marketing content creation, complex Excel formulas, and project kick-off brainstorming, primarily through reduced manual effort.
11. AI frees time for strategy development, client engagement, and innovation, enhancing delivered value.
12. Always critically evaluates, cross-checks, and refines AI output to ensure accuracy, reliability, and strategic relevance. Provides a good starting point
13. No formal AI-driven knowledge-management system yet.
14. Balances AI efficiency with human expertise, intuition, and trust-based client relationships; consulting remains people-driven.
15. Routine workload reduced; can devote more time to client interaction, creative problem-solving, and high-impact decisions.
16. Successful consultants will pair AI fluency with deeper field expertise; AI replaces generalist tasks, heightening the need for specialist depth. Junior can benefit a lot from AI implementation to boost productivity and have a steeper learning curve.
17. Sees AI as an enabler: automates entry-level tasks but opens opportunities for higher-value work and new skillsets.
18. Internal workshops and an extensive training catalog are available; participation is voluntary and self-paced.
19. Key issues: algorithmic bias due to training on historical data, lack of explainability, data privacy, and over-reliance on AI; consultants must audit outputs and preserve transparency. If an AI-driven recommendation results in negative business consequences, it is unclear who bears responsibility: the consultant, the AI provider, or the client.
20. Manual tasks will shrink; demand rises for strategic thinking, creativity, AI literacy, and ethical governance, areas AI cannot cover. A hybrid approach of AI and humans working together.
21. Consulting will automate manual work, deepen data-driven decisions, and push consultants toward strategic roles. Competitive firms will integrate AI, upskill staff, and maintain human insight under a long-term AI strategy now in development.

Interview 7:

1. Handles quotation preparation, order processing, and invoicing, recurring administrative tasks. Oversees HR lifecycle: recruiting, goal-setting, feedback, departures, and regular staff meetings.
2. Uses GenAI on a regular basis.

3. Primarily ChatGPT and Perplexity. The firm is too small for its own GPT but may revisit the idea.
4. Considers himself fairly knowledgeable and uses AI “every now and then.”
5. Goal: Let employees work more efficiently and use AI to challenge ideas. The firm provides the tools and shares trends in team calls; it encourages use but offers no incentives.
6. Occasionally receives AI-generated submissions containing unnoticed factual errors.
7. Always anonymize customer data before entering it into AI tools.
8. Current: Perplexity for market/product/customer research. ChatGPT for wording, rephrasing, and drafting bullet points. Digitized onboarding training via e-learning and video. Future potential: semi-automated offer creation, pricing, and order-to-cash efficiencies; AI support for written communication and project ideation. Sees little scope for AI to replace interpersonal relationship work.
9. Technically possible with proper prompts and data, but not possible yet without an in-house AI.
10. Quick research inspires next steps and speeds idea generation.
11. In an ideal scenario, time saved would be split 50 % to deeper client understanding and 50 % to employee engagement, but worries that compressed project timelines may erase that gain.
12. Trusts AI only for creative wording; for research, checks sources and corroborates figures with additional references. Always evaluates critically.
13. No AI-driven knowledge-management solution yet.
14. Envisions everyone having a “personal assistant” AI, but consultants remain the final decision-makers.
15. Saves time on formulation and research of new consulting fields, investing it in the firm’s strategic direction.
16. Traditional skills in PowerPoint, Excel, and research will fade; stronger methodological know-how and business understanding are needed to ask the right questions. Deeper domain expertise becomes more crucial as AI covers broad tasks.
17. The consulting pyramid may flatten into a “diamond” with a robust mid-level of experts. Risks: leakage of client data to AI operators and unchecked inaccuracies, necessitating rigorous quality assurance.
18. No formal programmes; one colleague shares updates and optional training opportunities.
19. Data privacy and correct tool usage are major issues; must model compliance for the team. Rightful implementation and usage are mandatory

20. Interpersonal skills will grow in importance relative to technical abilities.
21. Expects disruptive impact: clients will handle standardised tasks with AI, purchasing only specialized expertise. Predicts rising demand for consulting on AI use and development as a distinct service line. Expects clients to demand more transparency for AI usage. Asking the right questions, drawing the right conclusions, and adapting communication will be increasingly important.

Interview 8:

1. Handles partner-management escalations and supports many external consulting partners that implement the firm's procurement solution for clients. Projects follow a standard five-phase rollout methodology (Prepare → Explore → Implement → Test → Run).
   Recurring tasks in every phase: Give early system demos. Set up and run design workshops based on best-practice process templates; capture change requests in a backlog and a formal design document for client sign-off. Create or tailor test scripts, record findings, and track defect resolution. Maintain cut-over checklists, support go-live, and two-week hyper-care. Provide administrator training and "train-the-trainer" sessions.
2. Uses GenAI daily, switches to it if a web search fails within ~10 seconds.
3. Multiple in-house chatbots that draw on internal knowledge bases, plus a business license for ChatGPT. Additional specialized bots for sales content, such as battle cards, which are used for shortening competitor analyses
4. Considered proficient; continuously refines prompts. Uses AI to search internal articles, blogs, and docs, and to draft, rewrite, or summarize emails and longer texts.
5. AI adoption is driven by market expectations and client demand; many initiatives help customers identify use cases. Internally, usage is encouraged but not mandated; information is shared via round tables, newsletters, and team meetings; resistance-free, voluntary uptake is preferred. Usage of GenAI must be well-known to know what they are selling to their clients.
6. Finds the model easy to steer and occasionally notices inaccurate or "nonsense" answers, especially on deep technical queries. Also acknowledges the fact that the model is very easily influenced by just saying that another fact might be true.
7. All chatbots run on company-controlled servers so consultants can safely reference client data.
8. Current: knowledge search, email/text drafting, summarizing documentation, storyline, figuring out if a critical angle was missed, counterargument preparation, data gathering,

and idea generation. Before, everything had to be done manually, such as reading long reports to gather data/findings. Envisions automated self-service onboarding for customers and efficiency gains once bots can tap CRM history and industry data; does not expect full job replacement.

9. Possible while actively working with the tool, but AI output is not yet trustworthy enough to send directly to clients without editing and validating.
10. Uses AI conversationally to challenge ideas and obtain validation or alternative views.
11. Junior grades gain efficiency and work on more projects in less time; senior grades devote even more attention to client relationships.
12. Always cross-checks critical answers via provided sources, additional searches, and domain knowledge; relies on "gut feel" to flag fabrications. Validating AI outputs often takes longer than expected. With experience, imagines identifying more trustworthy outputs versus those needing extensive review more quickly.
13. Standard repositories (slide decks, spreadsheets, roadmap viewer) exist; one AI-enabled tool can query internal project data. Internal connectors between GenAI and the knowledge management system enable the tool to search not only public data but also past project reports, case studies, and best practices when answering questions. It significantly reduces the time spent on internal document searches. The integration is still imperfect, and results are sometimes redundant or outdated. The tool has made GenAI far more relevant to the consulting context, since the answers are grounded in actual project experience.
14. Consultant remains final reviewer; clients pay for experienced guidance (consulting is about relationships), AI support alone is insufficient.
15. AI assistant saves time on some tasks, but thorough cross-checking offsets much of that gain, leaving limited extra capacity.
16. Critical thinking, prompt engineering, and interpersonal skills grow in importance; coordination calls already consume ~80 % of time. Extreme specialists and high-level generalists (customer-success style roles) become more valuable than mid-level "deployment lead" profiles.
17. Expects consultants to engage later in projects as clients tackle more themselves; demand varies with client resources and industry conditions.
18. Participation is voluntary: tool directories, team spaces, GenAI events, and modular courses on building apps, productivity, and prompting.
19. Operates under detailed internal responsible-AI guidelines aligned with international (e.g., UNESCO) principles covering security, compliance, and sustainability.

20. AI supports but cannot replace human validation and domain experience; personal input remains critical.
21. Already now: Transparency has become more important since AI's rise. Clients ask for explanations of how results were created and if AI was involved, increasing accountability and requiring detailed documentation.

    Future: Disruption may arrive abruptly after a period of underestimation. The firm plans to scale back direct consulting in favour of recurring-revenue software, pushing more implementation work to external partners.

Interview 9:

1. Formulates problems, develops solutions, and programs code. Very few standard tasks: each customer has different requirements, data sources, and starting situations, so one-size-fits-all technical solutions are rarely possible.
2. Uses ChatGPT for code optimization and quick text drafts (especially customer reports).
3. ChatGPT plus an in-house GPT that searches internal documentation.
4. Works with ChatGPT every day.
5. The main driver is speed and efficiency—finishes more work in less time. Internal GPT is promoted for data-management tasks; developers gain noticeable efficiency boosts.
6. AI-generated text and code can contain errors; every result must be understood and cross-checked.
7. Never uploads customer data; problems are described abstractly, and table names lack context.
8. Today: report writing, code optimization, concise text formulation, best-practice elaboration, workshop agendas. Tomorrow: AI could perform simple analyses autonomously; consultants would still interpret results and make decisions.
9. Expects greater personalization once prompts improve and tools mature.
10. Reports and analyses are produced faster; strategic decisions still rely on specialized knowledge.
11. Time saved on reports lets him focus on analysis and solution-finding for clients.
12. Values AI speed but never trusts it blindly; manual control is essential. A very complex solution has to be put into simple words with their own words and the help of their skills.
13. Skeptical about current AI features in visual tools (e.g., Power BI); precise visual prompts still require manual effort. Difficult to put ideas sometimes into words.

14. Treats AI as a support tool; final solutions are co-created with customers to meet their needs.
15. AI cuts report-writing time, freeing attention for customer-focused solutions.
16. Role shifting from pure tech expert to "tech explainer" who communicates complex matters simply. Broad contextual knowledge plus selected deep expertise becomes more valuable than mastery of every technical detail.
17. AI will absorb simple, repetitive tasks, giving, especially junior consultants, more time for rewarding, meaningful work.
18. No formal training mandate; skills developed via trial-and-error. Consultancy is giving prompt engineering courses to its clients.
19. Limited worry about bias disclosure because internal methods are not shown to clients. The product remains the same regardless of AI use.
20. Less routine jobs; strategic thinking and interpretation remain indispensable.
21. AI will become standard; consultants must master it. Project mix is already shifting from traditional data warehousing/modelling toward AI-focused engagements, altering industry reputation and expectations. Clients will question in the long run the number of days they have paid for, and the amount of work that is billed might change.

Interview 10:

1. Focuses on project management in consulting projects. Standard project tasks include monthly forecasts, financial tracking, and risk log maintenance, largely repetitive and done in teams.
2. Regularly interacts with GenAI.
3. Uses internal GenAI, one tailored for consultants, GenAI for architects (business/application-specific support), and a contract analysis tool.
4. Actively trying to build confidence in use; tends to default to traditional tools (e.g., Google).
5. The goal is to create competitive advantages: faster and cheaper consulting. Consultancy strongly encourages the use of internal GenAI tools through heavy internal communication and incentives to boost efficiency.
6. Sometimes finds responses disappointing in areas he knows well, but impressive when he lacks prior knowledge. AI has sometimes delivered incorrect answers to detailed questions.
7. Never enters sensitive data into external AI tools; internal tools have looser but still cautious rules.

8. Uses AI for anonymous questions, task assistance, and basic edits. Automating repetitive PM tasks is seen as highly promising. Uses standardized prompt libraries containing tested prompts for tasks like summarizing reports, drafting proposals, or competitor scans. AI could reduce reliance on junior consultants for standard work, but it will take longer to handle creative, high-quality tasks. juniors have access to all previous projects within seconds and now have suddenly 20 years of experience
9. Without thoughtful prompts and input, AI outputs remain average; they lack true personalization.
10. Uses AI for brainstorming and some research. Summary features are limited due to data classification and access restrictions. Concerned that AI may lead to workforce reductions and work intensification.
11. Anticipates staff reductions as tools improve; remaining staff will face an increased workload.
12. Notices AI errors frequently; always cross-checks using personal expertise and logic.
13. Multiple tools exist, each suited for different needs.
14. GenAI cannot replace relationship management and soft skills. Human judgment remains the final control instance.
15. Time saved by AI is often overtaken by additional work; workload becomes concentrated, not reduced.
16. AI does not change core consultant skills like explanation and contextualisation. But increases the need for prompting and critical thinking. Prominence of Pi-model:
    - One vertical = customer/industry focus (e.g., Public, Finance).
    - One vertical = methodological role (e.g., PM, architect).
    - Horizontal = broad general knowledge plus GenAI/prompting skills.

    True expertise remains essential to validate and apply AI outputs effectively
17. Puts pressure on “average” professionals but offers junior staff earlier access to meaningful tasks. Clients may attempt to solve problems themselves before hiring consultants.
18. Extensive internal training and communication within the consultancy. Training is not mandatory, but strongly encouraged.
19. The consultancy enforces strict moral and ethical standards for AI training data. All inputs are verified carefully, making the process slower but more responsible.
20. Consultant expertise and experience are crucial and irreplaceable by AI.
21. Teams will shrink, increasing speed and cost pressure.

    Consultancies will rely on smaller teams with both prompt and domain expertise.

Better prompting ability without deep knowledge will not suffice.

Potential for clients to handle some problems by themselves with an AI provided by the consultancy. A large proportion of communication is then with AI, consultants have methodological knowledge, and clients have content-related one.

Clients start to expect faster turnaround times due to AI, which pressures timelines and prompts us to rethink project management. This speed may sacrifice depth in the beginning, but overall, it drives efficiency and better AI use.

Interview 11:

1. Conducts structured dataset analyses for clients. Prepares and follows up on customer workshops: best-practice slide decks, target images, and user stories.
   Performs PMO duties: weekly/monthly cost tracking, KPI calculations, progress reports for clients, and internal programme management.
   Workshop format is repeatable (process-oriented), but content is customized; introductory templates are reused, yet metrics and KPIs are updated each cycle.
2. Uses generative AI regularly, task-dependent.
3. Company-specific genAI based on OpenAI models. Copilot features for Excel formulas and for slide translations.
4. Generally comfortable; recognizes that rushed or imprecise prompts reduce output quality.
5. The firm pushes AI strongly to stay competitive and develop new consulting offerings. Managers recommend AI where useful; continuous monitoring of model advances.
6. No significant negative incidents recalled.
7. Customer data may only be uploaded to the dedicated internal GPT; general tools are allowed for non-sensitive queries.
8. Day-to-day: complex Excel formulas, quick bullet points, slide titles, first ideas for slide decks, storyline suggestions, icons. Sees automation potential in PMO reporting (weekly KPIs, budget status). Treats GenAI as an inspiration source and personal assistant; not yet capable of covering all tasks end-to-end.
9. Personalization is already high due to existing quality-assurance processes, independent of AI.
10. AI speeds formatting, translation, and reading long texts; serves as creative input.
11. Freed time can be spent on informal client communication and internal collaboration that often yields critical insights.

12. Always cross-checks outputs; depth of review depends on task (full check for analyses, quick proofread for translations).
13. Internal GPT retrieves related slides and draft content from past projects.
14. Relies on AI roughly 50 %; the consultant still provides the idea, validates, and refines it.
15. AI offloads formatting/administrative work, allowing greater focus on conceptual issues; it broadens horizons by shortening research time.
16. Problem-solving and conceptual flexibility grow in importance; routine skills (e.g., PowerPoint finesse) may diminish. AI helps learning, but domain expertise remains essential. AI can broaden horizons.
17. Risk of over-reliance: Small tasks are not critically thought through anymore. Junior consultants may take on higher-value work sooner; critical prompts still demand human judgment. Breaking down the questions into smaller pieces improves output.
18. Regular elective courses on prompting and available AI tools; a dedicated training programme exists.
19. Comprehensive data-protection guidelines communicated; AI usage is transparent when needed, sources cited for studies/quantitative data.
20. AI errors and limited knowledge mean human consultants remain central decision-makers.
21. Repetitive workflows are likely to be fully automated; competitive pressure will force consultancies to exploit AI for efficiency. Pyramidal staffing may narrow; fewer juniors could handle current workloads, and higher levels see less time saving. The difference in levels will become smaller. Projects may finish faster; the industry must choose between deeper refinement or higher volume throughput to match price pressures.

Interview 12:

1. Prepares documents, conducts analyses in various programs, facilitates meetings, and generates ideas with senior colleagues. Highly repetitive tasks: meeting summaries. Other tasks: creating presentations, evaluating and analyzing large datasets.
2. Uses generative AI every day.
3. All consultants have a business ChatGPT account through the firm’s partnership, plus several company-specific tools (slide-creation helpers, knowledge-base assistant).
4. Considers himself skilled; internal training prepares consultants well.
5. The firm adopted ChatGPT early for competitive advantage and efficiency; employees are strongly encouraged to use it.

6. Training includes “negative-example” drills to learn correct AI handling; no major negative experiences so far.
7. Confidential data may be entered within policy limits; models do not learn from these inputs.
8. Builds project-specific GPTs; uses AI for knowledge search, interpretation, research, quick learning, data cleansing, scheduling, first slide drafts, storyline ideas, and summarizing. GenAI usually creates initial drafts of documents or analyses, and then consultants need to refine them. For example, if a market overview is needed, AI generates a structured draft with data and trends, and then gets humanly validated, enriched, and adapted for the client, reducing repetitive work and increasing focus on context. Sees future potential in entire automated presentation prep and faster client-ready outputs; full job replacement not expected. AI helps him to be more creative.
9. Customization already high; AI will support, not replace, delivery of tailored solutions.
10. Major time savings in information gathering and text summarization.
11. Productivity gains free time for higher-value work and more interpersonal contact; hopes for better work-life balance rather than staff cuts.
12. Always cross-checks; faster with summaries but still verifies against originals. Different perceptions by the AI and consultants about what is important.
13. Internal knowledge base with an AI assistant that supports, e.g., slide searching and content drafting.
14. The consultant must understand and explain AI results to the client; human interaction remains central. It is the consultant talking to the customer, not the AI.
15. AI removes time-consuming tasks that do not need much expertise in the field, allowing focus on conceptual issues; immediate change to personal role, but possible effects at senior levels.
16. Correct AI usage becomes a key skill; juniors reach high-value tasks sooner. Generalist start still applies, but deep expertise is required at senior levels for credibility. Humans need to deliver authenticity through understanding the recommendations well and providing good insights, even without the help of AI.
17. Risk of weakened personal thinking if over-reliant; breaking work into smaller AI-assisted parts helps maintain critical thought.
18. Regular optional sessions on prompting and tools; weekly “Learning Friday” led by AI-trained “Black Belts”. Training is also more integrated in the onboarding process.

19. Compliance training urges minimal AI use with employees and transparent disclosure; strict data-protection guidelines.

    Version control is problematic, as it's unclear which parts of a deliverable were AI-generated or human-created. This causes issues in revisions and blurs accountability, making it hard to trace insight origins—particularly problematic in precision-dependent consulting.
20. AI output must be human-validated; consultants remain the final and ultimate decision-makers.
21. Mastery of AI tools and strong domain expertise will both be critical. Possible joint GPTs with clients, which are trained by both sides.

    Rising efficiency expectations may pressure fees and project timelines, resulting in business-model adjustments over time.

    Some clients are starting to experiment with GenAI, which forces consultants to focus on what differentiates them from AI by offering what AI cannot: judgment, creativity, and experience. Clients challenge consultancies with AI outputs, making it a threat and an opportunity.