



Assessments in a Nutshell

What

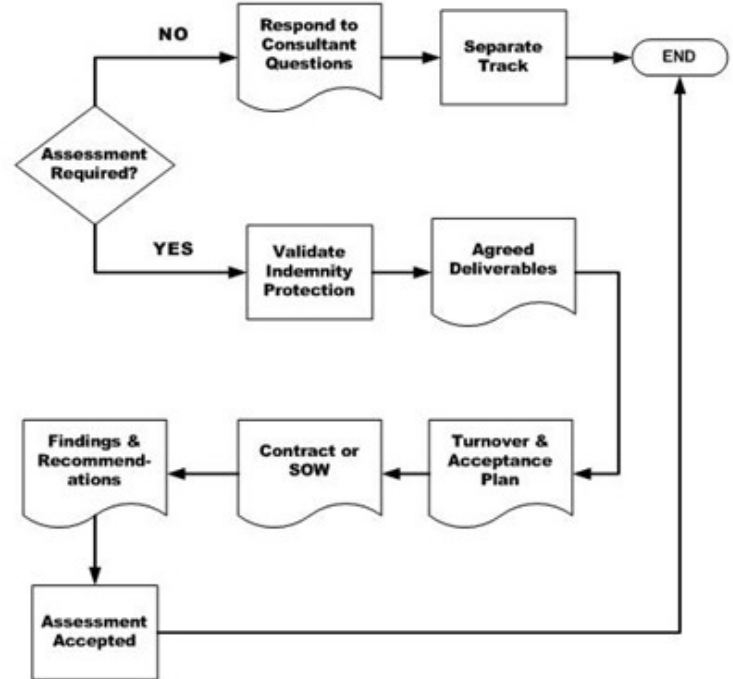
When engaging a consultant for design and implementation services (and especially for processes) it's common practice to start with an assessment.

To be perfectly frank, assessments are revenue generators for consultants. There are types of engagements in which assessments are required, and there are types when assessments bring little to no value to an engagement.

The key question: is your goal to create processes from scratch? If the answer is yes, then an assessment is of dubious value because the findings of such an assessment will be that you need the process.

On the other hand, if your goal is to improve existing processes, or to obtain independent verification and validation of plans, strategies, operational efficiencies, etc., then an assessment is warranted.

Decision and Workflow



How

Assuming that an assessment is warranted. Here are some factors and safeguards that you need to consider:

1. Does the consultant carry professional indemnity insurance to cover errors and omissions? Obtain evidence that (1) they have a valid, up-to-date policy, and (2) is their coverage sufficient to cover the impact that their potential errors will cost you.
2. Ensure that you understand the deliverables that will be associated with the assessment findings and recommendations. Include scope, schedule, and any specific format that you deem to be of value. Go over these items with the consultant and then describe them in the contract or statement of work between you and the consultant. Factors:
 - ensure that each task in the consultant's assessment plan of action has either a deliverable or work product that will be a part of a deliverable
 - agree to a timeline and maximum hours to be expended
 - agree on any penalties or bonuses based on work quality
3. Establish deliverable turnover and acceptance criteria (i.e., what the deliverables will cover, the limits on reviews and approvals, and an agreed upon acceptance and signoff checklist with those specifics.

Benefits

Business

1. Cost avoidance for activities that do not require an assessment.
2. When an assessment is required, assures that work performed conforms to contract or Statement of Work requirements.
3. Assessment findings and recommendations can provide basis for, or validate, cost containment or avoidance strategies in connection with process improvement or other IT plans.

Technical

1. Provides expert opinion and recommendations for internally developed plans and strategies.
2. Verifies and/or validates technical assumptions, or points out risks that were not internally identified.
3. Identifies resource, technology and/or process gaps and provides remedial recommendations.