The future of consulting: faster, smarter, more human

A manifesto for a 10x model of advisory: powered by technology, grounded in humanity

Marceau Partners



© 2026 Marceau Partners Corporation. Share with credit and a link to the original source.

Introduction

This paper follows my previous reflection on how AI represents both the greatest opportunity and the greatest threat for the consulting industry—and how most consulting firms today are failing their own people. The consulting model as we know it is reaching its limits. Fees have grown disproportionate to impact, internal processes have become bureaucratic, and the human element that was once the essence of advisory work has been diluted by industrial delivery models.

A profound transformation is now possible.

Traditional consulting is built on scale, not speed: large, heavily leveraged teams, long timelines, and rigid structures. The new consulting model changes that by combining AI and workflow technology, senior consulting leadership, and specialized industry expertise to produce insight, alignment, and action in record time.

This new model aims to make consulting ten times cheaper, better, and faster; while putting humans back at the centre. It's not only a business model shift; it's a cultural and societal one.

© 2026 Marceau Partners Corporation. Share with credit and a link to the original source.

1. Technology as the enabler, humans as the core

"The deliverables are built for clarity, transparency, decision, adoption and implementation."

AI and digital platforms enabled by workflow technology can now automate what once absorbed most of consultants' time and energy along the seven key stages of any consulting project, forming a clear path from scoping to deployment:

1. Content collection: data gathering, research, and targeted content assembly
2. Survey and benchmark: building a focused view of market practices and opinion
3. Insights: analysing vast amounts of information and developing insights about the problem and market
4. So-what and recommendations: translating insights, data, and evidence into implications and strategic options
5. Buy-in: securing stakeholder alignment to ensure easier adoption and delivery, including scheduling, coordination, and internal communication
6. Roadmap and next steps: aligned with the expected pace of change
7. Deployment: delivering communication tools and project support for implementation and change

Instead of gathering ten people in a room to "align," a digital platform enables everyone involved in the project: the senior partners, the clients, the experts, the juniors to access the same data, comment, validate, and decide in real time with full transparency. This removes friction, accelerates alignment, and dramatically reduces non-productive time.

Technology does not replace consultants; it frees them to focus on creativity, judgment, and human connection.

2. From pyramid to circle

"You work directly with senior partners and sector experts—not layers of analysts."

The traditional consulting model relies on a leverage pyramid: a few partners at the top, a narrow layer of managers, and a large base of junior consultants. Profitability depends on utilization and billable hours, not necessarily on client impact: though this is beginning to change.

The new model replaces this pyramid with a circle of expertise:

- Senior partners involvement from start to finish, not just at kickoff and delivery
- Small, senior-led teams (2–5 people instead of 10–20)
- Access to a wide expert network across domains (legal and regulatory specialists, geopolitical analysts, risk and control management experts, etc.)

© 2026 Marceau Partners Corporation. Share with credit and a link to the original source.

- AI assisting with analysis and content production

A project that currently requires a 6 person team for 14 weeks at €500,000 can be delivered by a 3 person hybrid team in two weeks for €80,000: with deeper insight, better design, and stronger relationships.

That's not just 6x efficiency: it's 10x clarity, creativity, and value.

3. A new deal for talent

In today's model, junior consultants are measured by utilization: how many hours they can bill. Seniors (partners and experts) often find themselves sidelined once their cost exceeds what clients are willing to pay.

This new system redefines both roles:

- Juniors are no longer numbers. They learn through real one-on-one apprenticeship, gaining depth rather than just hours.
- Seniors spend meaningful time with clients, mentoring juniors and bringing experience and perspective into every conversation.
- The "elusive partner" who appears only in a proposal deck becomes real again.

There's no pressure to be billable—only pressure to learn, grow, and think differently.

4. The critical role AI and workflow automation

"AI and workflow tools compress the process; you get more time for discussion and decision."

AI and automation are not used to replace human insight but to amplify it. They handle:

- Data structuring and transcription
- Thematic clustering and synthesis
- Drafting of analytical outputs for consultant review
- Coordination of alignment workshops, meetings, and interviews through workflow and digital technology

This frees consultants and clients to focus on:

- Strategic framing and hypothesis testing
- Interpreting data within a business or policy context
- Building confidence and decision alignment

© 2026 Marceau Partners Corporation. Share with credit and a link to the original source.

5. How it works in practice

"The cost advantage of the new model reflects design, not discount."

By automating what's repetitive and connecting everyone through transparent digital platforms, the entire process becomes simpler, faster, and more collaborative.

platforms, the entire process becomes **simpler, faster, and more collaborative**.

Today’s Consulting Model	**The New Model**
10-person team, 6 weeks	3-person hybrid team, 2 weeks
€500,000 average cost	€80,000 average cost
80% of time on research & slides	80% on ideas & decisions
Endless governance meetings	Platform-based validation & decisions
Senior experts and project leads visible only at pitch	Senior experts and project leads involved throughout
Juniors judged by utilization	Juniors mentored for growth
Clients buy reports	Clients co-create insights and buy value

Metric	**The new model**	**Big 4**	**Strategy firms**
Cost efficiency	1X	5X	7X
Duration	2 weeks	14 weeks	10 weeks
Senior involvement	70%	10%	20%
Expert involvement	20%	5%	5%
Junior involvement	10%	85%	75%
Usage of AI and workflow technology	90%	0%	10%

The new model provides targeted expertise and senior engagement at a fraction of the cost of traditional firms, with no loss of strategic depth.

6. Societal Benefits

This transformation extends beyond consulting firms. It has tangible societal benefits.

a. **Democratizing expertise**: Large consulting projects today cost between €300,000 and €1 million, pricing out most SMEs, NGOs, and local governments. With this new model, high-quality advisory work can be delivered for €20,000 - €50,000, making expert advice accessible to thousands of smaller organizations.
b. **Revitalizing local economies**: With digital collaboration, consultants and clients no longer need to be concentrated in global hubs. Experts can operate from anywhere, helping create regional networks of expertise and innovation.

© 2026 Marceau Partners Corporation. Share with credit and a link to the original source.

c. **Sustaining employment differently**: Smaller, faster projects mean more projects overall. A 200-person firm that currently delivers 150 projects per year could deliver 700 or more—maintaining employment while multiplying impact.
d. **Restoring meaning and purpose**: Consultants rediscover their purpose—not as process executors, but as thinkers, challengers, and creators. Clients gain access to relationships that feel human, authentic, and inspiring.

7. The economics of impact

This model is both scalable and sustainable.

A mid-sized consulting firm with 200 professionals might generate €60 million from 150 large projects today. Under the new model, the same firm could complete five times as many projects at an average fee of €60,000, generating similar revenue but vastly greater reach and client satisfaction.

The difference is not in how much is earned but in how value is created.

8. Redefining excellence: skills and character in the new model

The new consulting model redefines what it means to excel. Both senior partners and juniors must cultivate new skills, new mindsets, and new forms of character—shaped by technology but defined by humanity.

a) For senior partners: from controllers to catalysts

Technology removes the burden of process and governance. Partners can now refocus on thinking, challenging, and connecting.

Core skills

- Strategic synthesis and pattern recognition
- Creative problem framing
- Network activation and ecosystem building
- Digital fluency and AI literacy

Character traits

- Humility to learn and unlearn
- Curiosity over certainty
- Empathy to listen and connect
- Courage to challenge

A partner's authority will come not from control, but from clarity, insight, and purpose.

b) For juniors: from executors to explorers

© 2026 Marceau Partners Corporation. Share with credit and a link to the original source.

AI will handle much of what used to define the junior experience. That means juniors must now grow as thinkers, not producers.

Core skills

- Analytical storytelling
- Collaboration with AI and humans
- Hypothesis-driven creativity
- Continuous learning agility

Character traits

- Curiosity to question
- Integrity in reasoning
- Resilience through iteration
- Originality of thought

Excellence will no longer mean speed and accuracy alone. It will mean depth, learning, and the courage to think differently.

9. Purpose: why consulting must be rehumanized

Technology is transforming what consulting does—but the deeper question is what consulting is for.

For too long, the industry has measured success by revenue, rankings, and reputation. The new model invites a different definition of purpose: to create clarity and confidence for others, while cultivating humanity within ourselves.

At its best, consulting is a craft of meaning-making—helping organizations and people make sense of uncertainty, choose with courage, and act with integrity.

The purpose of this new model is therefore threefold:

1. To serve society by making expertise accessible, affordable, and impactful
2. To serve clients by building real trust and co-creating insights that last
3. To serve consultants themselves—by restoring dignity, curiosity, and joy to the profession

Consulting should not just help organizations transform. It should transform the people who practice it.

© 2026 Marceau Partners Corporation. Share with credit and a link to the original source.

Conclusion: a human renaissance, powered by AI and digital/workflow technology

AI is not replacing consultants. It is restoring their humanity.

By combining the precision and speed of digital technology with the depth of human insight, consulting can reclaim its role as a creative, purpose-driven profession: one that serves not only corporations, but society at large.

The consulting model of the future will be digital by design, human by intention.

It will reward curiosity, courage, and connection over process and billing.

It will turn consulting back into what it was meant to be: a dialogue between people trying to make sense of complexity and move the world forward.

© 2026 Marceau Partners Corporation. Share with credit and a link to the original source.