



What you see

Optima's Consultant deployed to your project



Hidden Benefit #1

Optima's reachback capability: tapping into the breadth of experience across our team.



Hidden Benefit #3

Specific, critical expertise: coupled with extremely high-level competence.



Hidden Benefit #2

Optima's knowledge transfer: upskilling your workforce via on-the-job / in-house training.



Hidden Benefit #4

Absolute integrity: we focus 100% on the very best approach, without bias.

Why use an external consultant on your engineering project?



Chris Lamb, Managing Director

There are many benefits to using an experienced, independent Systems Consultant to enhance your team:

The right person, straight away

Most projects and departments go through peaks and troughs of workload, and the requirements of the project may vary from one stage to the next. Using a consultancy helps you bring in the resource you need, at the time you need it and without the timescale often associated with full time hiring.

Equally, if a consultant is used on a longer term basis (typically 3 months and more) you'll start to experience many of the benefits of a full time employee as the consultant will gain an in-depth knowledge of your organisation and project. If that person is available the next time you need them, they'll be up to speed straight away. They can also pass on their expertise to your own team, either informally by osmosis as the project progresses, or formally as part of a bespoke in-house training programme.

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Value for money

General cost analysis shows that the total cost of contractors is typically 100% more than equivalent employed staff cost, whilst targeted use of consultants is typically 50% more whilst proving a greater emphasis on timely and high quality output and outcomes. So consultancy in a work package model with a blend of appropriate resources provides lower average cost per man day than contracted manpower solutions, and if cost is measured against output and outcome it can reach closer equivalence to employed staff costs.

Consultancy work packages **allow scarce, highly experienced resource with specific knowledge/skills to be used effectively across several parallel strands of technical activity** with support from competent and skilled engineers, whilst keeping focussed accountability for work package outputs. **This ensures higher quality, timely output across a broader set of tasks** than is possible with contracted manpower of similar levels of knowledge and experience – even should they be available.

More than just the consultant you see

Deployed consultants are expected to maintain contact with their company and are encouraged to bring the full strength of the consultancy team to bear. So rather than getting one contractor, working as a sole trader or single person limited company, **you can tap into the breadth of expertise across a whole consultancy** through one or more of their team working on your project. This reachback capability can be informal, for ad-hoc advice, or a fuller service with defined levels of additional support available when required.

Engineering consultants can also **provide on-the-job and in-house training to staff** to both delivery outputs and up skill the full time employed engineers. This knowledge transfer can be informal or a defined output in its own right and adds longer term value to even a fixed term contract.

Sidestep the recruitment hurdle

Recruiting the right people is – at best – an extra task that you almost certainly don't have time for and may not have the resource to do properly. Hiring people takes time, is draining, and the implications of getting it wrong are serious. Even once you find the right person you'll have to wait for them to leave their last job and then get up to speed on yours.

Budget-wise, recruitment fees will be an expense you hadn't allowed for, and the ongoing cost of a staffer far exceeds their own take-home pay.

What's more, for many technical roles, you may also find it difficult to recruit at all. Good Systems Engineers who are highly motivated, can think laterally and apply their expertise to the bigger picture of the organisational mission, are in short supply. Or, the right person may live in the wrong part of the country and need to go through lengthy permanent relocation processes before they can start.

A consultant is used to travelling, and a placement for a few weeks or months is much easier to set up than a full scale permanent relocation. Most importantly, all the admin is done by the consultancy, you just let them know when you'd like to start!

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Specialist, independent expertise

Often, there are **specific and critical skills that you really do need for a project** – but that you don't need often enough to make it worth paying for that expert inhouse.

More generally, everyone knows that a fresh pair of eyes can be an enormous benefit to moving a project on, especially if it's stagnated. Consultants should **bring with them extremely high levels of competence plus relevant experience to the complex technical areas you're dealing in**, and this input can be the kickstart your team need.

Systems engineering is founded on evidence that doing the right technical de-risking early in the life cycle is crucial to programme success and avoidance of cost and schedule issues. Senior consultants focus rigorously on this approach, whereas typically inhouse staff may have a wide range of often conflicting priorities.

There are also benefits to having a technically authoritative independent view on certain subject areas, which can be readily provided by a targeted, expert engineering consultancy but is harder to obtain via full time staff. Optima is proud to be an independent consultancy, so you can be assured of our absolute integrity. We have nothing to gain by selling you one approach over another, and we always focus 100% on the very best approach for your project, without bias.

Consultants need to deliver

You'll find that experienced consultants are usually better at **hitting the ground running and getting to the heart of what's needed more quickly** than a permanent new starter would be. Consultants are by nature more comfortable with the relative fluidity of their employment status. They like the challenge of making a difference quickly and understand that they're immediately accountable to you for their output. They ask the right questions, proactively make connections with the people whose input they need, and are low maintenance to have around.

They're also accountable to the consultancy that placed them, who in turn have a vested interest in their people performing well. Consultancies are only as good as our last referral; the business values of true consultancies have a strong focus on providing good outcomes for clients to build market reputation.



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How should I go about it?

Mix it up

In general, employing people on a consistent permanent basis is still the most cost-efficient model for a stable level of resource provision. These people can get to know the enterprise inside out and can acquire a deep level of technical expertise in your particular area. They're committed contractually to you long term and are probably the sort of people who appreciate a stable job. So, no-one is arguing that you should replace staff with consultants!

However, using consultants to supplement this stable core basis is a highly effective and usually cost efficient way of either bringing in specialist technical talent, or scaling up the department temporarily to cope with peaks in demand.

How does it work?

There are a number of different ways of using a Systems Consultant to best suit your organisation and your project:

- 1 Firm price method**

Most suitable for tasks where there's a clear view on the outputs required. You agree the price with the consultancy and expect the work to be delivered. This puts the onus on the consultancy to get the job done within the time, budget and deliverables agreed.
- 2 Rate based method**

You employ a consultant on a day rate or blended day rate (for a team of mixed seniority). This works best for projects where our help is actually needed to scope the task, or where the methods, dependencies or outputs needed are not certain. This method requires more focus on regular KPI checks with your consultant but allows them to provide senior expertise at the planning stage which should streamline the process throughout.
- 3 Contracting method**

The contracting method could be one or the other of these approaches, or a blend of both. You might commission a sequence of firm price tasks at the start of a project which reduce uncertainties in later tasks, or request an initial scoping to be conducted simply on a rate based call-off arrangement or through rate-based defined tasks. Clients can often also hold some rate based call-off support to give them flexibility alongside larger firm price or rate based defined tasks.

Get in touch

Could you benefit from experienced Systems Consultancy to help scope and deliver your project? Contact us to discuss your specific requirements and we'll introduce you to an expert who can help.