



BEVERLY CROWELL
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Developing Flawless Clients



Flawless Consulting is the popular workshop and book by Peter Block designed to increase an internal consultant's ability to have a strong and positive impact on their client's business results. Individuals in staff positions such as human resources, training, organizational development, information systems, finance, safety, purchasing, and engineering have all benefited from Flawless Consulting over the years.

While designed specifically for internal consultants, it's not unusual to hear from our participants, "I love all this content for myself as a consultant. It would be great if my client could hear it as well. Do you have a class for them . . . on how to be a flawless client?" After some laughter and agreement in the room, we talk about this idea of the flawless client. Who are they? What do they do or not do that makes them flawless? How can we as consultants help?

Most professionals are working in cross-functional, cross-business groups and other work models that do not maintain strict vertical business units grouped by function and geography. So, *a client today may be a consultant tomorrow.*

A consultant is a person in a position to have some influence over an individual, group, or organization, but with no power to make changes or implement programs. Most people in staff or support roles are really consultants, even if they don't call themselves one. And if we take that thinking further, many of our clients may find themselves in the consultant role, too.

If we agree that any client may also be a consultant, the answer to how we help them becomes a whole lot simpler. Here are *three simple ideas* for you to try.

- While we don't have a workshop called Flawless Clients, we do have Flawless Consulting. Anyone inside your organization who is in a position to influence without the power to make the changes would be an excellent candidate. Invite them to attend—and if they do, get together to talk about what they learned and how it can help your own relationship moving forward. Many leaders/clients have attended the workshop and found great value in the experience.
- Remember, we learn from each other—directly or indirectly. By being a Flawless Consultant, you are inviting your clients to learn from you through what you say and what you do. Have a discussion about the consulting process—specifically, as part of your conversations to lay the groundwork for how you will work together, not just what work you will do. Encourage questions and be intentional in sharing what you are doing and why. Throughout the process, ask the question, “What did we learn from that?” Push the pause button to reflect before moving on to the next task or step.
- In any consulting agreement, maximum client involvement will occur to the extent that you involve them. Our goal as Flawless Consultants is to be collaborative, where the engagement is a 50/50 partnership with our client to solve a given problem. When collaborative, the client must be actively involved in data gathering and analysis, setting goals and developing action plans, and finally, sharing responsibility for success or failure. When we are collaborative, problem-solving becomes a joint undertaking: the better the odds for success after the consultant has left and the more that is learned.

When we are being authentic with our clients and completing the business of consulting in each phase, we are being flawless. Even so, it won't always mean our clients become flawless too. According to Block, “Your job, as a consultant, is to present information as simply, directly, and assertively as possible, and to complete the tasks of each phase of the consultation. That's all there is to do, and it's within each of us to do that perfectly.” Do that perfectly, and perhaps your clients will follow.

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