

"The UK Consulting Industry 2006-07" by Fiona Czerniawaska

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Eden McCallum has built its entire business around its network of independent consultants – a “core” group of around 100-130 freelance consultants which it uses on a regular basis; another 100 it uses on perhaps two projects a year because they are more specialised, and 200-300 additional experts it can draw on from time to time. It’s a model which many other consulting firms are watching with a mixture of interest and concern. “Business is going up unbelievably,” says Liann Eden, “three out of the last six months have been the best ever, taking our turnover to around £12 million this year.”

“In retrospect, 2001 was the perfect time to launch the company,” says Eden, “because it brought a lower cost model to the market at a time when clients were cutting their budgets for consulting. We were able to use the down-turn to build our brand and gain clients.” But what’s been particularly interesting is that the firm has not suffered as the market has bounced back. “People told us we had a fantastic set-up for a difficult market, but weren’t so convinced we had the right model for a buoyant one. We, too, were concerned that we’d lose out when it came to attracting people in a more competitive market. What we’re finding is that consultants love the work, freedom and flexibility we offer. If anything, the benign economic conditions have made them more confident about making this kind of switch.”

“It’s an attractive model for clients as well,” says Dena McCallum. “Because we don’t have the conventional pyramid-shaped consulting firm, we’re lower cost and more flexible. Because the amount we charge per day is lower than the traditional strategy firms, clients can afford to use us for longer. From their point of view, it’s a bit like having their own personal consulting firm.”