



CAREER DEVELOPMENT MAP

What does **great** look like?

A map for the nine dimensions of brilliant consulting



Where you are, and where you're going

To be the very best at what you do, you first need to know what great looks like. That is what this map is for. The Career Development Map (traditionally called a competency framework) captures the traits, behaviours and skills of the very best consultants, across the nine dimensions that matter most, at every stage of a career.

Its whole purpose is to help you understand where you are today, and where you're going next. Every level is written as behaviour you could see and hear in the room, so progress is never a matter of opinion, and development becomes something you can map. It gives your whole team something to grow against: a development plan for every person, and a benchmark for every hire.

In the pages that follow, you'll meet the Nine Dimensions, and then the complete map for Curiosity, the first of the nine. The other eight are ready and waiting for you on the Showing Up platform.

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The Nine Dimensions of the Very Best Consultants

Over two decades we have carried out frontline research, analysis and testing with more than 11,000 consultants, across a wide range of industries and sectors. We wanted to create a Career Development Map that was memorable: everything you need and nothing you don't, when it comes to understanding what growth looks like. Our research continues to evolve, and the map is rigorously tested.

THINK DIFFERENTLY

Great consultants see what others miss. They love to solve the most complex problems. They create things that did not exist before.

Curiosity



Critical Thinking



Creativity



BUILD TRUST

Great consultants build trust with character and integrity. They inspire others. They work generously alongside colleagues and clients.

Character



Communication



Collaboration



DELIVER IMPACT

Great consultants curate experiences that people remember. They create lasting commercial value. They bring out the very best in everyone.

Curation



Commercial Acumen



Coaching



Curiosity π

See what others are missing

Curiosity is represented by Pi (π), the number that runs on forever. And that is exactly how to look at curiosity: approach your work, and your life, with an open mind and open eyes, and you will see more, learn more, and begin to ask the questions no one else is asking.

The nine dimensions are never perfectly linear. They are always interacting, always connecting with one another, in an almost infinite number of ways. That said, there is a purposeful cadence to how they are arranged. Great thinking comes first because it lays the foundation for trust, and when you think well and you are trusted, you are far more likely to create real impact.

And of the nine, curiosity really is the foundation for everything else, which is why we begin here. In consulting, in client work, and in life as a whole, curiosity determines how you see the world: how open-minded you are, how you spot patterns, how you connect with people, and how you come to understand the way things work, and the way they don't.

"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious."

Albert Einstein, in a letter to Carl Seelig, 1952

Look at the great thinkers, the people who built the future we now live in: engineers, consultants, doctors, nurses, scientists, teachers, architects, inventors, artists. Their backgrounds were wildly different. What united them was a boundless curiosity. And in the world of consulting, we have seen it again and again: the most successful teams, the ones that leave the greatest positive mark on their clients, their communities and the sectors they work in, are the ones that balance the three forms of curiosity.

Epistemic curiosity

Epistemic curiosity comes from the Greek *episteme*, meaning knowledge, and knowledge is exactly what this kind of curiosity is in love with. At its most charming it is a glorious sort of nerdery: the urge to know things in depth, whether about one subject or a hundred unrelated ones. A consultant with strong epistemic curiosity wants to understand a problem properly: the facts, the figures, the history, the data, and the analysis sitting underneath the data. Most people think a layer or two deep. The epistemic among us go several layers deeper.

Diversive curiosity

Diversive curiosity is often the rarest of the three. Where epistemic curiosity digs downward into a subject, diversive curiosity wanders in every direction. It is learning without an agenda, following your instinct through the world and collecting experiences with no immediate use for them in mind. Leonardo da Vinci filled his notebooks with anatomy, water, birds and machines, none of it to a brief, all of it quietly feeding the rest. Steve Jobs wandered into a calligraphy class, and years later that small detour shaped the typography of the first Macintosh. It is the art of collecting dots long before you can see how they will join up. You will know you are in its presence when a client pauses and says, do you know, I have never actually been asked that before.

Empathetic curiosity

Empathetic curiosity is a sincere interest in the people you work with, and the people your work will impact. It is the easiest of the three to neglect, because it is so tempting to spend all your time with the senior people who commissioned the work, and never quite reach the people at the far end of the change, the ones who have to live with it. It is the deliberate choice to see the situation through their eyes, and to care how it feels from where they are standing.

Balancing, respecting, and embracing all three

The best consultants need all three running at once. Most of us have a natural spike, and that is no bad thing. But the people who are brilliantly curious surround themselves with others who fill their gaps, and continuously nurture the forms that come less easily. From the outside it looks deceptively simple: better questions, more time spent with people, and never a hint of interrogation, because people can always tell the difference between being interrogated and being understood. When someone feels genuinely understood, they open up, and as they open up, they begin to trust.

Curiosity π

	1 · DISCOVERING	2 · DEVELOPING	3 · FLUENT	4 · LEADING	5 · PIONEER
Curiosity in consulting is a boundless interest in the client's world: the people, the problems, and how things really work. It is how you come to see what others are missing.	Preparation: Before every meeting you have read all the key documentation and done the research that gives you a robust understanding of the client's world and the purpose of the meeting. Questions: You are unlikely to be leading meetings yet, but you arrive with prepared questions that let you add something real to the conversation. Confidence: When you are unclear about something, you have the confidence to ask, rather than just nodding along. Listening: When people are speaking you listen attentively, you always let them finish, and you can play back what they said and summarise it clearly. Spotting: When something doesn't add up, you notice, and you raise it: with the team after the meeting, or, when the moment is right, there and then with the client.	Everything in Discovering, plus: Preparation: You dig beyond what you were given: their results, their market, what's changed for them lately. Questions: You ask open questions, and you follow the answer with another question rather than moving on to the next one on your list. Listening: You pick up on a hesitation or a half-finished thought, and you have the confidence to ask about it. People: You are beginning to build meaningful relationships across the business and with the client, to the point where they start to turn to you first, before a more senior member of the team. Recognition: You hear your first "that's a good question."	Everything in Developing, plus: Preparation: You keep a living picture of the client's world, maintained between meetings, and you are sharing questions and reflections with the team that evolve how everyone is thinking about the account. Questions: Your questions draw out things the client hadn't planned to say, revealing something of value the team was previously unaware of. Listening: You can spot what is not being said in the room, and you find the right moment to ask about it in a way that builds an even deeper relationship with the client. People: You have built the trust with the core stakeholders to widen your network of contacts across the business, in a way that strengthens both the work and the relationship. Courage: You are able to raise challenging questions that others were reluctant to ask.	Everything in Fluent, plus: Perspective: You understand the client's world as well as they do, and you're starting to bring outside perspectives that they had not thought of. Questions: You ask the question nobody else will, in front of the most senior room, and you've been told "nobody has ever asked us that before." Direction: Meetings change direction because of what you asked. Honesty: You are able to present what the front line told you to senior clients, even when there has been resistance from the core stakeholders to hearing it. Influence: Colleagues start borrowing your habits: your preparation, your notes, and they find greater confidence from learning beside you. Reframing: You've reframed a problem in a way that changed the direction of a whole programme. New ground: You can point to an opportunity that simply didn't exist before your question.	Everything in Leading, plus: Reputation: Clients ask for you by name as a reflection of the way that you think. Questions: Your questions travel: people quote them, and use them to frame how they run meetings. Candour: You run the sessions where clients say what they really think, and their people bring things to you first: "you should hear this." Authority: You're treated as an authority on the client's world well beyond your own account. Teaching: You teach the craft, and the people you coach start hearing "good question" themselves. Frontiers: You open kinds of work the firm had never done before, and clients bring you problems before they've properly formed their thinking. Legacy: The ground you open outlives you: others deliver the work your questions began. Horizon 2 & 3: You have repeatedly opened up Horizon 2 and 3 thinking from the way you look at the world.
The objective, observable response you're likely to see from the client	Client feedback to the senior members of your team is that you are well prepared, professional, and an excellent contributor in meetings. They thank you for your contributions, and they reflect positively on how prepared you were.	Clients start to engage with you directly rather than through senior colleagues. They volunteer context you never asked for. Feedback begins to name specific moments: a question you asked, a thread you noticed and followed. Small extensions of the work start to come your way.	Clients request you for the next piece of work, rather than accepting whoever is assigned. In meetings they answer your questions with things they hadn't planned to share, and in feedback they credit you with spotting things they had missed.	Senior clients bring you problems from outside your scope to get your view, and they repeat your questions inside their own organisation. New workstreams open on the back of conversations you started, and you are introduced into parts of the business the team had no other route into.	Clients approach you directly, often before the work is fully defined, and sometimes before there is any work at all. You are asked for by name in work that was never put out to bid, and client leaders cite you when they explain how their own thinking changed.

Critical Thinking

	1 · DISCOVERING	2 · DEVELOPING	3 · FLUENT	4 · LEADING	5 · PIONEER
What great looks like, level by level					
The objective, observable response you’re likely to see from the client					



The full Critical Thinking map lives on the platform

You get the full framework for every one of the nine dimensions, level by level, when you access the Showing Up platform.

Creativity

	1 · DISCOVERING	2 · DEVELOPING	3 · FLUENT	4 · LEADING	5 · PIONEER
What great looks like, level by level					
	 The full Creativity map lives on the platform You get the full framework for every one of the nine dimensions, level by level, when you access the Showing Up platform.				
The objective, observable response you’re likely to see from the client					

Character

	1 · DISCOVERING	2 · DEVELOPING	3 · FLUENT	4 · LEADING	5 · PIONEER
What great looks like, level by level					
The objective, observable response you're likely to see from the client					



The full Character map lives on the platform

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Communication

	1 · DISCOVERING	2 · DEVELOPING	3 · FLUENT	4 · LEADING	5 · PIONEER
What great looks like, level by level					
The objective, observable response you're likely to see from the client					



The full Communication map lives on the platform

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Collaboration

	1 · DISCOVERING	2 · DEVELOPING	3 · FLUENT	4 · LEADING	5 · PIONEER
What great looks like, level by level					
The objective, observable response you're likely to see from the client					



The full Collaboration map lives on the platform

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Curation

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Commercial Acumen



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The full Coaching map lives on the platform

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