
So You Want to Be a Consultant: Lessons From a Veteran



Key Highlights

1. Are you considering a career in management consulting after your MBA degree? Find out what it truly means to succeed in this field by learning about the storied career of Dr. Eli Konorti, who now runs his own management consulting business.
2. Dr. Konorti's extensive work experience in management consulting spans over three decades. The secret to his success might not be jumping from one job to the next. Eli has only had three jobs in his entire professional career. These include Koret, a division of Levi Strauss, as an Industrial Engineer, Ernst & Young as a Consultant, and Stork Craft Manufacturing as President & CEO.
3. A professional Engineering degree, an MBA, a Doctorate degree in Business Administration, and training in Change Management from Harvard prepared him to instruct master's degree courses to students in Vancouver and both share and transfer his knowledge and expertise to the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs.

Introduction

Having achieved both academic prowess and exceptional professional growth in management consulting, Eli walks a path less travelled in business management. Eli bridges the gap between

academics and practical knowledge of business management for his students and mentees by treading both paths to their full capacity.

Eli's doctorate degree in business administration alone has led him to a long-standing teaching career. But he has also had a bustling career in management consulting spanning over three decades and hands-on business management experience as President and CEO of a manufacturing business. In this article, we dive into how Eli acquired the skills, knowledge, and experience required to become a sought-after senior consultant management solutions expert and advisor.

Management Expertise

Management consultants like Dr. Konorti work with business executives to take an aerial view of a company or organization through detailed assessments to identify their unique challenges and then develop and implement solutions to tackle them.

You need multiple skill sets to become a successful management consultant. For example, it helps if you have strong analytical and problem-solving skills, sound resource management skills, and a deep understanding of business that can be carried into multiple industries.

Eli's academic achievements include a long list of degrees, beginning with attending a change management program at Harvard to a doctorate degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix. Coupled with an Industrial Engineering and Management degree and an MBA in between. However, what sets him apart from his fellow academics is his expansive professional career and the level of success he's seen in his work life while also teaching at various academic institutions in Vancouver.

Eli started his career as an Industrial Engineer for Levi Strauss when he moved to Vancouver from Israel in 1979. Three years later, he joined Ernst and Young (EY) as a consultant, where he stayed for eleven years, becoming a consulting partner. He then joined Stork Craft as President and CEO during a financially stressful time for the company and stayed there for nearly a decade. After these three jobs, Eli founded a management consulting company called Advantage Management Solutions or AMS for short.

"Theory is theory — the real world works very differently."

Eli believes that theory is just the foundation. Upon the basis of this foundation, one can begin to interpret the real-world problems of business management and management consulting. According to Eli, tackling these problems in real life and real time requires an altogether different level of understanding and expertise that can only be honed over time, combining practical experience and theory.

Ernst & Young

Konorti acknowledges that he owes much of his success to the eleven years he spent at Ernst and Young. He started off as a consultant and climbed up the ranks to become a partner. Here, he

gained invaluable hands-on experience by working with clients in many industries, including manufacturing, construction, wholesale and distribution, and financial services, to name a few.

In fact, Stork Craft was one of his clients while he was still working at Ernst & Young. He was first hired as a turnaround consultant to help Stork Craft overcome a financial crisis. The owners decided to sell the business, but suitable buyers were hard to come by. Eventually, master entrepreneur and philanthropist Joe Segal offered to buy the business and asked Eli to join as a shareholder and President & CEO.

Stork Craft

Eli was engaged by Stork Craft to turn around the business. First on the agenda was to conduct a bumper-to-bumper organizational assessment to identify root cause problems and opportunities for improvement. The assessment was thorough, including management resources, technology, strategic environment, and business processes and included nearly 100 strategic recommendations. Very quickly, the business turned around and became a world-class company selling to many countries across the globe.

"I am good at my job because I understand what keeps my clients up at night because I've been there and done that."

Eli talks about having many sleepless nights worrying about the different business processes that may lead to a problem for the company. He also spoke about not skipping a single day of work in his nine-year tenure at Stork Craft. Speaking from experience, he says a good organizational culture, a can-do attitude, and a 24/7 schedule are what it takes to make any company successful.

He believes the key to his success is that he can empathize with how hectic and tough it can get to carry the burden of running a business successfully. Having run a business himself, he is uniquely positioned to understand the pain points and needs of his clients.

"The secret to my success is not technical. I empathize with my clients, understand their needs, and tailor my solutions to meet those needs."

Eli still has the assessment report consisting of the recommendations he made to help Stork Craft. He says he scribbled a "done" next to each recommendation he implemented. Every recommendation, small or big, low-hanging or difficult to implement, adds up over time and helps achieve the vision one sets for the organization.

Experiential Learning

"Leave your books at home!" sums up Eli's approach to teaching MBA students. It's what we all secretly want our professors to say in business school. As an MBA student myself, I can vouch for that. He almost reminds me of the fictional professor John Keating, played by the great Robin Williams in *Dead Poets Society*, who tears the pages out of a book in a classroom and encourages his students to break all the rules and give way to creative learning and critical

thinking instead of memorizing a bunch of stuff that we might never use in our practical work life.

Dr. Konorti stumbled into teaching after he completed his doctoral studies at the University of Phoenix and was approached by the same institution to teach their MBA students. He had just left Stork Craft at this point and was ready to retire. He had some free time, so he started teaching at the University of Phoenix upon persuasion from his wife. Eli eventually ended up teaching at many other institutions in Vancouver, including the University of British Columbia, Fairleigh Dickinson University, and the University Canada West.

Ask any MBA student, and they will tell you that this is the kind of professor students really want to learn from because Eli has done and seen it all. After all, business administration degrees should prepare you for the real world. Learning from a professor who, apart from academic knowledge, also has valuable industry experience and can give you five industry examples for every concept he teaches you is the kind of beyond-the-textbook understanding all MBA students crave.

Eli's teaching style is inevitably intertwined with real-life examples of problems that he saw, identified, and had to solve throughout his management consulting and President & CEO careers. You learn a lot more through this style of teaching, where you hear examples of how a certain theory or method was applied to a real-life business problem and the results it produced. You understand that the context of the business problem is an essential factor, too. For example, not every business or management solution works for every kind of business problem or any kind of industry, and such things cannot be taught through textbooks.

Conclusion

Eli's career graph shows a strong work ethic and a people-centric approach toward managerial problem-solving. Honestly, Eli's expertise cannot even be boxed into management consulting alone. It would be more accurate to say that Dr. Konorti specializes in all aspects of planning and implementing simple to complex solutions in both the private and public sectors. At the core, he is a problem-solving and critical-thinking mind who assists organizations in achieving measurable top to bottom-level improvements.

Eli's personal mission is to mentor and guide the new generation of leaders and entrepreneurs. They would definitely benefit from his expertise in change management, operations management, finance, marketing and sales and strategic planning. He continues to consult and teach.

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