

The screenshot shows the Top-Consultant.com website interface. At the top left, it says 'Top-Consultant's Consultant-News.com'. The main header features a photo of three business professionals. Below the header, there are navigation tabs for 'Latest Consulting News' and 'Consulting Times'. The main content area displays an article titled 'Consultants find inspiration in the oddest places' dated 24/11/2011. The article text discusses Jonathan Chocqueel-Mangan and Tyler Mangan's metaphor of an artisan workshop. To the right of the article is a 'UK Consulting Jobs' sidebar with links for HR Transformation, IT M&A Transaction and Private Equity, Consultant to Manager, Microsoft Enterprise Architects, Managers - Finance & Performance Management, and Engagement Managers and Principals. On the far right, there is a search bar, a 'Keep Informed!' section with a satellite dish image, and a Twitter feed.

Is there room for artisanry in consultancy, asks Mick James, Top-Consultant.com's management consultancy columnist.

### **Consultants find inspiration in the oddest places**

Consultants find inspiration in the oddest places: Jonathan Chocqueel-Mangan of leadership specialists Tyler Mangan found the ideal metaphor in a leather workshop on a cobbled street in France.

"It was all really good quality and I talked to the guy who ran it and found he has customers in Tokyo and Milan and Paris," he says. Surprisingly, the owner had no ambition to ramp up production: "He said, 'I'm an artisan—that's not what I do. I can gain a worldwide market as an artisan,' I thought, what if a consultancy was like that."

For Chocqueel-Mangan, and his co-founder Jana Klimecki, "Does this fit the artisan model?" has become something of a catch phrase.

"We were looking at hiring someone, a real business development type, who was talking about creating a great pipeline and funnelling people through," he said. "But then we thought 'this doesn't feel artisanal,' so we didn't do it."

Instead, Tyler Mangan relies as much as the French artisan on the "Where did you get that lovely

bag?” effect.

“CEOs talk to each other,” says Chocqueel-Mangan. “We love what we do and we are very good at it, and we are big enough and bold enough to work with the top organisations.”

The firm’s approach stems very much from its founders’ experiences, bringing together diverse areas such as big ticket project consultancy, headhunting, organisational psychology and the balanced scorecard—and noticing a major lacuna in the consultancy model.

“How do we know all the change we do fits with what the boardroom are doing, and how does the boardroom’s work translate to the organisation?” says Chocqueel-Mangan. “With some types of transitions, it’s all very well to build the processes and infrastructure but if the leadership team doesn’t have the ability, it doesn’t matter how great the processes are. Equally, it’s no good if you’ve got sclerotic processes.”

Typically, clients would look to a consultancy for process work and a headhunter to build its leadership team. Chocqueel-Mangan sees this split in approach—between building infrastructure and developing leadership capability—as having been imposed by the professional services industry. “Clients in main don’t split them, it’s artificial,” he says. “We work to build process and capability.”

A large part of Tyler Mangan’s business comes from private equity firms, who are very alive to the idea that due diligence should encompass HR issues.

“We help them assess whether this management team can deliver their investment strategy,” says Chocqueel-Mangan. “For example, one CEO was very good at team building; but we saw that as a weakness, because he wouldn’t be very good at building the new, virtual team.”

Sometimes this means challenging clients; effectively, telling them “we don’t think you are up for this.”

“That’s the joy of being a small firm, we can tell them what we really think,” says Chocqueel-Mangan. “We only need a few clients but they have to be great clients—we can’t afford to have bad clients.”

This also means ignoring what Chocqueel-Mangan calls the “little devil that sits on your shoulder—the one that says ‘sell them a project.’ There may not be a project.”

Unsurprisingly, Tyler Mangan is not pursuing the headlong growth strategy of other consultancies:

“We think we can get to 40 with an artisan feel,” he says. “That’s still tiny, and there might be several offices around the world, we could have three offices of 15 or 20 people.”

That means a slightly different proposition to staff: “We don’t hire everyone in the expectation they will become a partner,” says Chocqueel-Mangan. “Lots of people say ‘I love consulting and I love working with clients but I don’t want to abandon my craft to climb the ladder.’”

The people who would struggle, he says, are those who don’t love their craft enough or who don’t have enough content to operate at board level. “We want artisans, people who love their craft and have content they are passionate about, he adds.

The trade-off is a better quality of live, without excessive travel and weekend working: “Everyone gets a research week—like a reading week at university—because we are here to have something to say,” he says. “You can go where you want, if you want to just read and think, there are no deliverables.”

Tyler Mangan tends to hire people with masters degrees rather than MBAs, which adds a certain intellectual rigour to their approach: “We understand what we are reading,” says Chocqueel-Mangan. “For example, an article in the *McKinsey Quarterly* might be a very good article and very high in relevance, but useless as a piece of research. We want work that is highly rigorous and highly relevant and we strive to find people who worry about things like that, who don’t see the world simplistically.”

Fully understanding that the problem is central to Tyler Mangan’s approach: “We need to understand the problem before we start charging you,” says Chocqueel-Mangan. “Consultants in general are pretty clueless about how clients think about price. We say, read the proposal. If it’s more expensive or less expensive than you were expecting then one of us doesn’t understand this. Once we get to a situation where we all know what the problem is, we very rarely have any fee discussions.”

Tyler Mangan also offers an unconditional client satisfaction guarantee (which, Chocqueel-Mangan points out, is every consultancy client’s legal right in any case).

“We offer this guarantee as a way of making sure we are really confident in the client and that we can work with them,” he says. “If you think we’ve only achieved 80% pay us 80%. There are no metrics—the only provision is that you sit down and tell us what we could have done better.”

Can the artisanal approach work in the growth-obsessed consultancy business? Tyler Mangan has certainly nailed their colours to the mast. When I ask Chocqueel-Mangan why the firm has based itself in the largely consultant-free Clerkenwell area of London he delivers the answer like a punchline:

“We’re artisans—we live in the jewellery quarter.”