

How to Evaluate Consulting Firms in the Age of AI

The consulting industry is undergoing a structural transformation driven by AI, automation, and new delivery models. These five considerations provide a practical lens for identifying partners best positioned to deliver value in this evolving environment.

1. Prioritize Product-led and Platform-based Delivery

Leading consulting firms increasingly embed expertise into reusable systems and platforms that accelerate analysis and standardize execution.

Questions to Ask Potential Partners

- ☐ What parts of your work are delivered through reusable platforms or engineered assets, and what still depends entirely on traditional consulting labor?
- ☐ Can you demonstrate how those systems have improved delivery speed, cost efficiency, or the consistency and value of outcomes in prior engagements?
- ☐ How consistently are these platforms reused across your projects and client engagements?

2. Examine Whether AI Is Embedded in Real Delivery

Nearly every consulting firm claims to use AI. The real distinction lies in whether those tools are deeply embedded in delivery workflows or remain confined to isolated experiments and demonstrations.

Questions to Ask Potential Partners

- ☐ Are AI agents or digital twins deployed in active client engagements, or are they confined to your internal pilots and marketing demonstrations?
- ☐ Which specific tasks do AI systems perform (e.g., research, data synthesis, modeling, drafting, monitoring), and how do they alter engagement speed, quality, and staffing structure?
- ☐ How do you measure the performance impact of AI-enhanced delivery compared with traditional approaches?
- ☐ Is AI usage standardized across your teams, or does it remain ad hoc and team-dependent?

3. Assess Talent Models for Flexibility and Capability

High-performing consulting firms are shifting away from traditional staffing pyramids toward delivery models centered on domain specialization, technical expertise, and AI-enabled analysis.

Questions to Ask Potential Partners

- ☐ Which tasks within the engagement are enabled or performed by AI systems, and how does that change team composition and delivery speed?
- ☐ Are domain specialists and technical practitioners embedded directly in your delivery teams, or brought in only occasionally as advisors?
- ☐ How do you access niche expertise that may not exist within your core staff, such as through partner ecosystems, global networks, or other sources of distributed talent?

4. Evaluate How Delivery Is Orchestrated

Modern consulting engagements increasingly embed strategy into execution through digital tools, automation systems, and technical specialists who translate insights into operational change.

Questions to Ask Potential Partners

- ☐ Who is responsible for orchestrating human expertise, AI systems, and internal platforms throughout your engagement life cycle?
- ☐ What does a typical engagement workflow in your firm look like (from data ingestion through implementation), and where does automation materially alter execution?
- ☐ How are AI-generated outputs reviewed, validated, and governed before they influence client decisions or operational systems?

5. Evaluate Whether Firms Can Reinvent Their Own Business Model

Consulting firms guiding clients through transformation must demonstrate that they can evolve their own operating models, pricing structures, and delivery systems.

Questions to Ask Potential Partners

- ☐ What concrete changes has your firm made to its pricing model, service mix, or intellectual property strategy in the past several years?
- ☐ Has your firm begun shifting portions of its work away from billable hours toward outcome-based pricing, subscriptions, or platform-supported services?
- ☐ How quickly do new capabilities move from experimentation to standardized client delivery within your organization?
- ☐ Has your firm demonstrated a willingness to sunset legacy practices that no longer create differentiated value?