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When people ask me what I do and I tell them I'm an accountant ☐, they understand what that means. But saying I'm a consultant leads immediately to what kind ☐? And this is where I tell them I'm a Common Sense Consultant.

Common sense is often referred to as being “uncommon” and somehow lacking. It is true that in our search for worthwhile solutions to important problems, we sometimes forget to consider simple answers but it is not necessarily true that the simple answer is the right or best one...

To me, common sense is about stating the obvious, and it helps us to uncover or discover hidden assumptions and other factors to which we may be blind. My step-father used to say that the cemetery was full of people who had the right of way. In a similar fashion, the business graveyard has plenty of examples where people operating blind or on false assumptions met the hard face of reality. Common sense tells us to look both ways before crossing the road. It can also warn us to not believe our own propaganda.

And what is consulting? Taking advice, taking soundings, asking for and receiving advices and input... Is one consulted or providing advice necessarily a consultant? Or does consultant mean something different? These days, consultant is almost a pejorative term - visit any business that uses consultants and gauge the enthusiasm of the staff for them. Consulting is a guise under which large accounting and legal firms up-sell services. It also comfortably shelters the unemployed former executive and the semi-retired professional.

I have some very basic ideas about consulting and consultants. First, a consultant brings something you don't have - be it advice, professional service, or fresh eyes. Businesses above a certain size, say over 100 employees, should not need to hire consultants - divert 5% of your workforce to the project and you have a team of 5 or more to run it. Second, the consulting process needs a definite purpose and desired end. Thirdly, you should make a profit on your investment in consulting.

☒ Finally, what is common sense consulting? Apart from paying me to tell you what you already know?

It's bringing a pair fresh eyes to see what you've become blind to. It's asking basic questions

that, for whatever reason, you can't answer. It's being an independent voice that tells you the truth. It's also finding the simplest and most effective ways to profit from your investment.

It's being a helping hand where and when you need it most ☐ because we all need someone to lean on.

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