



Key skills and behaviours for public affairs consultants

Skills assessment

The key skills of a Public Affairs consultant



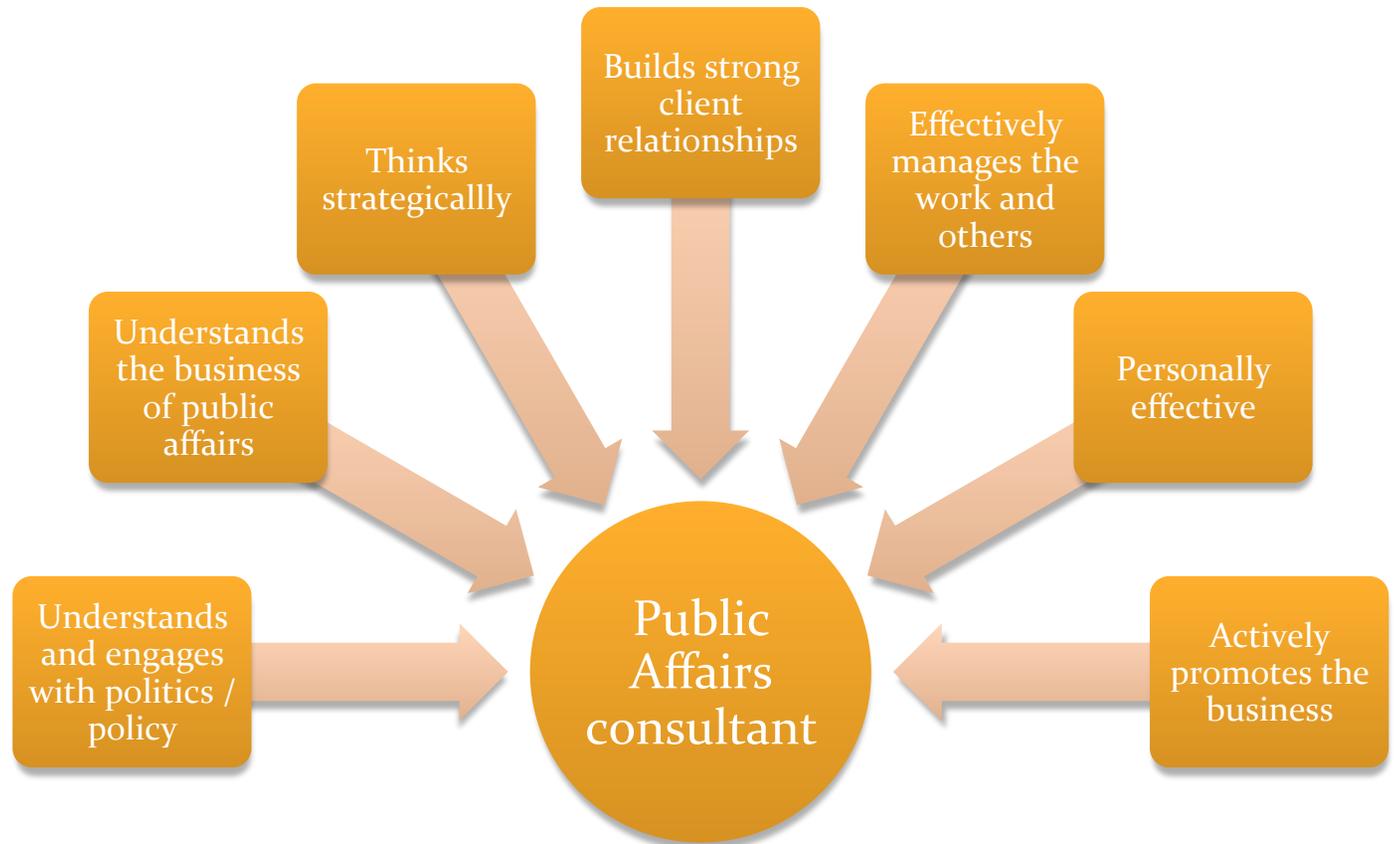
Structuring your development

This exercise is designed to help you structure your development; to explore the strengths you have, as well as the challenges you face, and to set short, medium and long-term goals for their progression.

Stage 1: PRIORITY AREAS

Take a moment to consider the kind of public affairs practitioner you would like to be. What does 'great' look like? What skills does this practitioner have?

The model looks at seven key areas. Each of these areas has a number of associated behaviours and skills, and these are listed below.



Stage 2: ASSESSING WHERE YOU ARE NOW

Each of the priority areas has a number of associated behaviours and skills. There may be others that you would want to add, and room has been left to allow you to do so.

Against each behavior score your sense of satisfaction – on a scale of 1 to 10 where do you feel you are NOW? A score of 10 would mean you are completely satisfied. 5 would mean there's a significant amount missing, score one and that's an area you are very unhappy about.

Scores should be adjusted according to the level assessed – the more senior the consultant or team, the higher the expectation.

Workshops that relate to each priority area are listed on the right.

Priority area	Behaviours	Satisfaction score (0-10)	Relevant workshops
Understands and engages with politics / policy	Invests time in understanding the political environment		Strategic Thinking Working with Legislation
	Builds a set of core relationships in the political and/or policy spheres		
	Seeks to deepen knowledge of identified sectors or area of expertise		
	Understands how decisions are made and influenced (i.e. policy, legislation, regulation, funding and contract award)		
	Can identify the most relevant stakeholders for a particular issue, assess their relevance and motivations		
	Understands the interplay between the media, social media and politics, and the role of media and digital relations		
	May engage with a particular political party in their personal capacity, but professionally retains objectivity.		
	Total		

Priority area	Behaviours	Satisfaction score (0-10)	Relevant workshops
Understands the business of public affairs	Knows that the value of public affairs lies in its ability to help an organisation solve problems or seize opportunities, rather than the simple provision of services		Growing the business Taking the lead on accounts
	Can communicate the agency's offer and experience in sufficient detail to represent the business		
	Understands what makes an organisation hire an agency, expand the brief, or terminate the contract		
	Remains alert to signals that accounts are vulnerable or at risk, and takes steps to address the issues and/or raise awareness		
	Understands what makes an account profitable, how to estimate service levels, and develop an effective quote.		
	Knows the facts for their accounts i.e. key objectives, scope of contract, contracted and actual service levels		
	Total	/ 60	
Thinks strategically	Understands and seeks to draw out the client's business objectives and the underlying rationale for public affairs activity		Thinking strategically
	Understands and can articulate the client's most critical issues and challenges		
	Seeks to provide the best guidance they are capable of based on a thorough analysis of the situation and available evidence.		
	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the difference between a strategic and tactical approach		
	Tries to always provide a fresh perspective, to seek out and welcome new ideas, and have the confidence to listen and consider others' suggestions		
	Remains proactive and alert, keeping the approach under review and recommending adjustments when necessary.		
	Total	/ 60	

Priority area	Behaviours	Satisfaction score (0-10)	Relevant workshops	
Building and managing client relationships	Builds trust by being honest, consistent and reliable, always meeting their commitments.		Essential management skills Building the client relationship Building rapport with clients	
	Takes time to understand the client and to cultivate the relationship, adjusting their style and communication where necessary			
	Is responsive to clients and accessible, helping to provide the support they need in a timely fashion, so as to become part of the decision making process			
	Listens, asks good questions, and seeks to fully understand the situation			
	Willing to be firm with clients and to provide challenge on important issues			
	When faced with a problem, they consider what they would do and what the solution might be			
	Can acknowledge the need for, and bring in, senior counsel where necessary, whilst retaining responsibility			
	Total	/ 70		
Management & Leadership	Provides visible leadership on their accounts even in the presence of more senior consultants		Essential management skills Taking the lead on accounts Building and managing a team Building rapport with clients and colleagues	
	Encourages, motivates and shares knowledge with those they work with			
	Delegates effectively, creating opportunities for others to take the initiative and to succeed			
	Cultivates team ownership of accounts and issues, and co-ordinated action			
	Deals with the causes of issues on accounts rather than fire fighting the symptoms			
	Deals with mistakes fairly, ensure that lessons are learned and then move on			
	Total	/ 60		

Priority area	Behaviours	Satisfaction score (0-10)	Relevant workshops
Actively promotes the business	Pursues opportunities to build relationships in the industry		Growing the business
	Stays in touch with and maintains relationships with core contacts, and seeks to add value to each relationship		
	Engages in networking activities that provide an opportunity to build their reputation and the agency's.		
	When pursuing new business, demonstrates a willingness to work with others and share the relationship, actively seeking out and drawing in those who could bring value		
	Total	/ 40	
Personal effectiveness	Sets and sticks to priorities, balancing the needs of different clients and the agency		Time management Project management Effective team work
	Manages their time, making time for "important, not urgent" activities, and avoids continuous firefighting		
	Delegates effectively, freeing up time so they can focus on where they can add value, whilst building the capability of others		
	Communicates effectively both in writing and in person, presenting their thinking succinctly, with clear recommendations		
	Takes time for their own development, to renew their skills, and undertake new challenges		
	Reflects on own strengths and weaknesses, knowing where they are now and where they need to go in the future		
	Patient with themselves and others and awareness that change takes time		
	Total	/ 70	

STAGE 3: IDENTIFYING AREAS OF FOCUS

Take a moment to review the table. Some areas may have scored highly, others less well. Decide what this means for you, and what you'd like to do about it. What areas are most important to you? What areas will you choose to focus on?