



Management Consultancy: Boundaries and Knowledge in Action

Andrew Sturdy, Karen Handley, Timothy Clark, Robin Fincham

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Management consultants are typically seen as key mediators in the flow of management ideas. And yet little is known about exactly what happens when they work together with clients, behind closed doors in consulting projects. Do they really innovate or simply legitimate existing knowledge? This book presents research from a three year long 'fly-on-the-wall study' of consulting projects and challenges our taken for granted view of consultancy.

It draws on and integrates theories of knowledge and social boundaries to reveal a picture of complex and shifting insider-outsider relationships. Here, the outsider or expert status of consultants in relation to their clients cannot be assumed in their day-to-day project interactions. Different actors, roles, and types of knowledge are involved in an interactive and dynamic process where various boundaries are constructed, reinforced, negotiated and transformed. The chapters selectively explore these dynamics, revealing the importance of boundary complexity, the role of humour and challenge in often tense relationships, and the importance of shared knowledge domains such as sector knowledge.

This in-depth analysis of inter-organizational project teams also covers a wide range of consultancy contexts, drawing on cases studies which include:

- * a US-based strategy firm and a multinational client,
- * the public and private sectors,
- * a sole practitioner consultant,
- * IT implementation in financial services.

The book is important for all those with an interest in management consultancy, project working and management knowledge as well as in innovation/change, inter-organisational relations, boundaries and professional services. The authors include some of the leading research experts on management consultancy as well as a former management consultant and current expert in management learning.

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