

1 Introduction

This report is an update to the CMCE [*Future of Management Consultancy* report](#) published in October 2025 and is based on a presentation and discussion session led by Paul Kelly and Jim Foster on 29 January 2026.

This report is intended to answer a number of key questions:

- What consulting marketplaces are available?
- Why and when should clients use them?
- How are they likely to be impacted in the future?

2 Connecting clients and consultants

There are a number of ways that a client can connect with a provider of consultancy services.

2.1 Directory

Providing information about the services and contact details of management consultancies. Specific types include:

- Consultancy-specific Directories, for example:
 - Management Consultancies Association (*Provides details of MCA members only*)
 - Consultancy.uk
 - Consultport
- Market Sector-specific Directories
An example is Joint Supply Chain Accreditation Register (JOSCAR) which provides details of products and services to Aerospace and Defence organisations

2.2 Framework Agreement

Providing information about the services and contact details of management consultancies who meet specified pre-qualification requirements. Examples include:

- *UK Government Management Consultancy Framework 4 (MCF 4)* which provides details of consultancies pre-qualified to provide services to UK Government departments
- *Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Management Consultancy Framework 664_25* which provides details of consultancies pre-qualified to provide services to UK public sector organisations

2.3 Marketplace

Connecting clients with providers of management consultancy services, primarily independent consultants. These are increasingly an alternative to contacting a contract agency to identify independent consultants. There is evidence of some contract agencies responding to this by re-advertising roles that have been posted by marketplace providers.

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
NON-CONSULTANCY SPECIFIC		
GENERIC MARKETPLACE	Connects clients to potential suppliers of a wide range of products and services	Upwork; Xing
SECTOR-SPECIFIC MARKETPLACE	Connects clients in a specific market sector to providers of a range of products and services	UK Public Sector: Find a Tender; ProContract EU member states and institutions: Tenders Electronic Daily
CONSULTANCY SPECIFIC		
EXPERT ADVISOR	Connects clients with consultants who are able to provide advice on a specific topic	10EQS; AlphaSights; GLG; Guidepoint
ONLINE OPERATOR	Connects clients to independent consultants	Catalant; Consultport; Malt Strategy; Internal Consulting Group
NETWORKED CONSULTANCY	Connects clients with teams of one or more independent consultants	a-connect; Business Talent Group; Eden McCallum; HiveMind Network; i-10; Odgers Connect; The Barton Partnership

Table 1. Types of Marketplace Provider

Table 1 contains a description and examples of a number of types of marketplace that connect clients with consultants. All are focused on independent management consultants except Sector-specific marketplaces which are focused on management consultancies. There may be some surprise about including Networked Consultancies but they have been included as they connect clients with independent consultants

These marketplaces operate in different ways to connect clients with consultants

- Generic Marketplaces
 - Consultants respond to opportunities posted on the marketplace website
- Sector-Specific Marketplaces
 - Organisations in the sector publish details of requirements and registered providers (primarily consultancy firms) respond with proposals
- Consultancy Specific Marketplaces
 - Clients are usually requested to provide details of their requirements which are then either publicised on a marketplace website or emailed to registered consultants

3 Consultancy Specific Marketplaces

Table 2 provides details of a number of providers of Consultancy-specific marketplaces.

This includes, where relevant, the organisation's rating in the Networked Consultancies category of the *Financial Times UK's Leading Management Consultancies 2025* and whether the organization is included in *Forbes' World's Best Management Consulting Firms 2025*.

Name	Financial Times Rating	Recognised by Forbes	Founded	Consultant Pool: Over	Headquartered	Type
10EQS	Bronze	Yes	2008	40,000	United States	Expert Advisor
AlphaSights	Gold	Yes	2008	2,000	United Kingdom	Expert Advisor
GLG	Silver	Yes	1998	1.2 million	United States	Expert Advisor
Guidepoint	Not Included	Yes	2003	1.75 million	United States	Expert Advisor
Catalant	Not Included	No	2013	100,000	United States	Online Operator
Consultport	Not Included	No	2018	15,000	Germany	Online Operator
Internal Consulting Group	Bronze	Yes	2011	5,000	Australia	Online Operator
Malt Strategy	Bronze	Yes	2013	15,000	France	Online Operator
a-connect	Bronze	Yes	2002	2,000	Switzerland	Networked Consultancy
Business Talent Group	Bronze	No	2007	35,000	United States	Networked Consultancy
Eden McCallum	Silver	No	2000	2,500	United Kingdom	Networked Consultancy
HiveMind Network	Bronze	No	2014	2,500	United Kingdom	Networked Consultancy
i-10	Not Included	No	Unknown	76,000	United Kingdom	Networked Consultancy
Odgers Connect	Gold	No	2016	Not Available	United Kingdom	Networked Consultancy
The Barton Partnership	Silver	Yes	2007	8,500	United Kingdom	Networked Consultancy

Table 2. Consultancy Specific Marketplaces

This information demonstrates that many of the providers are recognized as a fundamental part of the consultancy eco-system, are long-established and have access to many independent consultants.

It is helpful to understand the origins of these providers as it helps inform how they operate. The founders of these organisations come from a variety of backgrounds, including:

- Consultants, whose approach is to know how to run a consultancy without lots of permanent resources
- Recruiters, who know lots of consultants
- Technologists, who can provide technology that matches client requirements to resource skills, experience and availability

Table 3 provides an analysis of the origins of the marketplace providers included in Table 2. Of the two organisations in the “Other” category, GLG’s background is in publishing and Guidepoint’s in academia.

TYPE	ACTIVITY	ORIGIN			
		Recruitment	Consulting	Technology	Other
<i>Expert Provider</i>	Connects clients with consultants who are able to provide advice on a specific topic		10EQS	AlphaSights	GLG Guidepoint
<i>Online Marketplace Operator</i>	Connects clients to independent consultants		Internal Consulting Group	Catalant Consultport Malt Strategy	
<i>Networked Consultancy</i>	Connects clients with teams of one or more independent consultants	The Barton Partnership Odgers Connect	a-connect Business Talent Group Eden McCallum HiveMind Network i-10		

Table 3. Origins of Marketplace Providers

4 Deciding the Directory, Framework or Marketplace to use

Table 4 identifies a number of typical client situations and the buying approach that we consider clients should consider adopting in those situations

CLIENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ RISK	CERTAINTY OF REQUIREMENT	LIKELY BUYING APPROACH
Has a problem and wants proposals on how to deal with it	High	Low	Consultancy-specific Directory
Has a problem, wants proposals on how to deal with it AND Wants assurance that the consultancy meets standards applicable to their market sector	High	Low	Sector-specific Directory or Framework
Has a requirement for a consultant to undertake work AND Is required to publish requirements for projects over a certain value	High	Medium	Sector-specific Marketplace
Requires advice on a specific subject from a specialist	High	High	Expert Advisor
Needs consultancy support from one or more consultants	Medium	Medium	Networked Consultancy
Needs a single consultant with a specific skillset	Medium	High	Online Operator
Has a requirement for a consultant to undertake work that has a low business risk and impact	Low	Medium	Generic Marketplace

Table 4. Client Situations and Buying Approach

5 Potential Developments and Impacts

5.1 Potential Developments

The increased use and availability of AI tools is likely to result in clients going out to market for consulting services with a belief that they have a greater understanding of the support that they require from a consultant and of the business risk and impact of adopting a solution to their business issue.

In some situations, the client may decide to engage the consultant to validate the solution defined by the client using AI support. In other situations, the client may decide to engage a consultant to define the solution. However, because clients have a belief that they have a better understanding of their requirements and of business risk and impact, they may be less likely to pay the “risk premium” of engaging an established consultancy or using a specialist marketplace.

Whatever level of consultancy support is required to analyse a business issue and define solution clients are still likely to continue to require support in adopting the solution. The potential “decoupling” of advisory services from adoption services may result in clients considering a wider range of options in selecting a consultancy to support solution adoption.

5.2 Potential Impacts

The potential impacts of this development are:

- Use of Consulting Marketplaces grows more rapidly than the overall growth in demand for consulting services
Clients are more likely to go out to market for consultancy services with a better understanding of their requirements and of the related business risk and impact. Where this is the case, they are also more likely to be prepared to avoid the “risk premium” of engaging an established management consultancy and procure consultancy services using a consulting marketplace
- Segments likely to experience most growth are:
 - Generic Marketplace Providers, as an alternative to Online Operators
Used by clients avoiding the “risk premium” of a specialist consulting marketplace
 - Networked Consultancies, as an alternative to more traditional management consultancies
Used by clients avoiding the “risk premium” of a more traditional management consultancy and able to “decouple” adoption services from advisory services
 - Expert Advisers
Engaged to validate an increased number of client-defined solutions

Also, the winners in each segment are likely to be those that make better use of technology to assist clients in determining requirements and in identifying suitable consultants.