

Why Independent Strategy Consulting is Rare and Valuable



Introduction: A Structural Gap in the Market

In today's market, companies with €50 million to €1 billion in revenue face a paradox. They are too complex to operate without strategic guidance, yet too small to attract sustained attention from top-tier strategy firms like McKinsey or BCG. This segment—growth-oriented, often tech-dependent—is structurally underserved. What they need is deep, senior, strategic insight with full focus. What they often get is delegation, dilution, or disregard.

Independent strategy consulting exists to fill this gap. Yet it is rare. Why? Because it requires a rare combination: deep experience, intellectual independence, and a willingness to work outside the machinery of institutional leverage. That is what makes it valuable.

The Shortcomings of Traditional Strategy Firms

Top-tier firms operate on a scale model that prioritizes revenue per partner and leverage over impact per engagement. Their structures inherently deprioritize the type of focused, senior attention mid-sized firms require.

- **Leverage Overload:** Delivery is pushed down to junior teams. Partner time is scarce and fragmented.
What this means for clients: Strategic nuance is often lost in translation. Clients may get efficient execution, but not original insight.
- **Sales vs. Strategy:** Senior staff spend most of their time on business development, not problem-solving.
Why that matters: The people selling the work are not the ones solving the problem. Expectations and delivery can misalign.
- **Institutional vs. Individual Expertise:** The quality of advice depends on the team, not the individual. Experience resides in the firm, not in the consultant across the table.
What this means for clients: Quality becomes inconsistent. The outcome depends on which individuals are staffed, not on who pitched the engagement.
- **Internal Demands on Seniors:** Senior managers and principals often spend up to 40% of their time on internal operations.
Why that matters: Their capacity for deep client thinking is limited. Strategic reflection becomes a secondary priority.
- **Tiered Access:** Top-tier firms white-list clients. Smaller clients get B-teams or no teams.
What this means for clients: Unless you're a strategic account, you're unlikely to get top talent or consistent support.

The Independent Advantage

An independent strategy consultant flips this model. There is no leverage pyramid, no layers of abstraction, no bait-and-switch. Instead, there is direct access, sharp thinking, and real partnership.

- **True Senior Engagement:** Clients work directly with a seasoned strategist who owns both the thinking and the delivery.
- **Integrated Advice:** There is no divide between selling and solving. The person who shapes the proposal also shapes the solution.
- **Experience is Personal:** The expertise brought in is not institutional—it is earned, lived, and applied by the individual consultant.

- **Unconstrained Thinking:** Without internal hierarchy, politics, or productization, advice can be tailored, unfiltered, and bold.
- **Flexible, Fast and Focused:** No bureaucracy. No internal prioritization issues. Just high-frequency iteration and deep strategic thought.
- **Client Fit Over Firm Fit:** Smaller, ambitious firms don't get downgraded. They get first-tier thinking tailored to their scale and ambition.

Why It's Rare

Despite its clear advantages, independent strategy consulting remains scarce. Why?

- **High Entry Bar:** It requires years of top-tier experience and the confidence to operate without a brand platform.
- **Non-Scalable Model:** It cannot be easily leveraged or scaled. Quality is tied to the individual.
- **Intellectual Risk:** Every assignment is bespoke. No templated solutions, no standard operating procedures.
- **Lack of Sales Infrastructure:** There's no pre-existing BD machine. Relationships must be built from trust and track record.

But precisely because it is rare, it is valuable. It offers a unique opportunity: to work with someone who thinks deeply, acts independently, and has nothing to sell except clarity.

When to Choose an Independent Consultant

Independent strategic consulting is not for every situation. But in the following cases, it is likely to outperform institutional options:

- When the problem is strategic and ambiguous
- When senior-level sparring is more important than team execution
- When candor and independence matter more than process and packaging
- When the organisation is at a strategic inflection point
- When you want to outthink—not just outspend—your competition

Conclusion: The Value of Focused Strategy

Independent strategy consulting is not cheaper strategy. It is **concentrated strategy**: deep, direct, unfiltered. It does not come with a brand machine, a three-tier team, or a 200-slide deck. It comes with strategic clarity, forged through experience, and tailored to the situation.

In a world increasingly shaped by noise, speed, and standardisation, independent thinking is rare. And that is precisely why it matters.