



Consulting From Your Career

Your career is the inventory. Twenty years of judgment, repackaged at market rates your old salary never reflected, sold to people who already know your name.

\$300-1,000

START LEAN

14-45 days

FIRST DOLLAR

85-95%

TYPICAL MARGIN

Is this your business?

Every year of your career, your employer billed your judgment to the business at far more than they paid you. Consulting is simply removing the middleman. You sell what you already know (the function you ran, the problems you fixed, the industry you speak fluently) to companies that need it without the headcount. Startup cost is nearly zero, your first client is often your former employer, and a corporate salary frequently gets replaced inside six months at half the hours.

\$300-1,000

LEAN STARTUP COST

\$2,000-5,000

STANDARD BUILD

14-45 days

TIME TO FIRST DOLLAR

85-95%

TYPICAL GROSS MARGIN

Yes, fully

SOLO-FRIENDLY

Yes, entirely

HOME-BASED

BUILT FOR THESE FOUNDER TYPES

THE ADVISOR

THE CONNECTOR

3/5 difficulty

THE HONEST FIT TEST

You need ten-plus years of real expertise someone paid for, comfort selling yourself without a brand behind you, and tolerance for lumpy income while the pipeline builds. If losing the title, the team, and the IT department sounds liberating, you are ready. If you mostly want to escape your job rather than sell your judgment, fix that first: consulting amplifies expertise, it does not create it.

Who pays, and why now.

Corporate America has spent a decade swapping fixed headcount for flexible expertise. Hiring freezes, leaner org charts, and project-shaped problems mean companies constantly need senior judgment they cannot justify as a full-time salary. That gap is the consulting market, and it is enormous: US management consulting alone is a \$300+ billion industry, and the fastest-growing slice of it is independents, not firms. Companies increasingly prefer the operator who has done the job over the firm that studied it.

Here is the math that surprises corporate leavers: your employer's fully loaded cost for you was roughly 1.3 to 1.5 times your salary, and they billed or valued your output far above that. As an independent, the standard floor is your old salary divided by 220 working days, times 2.5 to 3. A \$160,000 director should not quote less than \$1,800-2,200 a day. Mid-level specialists run \$1,200-2,000 a day, directors \$2,000-3,000, VP-and-above operators \$3,000-5,000. Quote below that and buyers do not think bargain, they think junior.

The corporate-to-consultant transition has a well-worn first move: your former employer. You are leaving with context no outsider can buy, projects half-finished, and relationships intact. A respectful exit plus a proposal to finish or advise on specific work converts to a contract surprisingly often, frequently at 2x your old daily cost, because to them you are still cheaper and faster than a search firm or a Big Four engagement. One anchor client covering your base changes the psychology of every sale after it.

The losing pattern is also well-worn: the generalist. 'Strategy consultant' with no niche competes with everyone and is referred by no one. 'I help mid-size manufacturers fix their S&OP process' or 'I run pricing transformations for B2B software companies' gets remembered, repeated, and paid. Your niche is usually obvious in hindsight: it is the problem you fixed repeatedly for the last decade, named in the buyer's words.

WHO BUYS	WHAT THEY PAY	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT
Your former employer	\$10,000-30,000/mo equivalent	Continuity, finished projects, and your context without your headcount
Mid-market companies (\$10-200M)	\$1,500-3,000/day or \$5,000-15,000/mo retainers	Big-company expertise without big-firm fees or a full-time hire
PE-backed portfolio companies	\$2,000-4,000/day	Operators who move fast on the value-creation plan, no learning curve
Startups post-funding	\$4,000-10,000/mo retainers	The senior function they cannot yet hire: gray hair on demand
Agencies and firms (subcontract)	\$1,000-2,000/day wholesale	Credible senior delivery capacity under their brand

DAILY RATE VS. SALARY-EQUIVALENT DAY

2.5-3x

The independent's floor: former salary divided by 220 days, multiplied by 2.5 to 3. The multiple is not greed. It covers your benefits, your bench time, your pipeline hours, and the fact that the client buys outcomes now, not potential later.

Every dollar, before you spend it.

Consulting is the cheapest launch in this entire series because the product already exists: it is you. Your spend goes to the legal wrapper, insurance serious clients require, and a presence that survives the due-diligence Google search every buyer performs before signing.

THE LEAN BUILD · START HERE	WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE	COST
LLC or S-corp election + EIN	Clients' procurement teams strongly prefer contracting an entity. THE LAUNCHPAD Module Three walks it	\$50-500
Professional liability (E&O) insurance	Most corporate MSAs require \$1M. Have it before they ask	\$40-80/mo
Contract templates (MSA + SOW)	Attorney-reviewed once: scope, IP, payment terms, limitation of liability	\$300-800
Domain, professional email, one-page site	Your niche, your results, three case summaries, one calendar link	\$60-150
LinkedIn Premium / Sales Navigator	Your storefront and your prospecting tool in one	\$30-100/mo
Proposal + e-signature tooling	PandaDoc or similar; speed from handshake to signature is a close rate	\$0-40/mo
Accounting + invoicing setup	QuickBooks or Wave, quarterly estimates calendared from month one	\$0-30/mo
Lean total		\$300-1,000 to be fully in business

THE STANDARD BUILD · ADD AFTER FIRST REVENUE	WHAT IT UNLOCKS	COST
Positioning and brand sprint	Niche statement, case studies, and a site that sells while you deliver	\$1,000-3,000
S-corp payroll + accountant	Above ~\$80k profit the S-corp election typically saves real self-employment tax	\$600-1,500/yr
Diagnostic or assessment productized	Your repeatable front-door offer, templated and priced	\$0 (your time)
Conference + association presence	Your niche's two annual gatherings, attended as the expert, not the job-seeker	\$1,000-2,500

THE RULE

Do not spend a dollar on branding before you have signed two clients. The logo, the fancy site, and the personal-brand photoshoot are procrastination wearing a business expense costume. Two signed SOWs will teach you your real positioning; then make it pretty.

Clean from day one.

No license required: anyone can call themselves a consultant tomorrow. The legal weight here sits in contracts, IP, and your classification as an independent contractor. Get those three right and this is among the safest businesses on earth.

- Form the entity before the first contract:** An LLC (with an S-corp election once profits justify it) is what corporate procurement expects to see. It also keeps a client dispute away from your house.
- Master Service Agreement + Statement of Work:** The MSA holds the legal terms once; each SOW defines scope, deliverables, timeline, and fees per project. Never work from an email thread. Scope in writing is also your only defense against scope creep.
- Own your IP, license the deliverable:** Default contract language often assigns everything you touch to the client, including your frameworks and templates. Carve out your pre-existing IP and methods explicitly, or you will sign away your toolkit one engagement at a time.
- Protect your independent-contractor status:** If a client sets your hours, gives you a manager, and makes you use their equipment, you may be an employee under IRS and state ABC tests, which is the client's problem and then yours. Multiple clients, your own tools, and outcome-based SOWs keep you clearly independent.
- Check your exit paperwork:** Before pitching your former employer or their competitors, reread your non-compete, non-solicit, and confidentiality agreements. Many are narrower than they look, some are unenforceable in your state, but know before you pitch, not after.
- Professional liability insurance:** Advice has consequences and corporate MSAs require coverage, typically \$1M. It also makes the 'limitation of liability' clause in your contract credible.
- Payment terms with teeth:** Net 15 where possible, a deposit or first month upfront on new clients, and late-fee language you actually enforce. Big-company accounts payable will take every day you legally allow them.

INSURANCE, SPECIFICALLY

Professional liability (E&O) at \$1M is the standard ask in corporate contracts; have it bound before procurement requests the certificate so you never stall a deal. Add cyber liability if you handle client data or systems access. General liability matters only if you are regularly on client sites; bundle it cheaply if asked.

WATCH FOR

The disguised-employee trap. One client, forty hours a week, their laptop, their standing meetings: you have rebuilt your job with worse benefits and a misclassification risk attached. Cap any single client at 50-60% of revenue as fast as you can, keep your own tools and methods, and write SOWs around outcomes, not hours present. Independence is both your legal status and your entire pricing power.

Requirements vary by state and city. Verify with your state, city clerk, and a licensed professional. Education, not legal advice.

Three doors. Real numbers.

Sell outcomes in packages, anchored to the value of the problem, never to your old salary. Three offer shapes cover the whole market: a fixed-fee diagnostic that opens doors, a project engagement that does the work, and a retainer that keeps you in the room. Day rates are for subcontracting and bridge work only.

DOOR ONE	RECOMMEND DOOR TWO	DOOR THREE
<p>The Diagnostic</p> <p>\$5,000–15,000 <small>2-4 week</small></p> <p>assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Structured review of the problem area ◆ Stakeholder interviews and data review ◆ Findings report with prioritized roadmap ◆ Executive readout session ◆ Fee credited if they engage you to implement 	<p>The Engagement</p> <p>\$15,000–60,000 <small>most-</small></p> <p>booked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Defined project with a defined outcome ◆ 8-16 week typical arc, milestone-billed ◆ Weekly working sessions with the team ◆ Deliverables the client keeps and uses ◆ Executive sponsor check-ins built in 	<p>The Retainer</p> <p>\$5,000–15,000 <small>per</small></p> <p>month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ongoing advisory: their senior brain on call ◆ Defined cadence (weekly call, monthly on-site) ◆ Priority access between sessions ◆ Quarterly planning facilitation ◆ 90-day initial term, then rolling

PRICING NOTES FOR THIS BUSINESS

- Day-rate floor: former salary divided by 220, times 2.5. Use day rates for subcontract and interim work; packages for everything direct.
- Anchor to the problem's cost, not your time. A pricing fix worth \$2M a year is not a \$9,000 project because it took you three weeks.
- The diagnostic is your risk-reverser: small enough to approve without a committee, structured to surface the bigger engagement.
- Never discount the price; trim the scope instead. A consultant who cuts 20% on request teaches the client every number is fiction.

THE UPSSELL THAT PAYS THE RENT

The retainer after the engagement. At every project's final readout, the client realizes the roadmap needs a steady hand they do not employ. That is the moment to offer the monthly advisory retainer. Three engagement clients converted to \$7,500 retainers is \$270,000 a year of recurring revenue before you sell anything new.

Names, not strategies.

Your first ten clients already know you. This is not a cold-traffic business in year one: it is a systematic harvest of the trust you built over a career, starting with the company you just left and radiating outward through every colleague who ever changed jobs.

1 Your former employer, first

Exit gracefully, then propose finishing or advising on specific work you uniquely understand. Frame it as their cheapest possible continuity. This single conversation funds more consulting launches than every other channel combined.

2 The alumni diaspora

Every colleague who left before you now works somewhere with problems you solve. List 50 of them, message 5 a day: not 'I'm consulting now' but 'who do you know wrestling with [the problem]?' Asks for referrals outperform asks for work.

3 Vendors, partners, and ex-clients of your old role

Everyone who sold to you, partnered with you, or bought from you knows exactly what you are good at. They are also a non-compete-safe network. Tell all of them, specifically, what you now fix.

4 PE and VC talent networks

Private equity operating teams maintain rosters of independent operators for portfolio companies. One coffee with an operating partner can put you in front of ten companies that share your exact problem.

5 Boutique firms needing senior delivery

Subcontracting at \$1,000-2,000 a day is dignified bridge revenue while your direct pipeline matures. Two or three boutiques in your niche smooth the lumpy first year.

6 Your niche's watering holes

The association, the conference, the LinkedIn conversation where your buyers complain. Show up as the practitioner with the sharpest specific answers. Speak once and the room becomes pipeline.

THE EXACT ASK

"Hi [name], after [number] years running [function] at [company], I have gone independent. I help [specific buyer] fix [specific problem]: the thing I did over and over inside. I am starting with a short diagnostic: two to three weeks, fixed fee, and you get a prioritized roadmap whether or not we go further. Who in your world is wrestling with this right now? And if it is you, want 30 minutes this week?"

THE FOUNDING-CUSTOMER DEAL

First three clients: founding-client pricing at roughly 20% below your target, in exchange for a detailed written testimonial, a case study with real numbers (anonymized if needed), and two introductions each. Tell them they are founding clients and why. Three documented results convert your career from a resume into a track record, which is the only asset this business runs on.

Owned, earned, then paid.

Consulting is bought on perceived expertise and sold through trust. Your marketing is evidence management: publishing proof you can think, staying visible to the network that already believes in you, and making sure the Google-and-LinkedIn check every buyer runs tells the right story.

CHANNEL, RANKED	WHY IT WORKS HERE	THE FIRST MOVE
LinkedIn (the working channel)	Your buyers, your alumni network, and their feeds; the due-diligence stop for every deal	Three posts a week from real practice: one insight, one story, one point of view
Direct outreach to warm network	Year-one revenue is harvested, not attracted	Five personal messages a day from your 200-name list; track every conversation
A monthly expertise email	Stays in the inbox of people who are not ready yet; deals mature on its schedule	One sharp idea a month, written like a memo to a smart client, never a newsletter blast
Speaking + niche associations	A 25-minute talk is a sales meeting with the whole room at once	Pitch your niche's two conferences and every relevant webinar; one talk per quarter
Case studies with numbers	Buyers do not purchase confidence, they purchase evidence	Document every engagement: situation, action, measured result; publish the sanitized version

FIVE CONTENT PIECES THAT WIN THIS NICHE

- The [function] problems I saw at every company in [number] years, and what they cost
- What I learned in my first 90 days as an independent after a corporate career
- How to know if you need a consultant or a hire (an honest decision framework)
- A teardown of a common [niche] mistake, with the real numbers behind the fix
- The questions I ask in every diagnostic, and why executives cannot answer the third one

THE REVIEW MACHINE

In consulting the review is the testimonial and the reference call. At every engagement's close, while the result is fresh, ask for three sentences in writing: the problem, what changed, the number that moved. Then ask the bigger question: 'who are two people you would feel good introducing me to?' A consultant with ten quantified testimonials and a live referral chain never cold-pitches again.

One unit, one month, no fog.

Two honest snapshots: one mid-size engagement, and a realistic month once the practice is established at roughly 60% billable. The margin numbers look absurd next to any other business in this series. They are accurate; the inventory was already paid for by your career.

ONE UNIT: ONE 10-WEEK ENGAGEMENT (\$30,000)	AMOUNT	A WORKING MONTH: ESTABLISHED SOLO MONTH (60% BILLABLE)	AMOUNT
Engagement fee (milestone-billed)	\$30,000	Engagement revenue (milestones)	\$12,000
Travel and tools (typical, reimbursed less)	-\$900	Retainer clients (2 x \$6,000)	\$12,000
Insurance + overhead share	-\$400	Software, phone, subscriptions	-\$250
Subcontract/research help (if any)	-\$1,500	Insurance	-\$70
Gross profit (~25 working days)	\$27,200	Marketing, travel, events	-\$600
Tax reserve (30%)	-\$8,160	Accountant + admin help	-\$500
Yours, per engagement	\$19,040	Pre-tax profit	\$22,580
		Tax reserve (30%)	-\$6,774
		Owner take-home	\$15,806

BREAK-EVEN

First invoice

With under \$1,000 of startup cost, the first diagnostic covers everything several times over. The real breakeven is psychological: the month your pipeline replaces your paycheck's certainty. Budget six months of living expenses so you never price from fear, because buyers can smell it.

Illustrative figures at typical market rates; your market, prices, and costs will differ. Run YOUR numbers in the One-Page P&L from THE LAUNCHPAD, Module Six. Remember the 25-30% tax reserve on every dollar of profit.

Pre-decided, so motivation is never consulted.

WEEK ONE: FOUNDATIONS

- Exit paperwork reviewed: non-compete, non-solicit, confidentiality
- LLC filed, EIN issued, business bank account open
- Niche statement written: who, what problem, what outcome
- E&O insurance bound
- MSA and SOW templates attorney-reviewed

WEEK TWO: DOORS OPEN

- One-page site live: niche, proof, calendar link
- LinkedIn rewritten from job-seeker to practice owner
- 200-name warm list built from your entire career
- Diagnostic offer defined, priced, and templated
- Former-employer proposal drafted (if exit terms allow)

WEEK THREE: MOMENTUM

- Five warm outreach messages daily, tracked
- Former-employer conversation held
- Two boutique firms approached for subcontract bench
- First LinkedIn posts published (the practice voice)
- Three discovery calls completed with notes

WEEK FOUR: THE SYSTEM

- First diagnostic proposal delivered with a deadline
- Follow-up rhythm set: every open conversation touched weekly
- One PE operating partner or talent network contacted
- Monthly expertise email drafted and sent to the list
- Pipeline reviewed: 15+ live conversations or fix outreach

DAY 30 VERDICT

Green light: one signed engagement or diagnostic, 15+ live conversations, and your former employer or a boutique in real discussion. Yellow: meetings happening but nothing signed: your offer is too vague to buy, sharpen the diagnostic into a fixed scope, fixed fee, fixed start date. Red: under 50 outreach touches made all month: the problem is volume, not market; consulting pipelines are built daily or not at all.

How this business fails, and how it grows.

THE FIVE KILLERS

- ✕ **Pricing from your old salary**
Dividing your salary by 2,080 hours produces a rate that slowly bankrupts you. The 2.5-3x daily multiple covers benefits, bench time, and selling time. Underpricing also signals junior: buyers infer quality from the quote.

- ✕ **The single-client trap**
One client at 100% of revenue is your old job with extra paperwork and a misclassification risk. The moment one client passes 60%, your only job is selling. Diversification is the product you sell yourself.

- ✕ **Selling time instead of outcomes**
Hourly consultants get managed; outcome consultants get trusted. Package the diagnostic, the engagement, and the retainer. The client should buy a result with a date, never a calendar with your name on it.

- ✕ **Stopping the pipeline while delivering**
The feast-famine cycle is self-inflicted: sell hard, deliver heads-down, look up to an empty calendar. Five outreach touches a day, every day, including the busy ones. The pipeline is the practice.

- ✕ **Staying a generalist**
'I do strategy and operations' is a resume, not a practice. Buyers hire the specialist in their exact pain and refer them compulsively. Pick the problem you have solved most often and own it in public.

THREE SCALE PATHS

- 1 **The boutique firm**
Add associates and subcontractors who deliver under your methodology while you sell and oversee. You move from billing days to billing teams: revenue per engagement triples, and you have built something sellable.

- 2 **The productized practice**
Turn the diagnostic into a fixed-price, fixed-scope product with templates and a waitlist. Then layer training, workshops, and a paid community. Income detaches from your calendar one product at a time.

- 3 **The portfolio advisor**
Convert delivery into board seats, advisory retainers, and equity stakes in clients you trust. Five advisory positions at \$4,000-8,000 a month plus upside is the senior endgame: maximum leverage on judgment, minimum hours on delivery.

YOUR FIRST HIRE

A fractional virtual assistant for scheduling, invoicing, proposal assembly, and follow-up tracking at 5-10 hours a week. Every admin hour you reclaim is a billable hour at \$200+. Your second hire is a subcontractor for delivery overflow: the test of whether your methodology lives in documents or only in your head.

THE STAIRCASE CONTINUES

The playbook is the map. The machine is waiting.

Everything this playbook describes, Epic Advisory Group can build with you: the brand, the cinematic website, the entity, the engine. Describe your idea to the Launch Engine and see your business real in about sixty seconds, free.

- The Launch Engine: your idea, built free, in about a minute
- THE ASCENT: Founder Edition: the eight-module course
- Launch-in-a-Box: entity, brand, site, and first campaign, one flat price
- Growth, capital readiness, and the path to the public markets

"There is no right age. There is only the decision."



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