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At What They Do

## The Consultant to Trusted Advisor Journey

*Part 2 – How to Develop Advanced Skills  
for Lasting Client Impact*

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# Future-Proofing Consulting

## The Consultant to Trusted Advisor Journey

*This two-part white paper series is designed to help Professional Services organizations and delivery practitioners thrive in the AI era. Part 1 explored the critical journey from transactional consultant to trusted advisor, highlighting the advanced consultative skills required to make that transition. Part 2 provides practical insights into how these skills can be developed through modern, effective training approaches that drive lasting behavioral change.*

### Introduction

In Part 1 of this series, we explored why trusted advisor skills have become the new competitive advantage in the AI era. As automation and technology transform the way we manage transactional tasks, consultants must evolve beyond execution and develop the capabilities that position them as strategic partners. But knowing what skills matter is only half of the equation. The real challenge lies in how to develop them.

Unlike technical training, which focuses on structured knowledge and processes, the development of the consultative skills trusted advisors need requires a fundamentally different approach. These skills are rooted in behavior, not just information. They demand practice, feedback, and reinforcement to become second nature. This paper examines why traditional training models fall short and outlines the principles of effective development for consultants ready to make the leap to trusted advisor.

### Why Traditional Training Falls Short

Most professional services organizations have well-established processes for technical training. They allocate budgets, schedule workshops, and measure success through certifications or proficiency tests. But consultative skills don't fit neatly into this model. They are not about memorizing steps or mastering tools, they are about learning how to influence, communicate effectively, and build trust in dynamic, unpredictable situations.

Event-based training, or what we think of as the "one-and-done" workshop doesn't work in this case because it treats soft skills like technical skills. Participants may leave with new concepts, but without ongoing practice and reinforcement, those concepts rarely translate into lasting behavioral change. The result? A short-term boost in awareness, followed by a return to old habits.

To truly transform consultants into trusted advisors, organizations need a programmatic, iterative approach that mirrors how behavioral change happens: through practice, repetition, feedback, and real-world application.

### The Path to Trusted Advisor: How "Behavioral Muscle Memory" is Built

Developing trusted advisor capabilities is a journey, not an event. It begins with practical instruction that connects concepts to real-world consulting scenarios. It continues through experiential learning—role plays, case studies, and simulations that allow participants to practice new skills in a safe environment. And it requires reinforcement over time, so new behaviors become instinctive.

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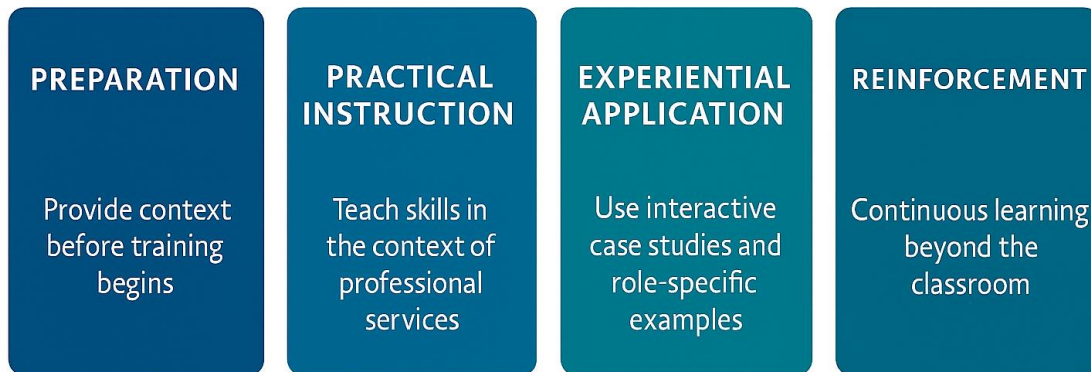
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Think of it like learning a sport. You don't master a golf swing by reading a manual or attending a single clinic. You learn the fundamentals, practice under guidance, and repeat until muscle memory takes over. The same principle applies to consultative skills. Trusted advisors need "behavioral muscle memory" so they can naturally apply these skills in client interactions without thinking about them.

## Keys to Effective Development

Turning concepts into consistent behaviors requires more than awareness, it demands a deliberate, structured approach. While the previous section outlined *how skills are built over time*, the following keys focus on the practical elements that make this transformation possible. These principles ensure consultants don't just learn trusted advisor skills, they apply them effectively and sustain them in real client interactions.



## DEVELOPING TRUSTED ADVISOR CAPABILITIES

- **Preparation:** Provide context before training begins. Pre-reading and assessments help participants understand why these skills matter and how they apply to their role.
- **Practical Instruction:** Teach skills in the context of professional services, linking concepts to real client scenarios.
- **Experiential Application:** Use interactive case studies and role-specific examples to make practice relevant and engaging.
- **Reinforcement:** Extend learning beyond the classroom. Continuous learning sessions, manager coaching, and peer discussions help make new behaviors stick.

## Why it Matters

Investing in trusted advisor development is not optional, it's strategic. Organizations that embrace a structured, continuous approach will equip their consultants to build deeper relationships, influence decisions, and deliver value that technology alone cannot achieve. Those that cling to outdated training models will struggle to differentiate and risk being left behind.

The future of consulting belongs to those who master the human skills that AI cannot replicate. The question is: are you ready to make the shift?

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## About the Author: Ryan Childers, RMCP®



Ryan Childers is a Partner and Practice Leader for RTM Consulting. With 20 years of experience in PS strategy, operations, delivery, and management in technology services, Ryan has a proven track record of helping services organizations drive operational improvements and develop the consultative skills of their delivery teams. He has specific expertise in PS strategy, global resource management (GRM), Just-in-Time-Resourcing®, and developing delivery methodologies.

Ryan also serves as the Managing Director of the Resource Management Institute (RMI). With specific expertise in Global Resource Management, Ryan was an early adopter and implementer of the Just-in-Time Resourcing® brand of human capital management solutions. His passion for the resource management discipline is central to his role leading this important industry institute.

Prior to joining RTM Consulting, Ryan spent several years at Finvi (formerly Ontario Systems), where he held leadership positions in Professional Services and corporate strategy. His professional experience also includes working in systems deployment at Accenture. Ryan holds an MS in Information and Communication Sciences and BS in Management from Ball State University. Ryan has been a frequent speaker and panelist at Technology Services Industry Association (TSIA) events.

## About RTM Consulting

Specializing in resource, workforce, and project management, service business optimization, digital transformation, and consultative skills development, RTM Consulting helps project-based service providers deliver better business outcomes and customer success for their clients. RTM Consulting helps IT hardware, software and support services organizations achieve the benefits associated with successful services portfolios. With its unique Just-in-Time Resourcing® solutions, Business Acceleration Services, and training solutions, RTM Consulting helps large, medium, and small firms move beyond theory to practical application of industry best practices and achievement of exceptional results in the shortest possible period of time.

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