

Smart THOUGHTS™

Smart THOUGHTS is a series of articles focusing on how to place the value of Product Rescue in an industrial perspective.

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What makes the use of Product Rescue so valuable ?

The right tool for the right job

Everyone has their own view on consultants. Whether good or bad, this view is often laden with prejudice. Any consultancy service has a reason for existence, namely its **functions**: what it can do for its clients. However, the functions of a consultancy service is not about what knowledge is available, how much experience is there or what the network of contacts looks like. Those things are **properties** and are not going to be conclusive in determining the value of the service. They are necessary but not sufficient.

Compare this to a screwdriver, for example. The fact that it has a sharp and flat end, a hardened steel shaft or a large ergonomical handle will not determine how much value you get from it. Of course, these properties are necessary, but the function will determine your level of satisfaction. Suppose you use this screwdriver to drive in a nail, you will not be impressed with its performance, even though it may be the best screwdriver available. Anyone will know this for the screwdriver example. Not so for consultancy.

Your opinion

I agree completely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I don't agree
I knew this	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	This is new to me

Consultancy has to make you grow; help you become more enabling

On a project level, most tasks have a limited impact on the company's strategy. They are specific to this one project and are often seen as stand-alone tasks like tool design, tool calculations or the setup of moulding procedures for this tool. Mistaking something specific for something which is stand-alone will create a lot of duplications of effort. In this respect, consultancy work should not be stand-alone but needs to be integrated into the company's processes. Consultants should make themselves redundant as soon as possible. Everything they do has to be part of the overall education and training objectives.

Education = changing the way we think

Training = changing the way we work/act.

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Efficient use of time

Consultancy is often something you will use when you want to focus on a certain topic and get short time results. You want to keep the learning curve as steep as possible AND make sure that the acquired knowledge is integrated into the company's assets.

Using the Kaizen approach to look at the efficiency of management jobs, the following comparison can be made which illustrates the potential efficiency of a good consultant.

Typical Western Management	40% Daily Tasks		60% Fire Fighting	
Kaizen Management	20% Daily Tasks	20% Fire Fighting	60% Continuous Improvement	
A Consultant on the Job	20% Fire Fighting	80% Continuous Improvement		

Your opinion

I agree completely I don't agree

I knew this This is new to me

Efficient use of resources - Flexibility

Any improvement system consists of a sequence of cycles to go through - a bit like a spiral which regularly passes through the same sector, each time a bit closer to its goal. One of the best known cycles is the PDCA cycle (Plan - Do - Check - Action). Process improvement engineers (PIE) are expected to go through this cycle on a continuous basis. However, every step of this cycle requires different skills and adds a different amount of value to the improvement process.

	Plan	Do	Check	Action
Required 'Skills'	Management	Worker	Inspector	Management
Relative Value Added	++	+	+	+++

Optimising your resources means

- matching the skills of people to the appropriate step
- letting the planner improve the planning, the do'er improve the doing, etc.

The more know-how a person has, the faster his step will be completed. If the know-how of the consultant's step can be automatised (simulation, calculation, standard analysis), he can be taken out of the pool of resources and the organisation and subsequent cost structure can be streamlined.

Your opinion

I agree completely I don't agree

I knew this This is new to me

Better quantification of results

Binge drinking is what often happens during parties where people pay a one-off fee and get free drinks for the rest of the night. The reason so many people get tempted into getting drunk is because once the price is paid, the next drink is always free. When they are too drunk, they leave. Similarly, once people's salary is fixed, the next thing the employer asks is always free. Amongst other dangers, this can skew the relationship between the requested results and what needs to be done to get there.

This is a black-and-white representation of the loss of quantification of effort. It is hard to determine what the 'return on investment' is for every employee and arguably this should not be done. On the other hand, consultants have a better chance at quantifying what they do. The use of consultants is linked to the definition of milestones and deliverables. These deliverables are being monitored a lot closer than the employee's yearly objectives, since the employee will continuously be distracted by daily tasks and fire fighting.

Quantifying efforts is a vital part of any improvement system. Even things that have no numerical value can be quantified. For instance, if you mark your opinion for every paragraph in this article (grey sections), you will have a clearer view on what you think about it. This is a Product Rescue way to make documents and instructions more interactive and quantifiable.

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Cost-Efficient

Sure enough, consultants are said to be expensive but they are actually an easy contributor to keeping a project within budget. You get an expert opinion on the cost in advance, an expert opinion on the return to be expected and several tools to negotiate the terms and conditions on a project basis. Amongst the things to consider when looking at cost is the cost of getting it wrong, i.e. what would a trial-and-error approach cost?

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On a process level, the main value of Product Rescue lies in its effectiveness and cost efficiency.
 On a product level, Product Rescue generates innovative ideas and resolves technical contradictions.