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no nonsense business expertise

A close-up, high-angle shot of an astronaut in a white space suit. The astronaut's helmet is prominent, featuring a large, circular, red-tinted visor that reflects the interior of the suit and the astronaut's face. The background shows the Earth's surface from space, with clouds and the curvature of the planet. The overall tone is dramatic and futuristic.

# The 8 Best Careers to Have

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**If You Want to Become an  
Independent Consultant**

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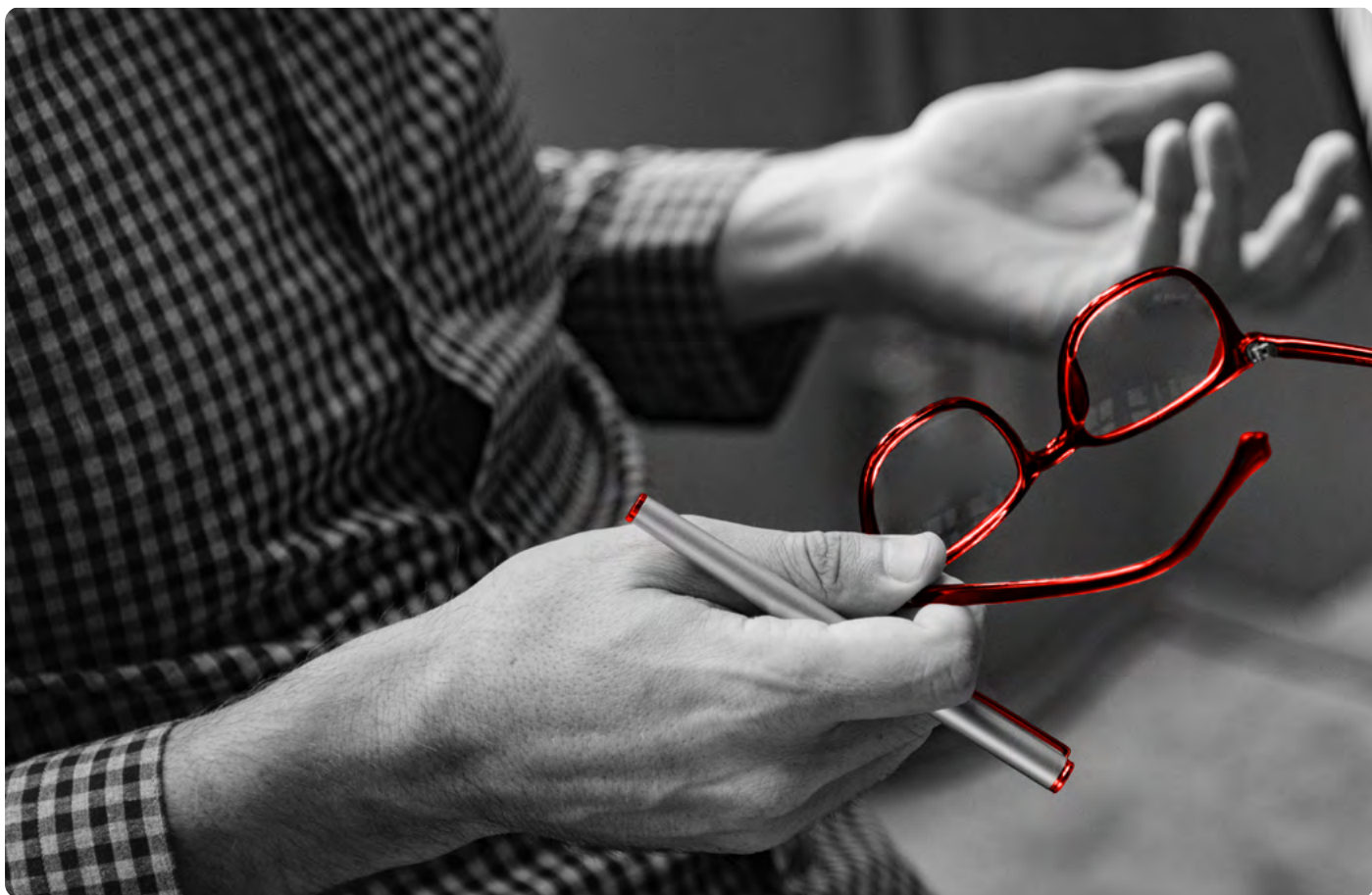
# The 8 Best Careers to Have If You Want to Become an Independent Consultant

**If you want to become an independent consultant, you need an established career.**

You will be running a business. You will be running a business that sells your expertise. Without a significant amount of real-world experience, that is a hard sell.

But, when is the right time to become a consultant? What is the best career to have if you want to get into independent consulting? Are there job titles that will make the transition easier?

Here is our list of the 8 best career types to have had if you want to become an independent consultant.



## 1. A Diverse Career

I want to start by blowing up the whole idea behind this article: there is no single best career to have when building an independent consulting business. In fact, it's ideal if you haven't just had one career, but several.

First-hand acquaintance with success, failure and change is the most potent proving grounds for any independent consulting – delivering real-world and tested insights that you can pass on to clients. This is why ex-corporate professionals are in high-demand from a wide variety of backgrounds.

A career that has driven you to master multiple areas of business, suffer failure and pull success from the brink of destruction – that is the real secret sauce to success as a consultant

Consultants, independent consultants in particular, are valued for their ability to advise on multiple aspects of

the same project. If you have those multi-disciplinary skills, being able to pull off real business experience in marketing, operations, HR and IT, you will have the perfect skill set for any job.

Having faced actual challenges, suffering real defeats and successfully executing a plan B is a strength.

The truth is that the broader the scope of your career, the more change you have undergone and the more kinds of challenges you have had to confront, the more prepared you will be to become an independent consultant. It will allow you to show resilience and deliver real-world experiences based on a deep understanding of the problems that your clients face.

The ability to talk and understand right across business lines is hugely important. It is something any consultant will need to learn to understand. If your career has prepared you for it already, you are off to a flying start. If you understand the impact a change in one area of the business has on another – then you are fit for any role.



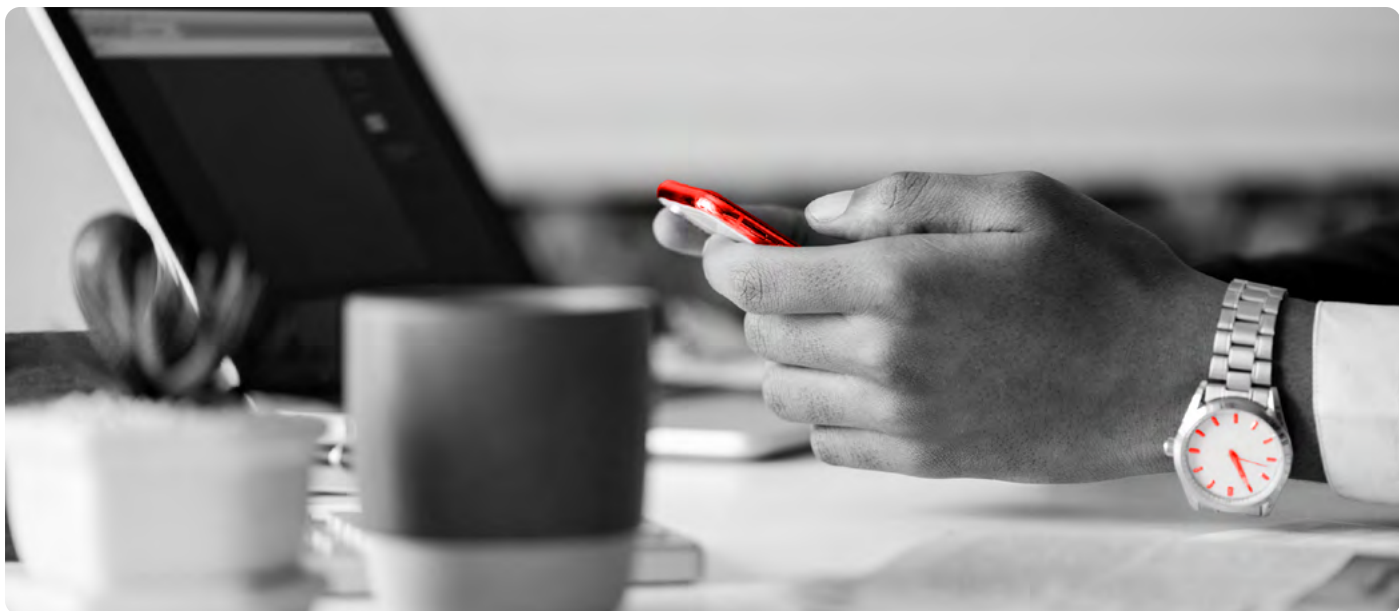
## 2. Project Management and Team Leadership

As a consultant, you will lead projects. That means resource and activity planning, organising teams, controlling time management, estimating costs and overseeing the delivery of outcomes. In-house project managers are more hands-on than their consulting counterparts. But, the parallels are clear and the transition will be straight forward.

Project management has been a discrete function within business for decades. In recent years, this has ballooned. Change is constant within modern business, one reason consultants are in such high demand. But, it also means that there is a permanent need to employ people who can oversee change programmes on a project by project basis.

Project management and 'change initiatives' have become so ubiquitous within business that you might have held a project management role without even realising it. Overseeing the restructuring or creation of a department, the digitisation of a process, or updating of business-wide procedures are all project management positions.

Having this kind of practical experience under your belt will be invaluable in your ability to deliver the kind of nuanced and detailed projects your clients will expect. Effectively, if you spend your day-to-day developing, managing and executing projects, you are already filling the role of 'consultant', just in an internal capacity. Consulting will be a natural fit.



### 3. Information Technology

Technology has been a huge deal since we grew thumbs. The digital revolution, Moore's law and the delivery of everything-as-a-service has blasted IT into the stratosphere. It is part of the reason there is all this 'constant change'.

'Digital and technology' consulting accounts for a disproportionate 28% of the fees brought into the UK consulting industry. Things aren't quite as simple as 'ready made' consulting jobs for anyone who can plug in a modem – although you might be surprised!

If you have a background in IT, there is room for you in the independent consulting market. Particularly if you have a combination of strategic management, procurement or people skills and a deep technical understanding of one or more common technologies, you will find it is disproportionately easy to find jobs as a consultant.

Although there is definite cross over, and it is important to avoid pigeonholing your consulting career, technical consultants generally follow one of four broad paths into the industry:

1. The first is helping businesses without IT experience build robust and secure infrastructure to cope with new digital demands. This requires generalist skills on how to construct and maintain IT networks.
2. The second is troubleshooting specific, complex and/or legacy IT solutions. This is, broadly, one of the most specific skills sets that will get you into independent consulting – technical or otherwise. There are plenty of businesses that rely on technology that their IT teams no longer (or never did) understand. Troubleshooting issues within specific IT environments and delivering long-term solutions are all skills that are in great demand.
3. The third is delivering large technical change projects in businesses, often large businesses. This kind of technical consulting pulls more heavily on other skill sets – strategic skills, people management and process development. Someone who held a position as CTO in a large or medium-sized business would likely find this transition easy.
4. Lastly, there are process people. These often come out of DevOps teams and are experts and improving how IT is developed, managed, operated and deployed. This kind of experience is helpful across all of the IT fields, and it can form a specialism of itself.



## 4. Human Resources

At their heart, all businesses are people businesses. Even a company like Amazon, one that relies hugely on technology and AI is built by people, run by people and maintained by people... at least for now.

People, with very few exceptions, are the most expensive resource in any business – costing 40%-80% of gross revenues in salaries alone. We live in the present, and the fact that general-purpose robots have not yet made us their servants means that understanding people is at the centre of how businesses run.

Cultural change and restructuring/reorganising departments are all significant struggles for many businesses. Changes within the modern economy, specifically rapid digital development, make these prized goals that must be repeatedly realised. Equally, optimising employee on-boarding and improving employee experiences are great skills to have.

If you can optimise the 'human resource' within business, build training programmes and improve processes, you will find a place in consulting. That means helping staff better relate to new technology, changes to business models, mergers and more.

A background in strategic and granular people management is a huge benefit to an independent consultant. These skills can be partnered with other projects (such as direct technical deployment) or deployed alone. Either way, people are central to almost any problem or change that will inspire a company to hire a consultant. All consultants need to understand HR. If this is within your core competencies, all the better.

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## 5. Operations

Every business has an operations function. Optimising that capability and building new processes is a skill set on which you can build a consulting career. These same skills will help you execute on any project, whether focused on operations itself or otherwise.

A background in operations will drill in the importance of building processes in addition to simply skimming high-level theory. One benefit of operations experience is that the realities of different sectors are only incidentally important. Creating repeatable, efficient and scalable processes is at the heart of any good operations manager. Learning to apply those skills in a wide variety of contexts is critical to your success as an independent consultant.

When working as a consultant, your role in executing plans, particularly in the long-run, will be limited. But, building the framework in which others will do that work is critical. The better you are at this, the happier your clients will be.

Auditing processes and working to make sure that organisational structures actually align with goals, infrastructure and human resources is a hugely in-demand skill-set. The number of prospect clients that simply need this help looking at their existing capabilities will line up down the street. But, possessing these skills will allow you to deliver operational focused projects on top of any other transformation project you are brought on to design.



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## 8. Anything In The C-Suite ... and VP Too!

That nameplate, however, won't do all the work. You will still have to show the skills and expertise required to deliver results. Luckily, those are skills, perspectives and capabilities that you likely possess, traits that led you to the position that you hold. Simply turn around and show that executive experience, strategic thinking and the ability to act under pressure. Your job title isn't everything, but having a good one never hurts.

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### There is No One Path Into Consulting

Your aptitude for consulting has more to do with your attitude, interest in learning and ability to craft creative solutions to unpredictable problems. Your practical ability to get started hinges on your ability to network and drive yourself to succeed. The latter of which you need inherently and the former you can learn. Your occupational background has little impact on your networking skills.

When getting started, you need to look into partnership programmes, get support, make sure that you don't alienate your existing network with sales pitches and always look to grow.

When it comes to the core skills that will make up the bedrock of your business, you can acquire those in any number of positions. Part of your transition

into consulting is learning to look at those skills in a different context. For example, realising that your operations experience in a financial service firm applies just as well to hospitality or tech businesses. The next step is learning how that same operations experience will give you insights into strategy, IT, HR and more.

People with diverse careers already know this and are primed for success in the fast-paced world of consulting. For everyone else, the transition into consulting is about learning how to conduct yourself as a consultant, figuring out how your skills fit within a wider context and identifying gaps in your skill sets to fill. It is a journey, but if it is one that excites you, it will be fun along the way.

There is no better time to get started. If you want to jump into independent consulting, the market is growing. The first step is to take stock of your network. You can get started on this before leaving your current job. Get out there and start your transition into a consultant today!



Are you interested in taking  
your next steps into being an  
independent consultant?

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**Thank you.**