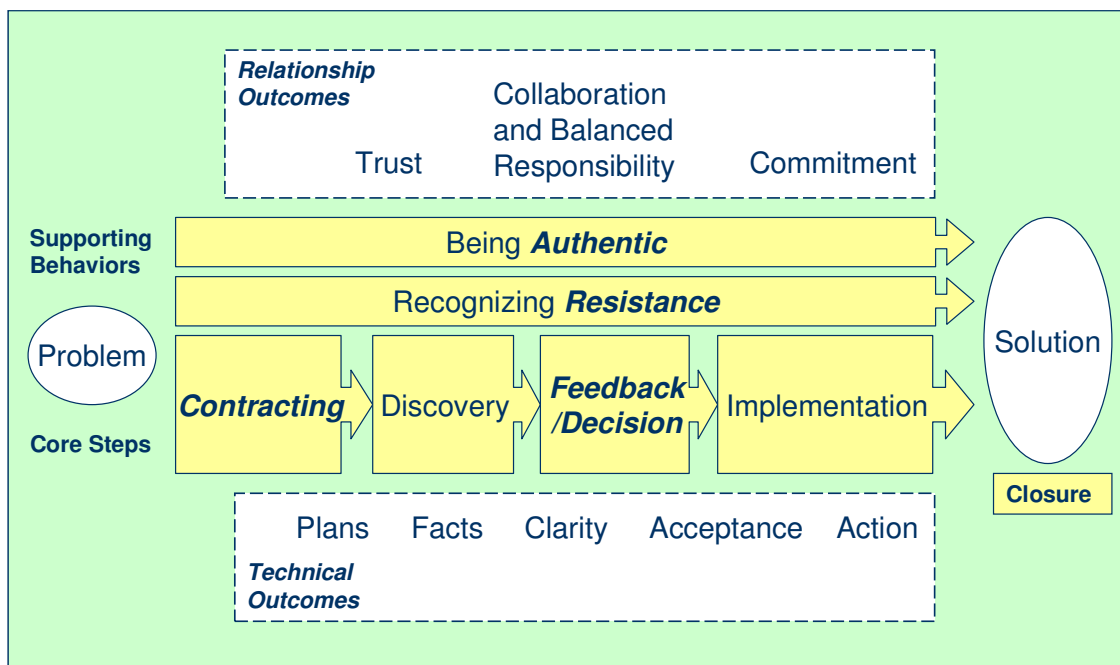


Overview:

Consultants and Project Managers both help their clients bring successful changes to their organizations. Both face the challenge of being effective without direct authority. Key consulting skills emphasize building relationships to have impact without authority. These consulting skills can help project managers be more effective:

- Being *authentic* to build trust
- *Contracting* to build collaboration and commitment
- Giving *feedback* to build understanding and support decisions
- Recognizing *resistance* to build acceptance

Consulting Skills Model:



Being Authentic:

Peter Block, in “Flawless Consulting,” tells us: ‘Being authentic is putting into words what you are experiencing with the client as you work.’

The client doesn’t have to guess where you are coming from, or what you are. Why is this important? It builds trust. Trust is the foundation for all the consulting skills.

Contracting:

Contracting creates a mutual understanding of what will be done and seeks a balance of responsibility between client and consultant (or PM). The goal is a collaborative relationship by understanding wants and concerns. Key steps to contracting include:

- Understand the client’s wants

- Express consultant wants
 - Be authentic during wants
- Surface client concerns about motivation, exposure, loss of control
- Reach and confirm agreement
- Give support – connect with the project and build confidence in success

Giving Feedback/Seeking Decisions:

Giving feedback is often a crucial point in a consulting engagement or project. Successful delivery, understanding, and acceptance of feedback as findings and recommendations, project phase results, risks identified, or adjustments in the problem to be solved can make a difference in project success. Steps to effective feedback are:

- A collaborative approach will help the client be receptive to feedback
- Funneling data to focus on key findings – don't overwhelm – leave room to adjust
- Describe feedback objectively, not judgmentally – seek agreement on what is true
- Include personal and organizational data – politics, attitudes, and environment are all valuable types of data to share
- Focus on things that can be acted on
- Encourage client responsibility – “Could you be contributing to...?”
 - Trust makes this easier
- Seek confirmation and a decision to act
- Give continued support to the client and their decisions to help build commitment

Recognizing Resistance:

Resistance may signal lack of trust or awareness of potential change. Resistance must be recognized and addressed. Steps to recognize and address resistance are:

- Resistance may not be directly expressed. Look for:
 - Silence or very terse answers
 - Body language
 - Repeated rejection of the observations, or adding details and clarification
 - Avoiding responsibility of the problem, blaming others
 - Complete compliance
 - Anger, detachment, or changing the subject
- Recognize resistance and objectively restate your position, not more than twice
- If resistance continues, seek to name it with a brief neutral statement:
 - “You're quiet. I don't know how to read your silence.”
 - “You're accepting this without any questions.”
 - “You don't see yourself as part of the problem.”
- It may not work. Stay calm, objective, and authentic. Seek understanding, don't require agreement. Be confident. Lighten up.

For more information on these skills, see Peter Block's book, [Flawless Consulting](#).