



THE INSTITUTE OF THE MOTOR INDUSTRY

Motor Industry Consultants (MIC) Group

Background

The IMI's principal objective is to enhance the recognition and status of its members and is, therefore, offering all members an opportunity to network within specialist teams called *Shared Interest Groups (SIG)*.

One such group is the *Motor Industry Consultants* group (MICg), which has been established for those members who operate as consultantsⁱ, providing a valuable service to the industry promoting best practice, delivering training and offering expert advice.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the MICg is to provide a means of recognition, differentiation and verification for motor industry consultants. By applying independent evaluations to MIC group members the IMI has developed, and continues to expand, a database of verified consultants that is available to all who wish to purchase specific skills and expertise. The MICg will provide a reliable point of reference, with a respected code of practice, representing consistency of quality and standards and defining itself as a first point of contact for specialist industry providers.

The IMI Offer to Consultants

The *Motor Industry Consultants* group has the potential for rapid growth as more and more professionals turn to consultancy as a career option. With the objective of improving skills and knowledge throughout the industry as a whole, the IMI is perfectly positioned to act as operational sponsor and can provide the communications infrastructure required for the ongoing success and expansion of the group.

The *Motor Industry Consultants* group currently has 168 active members. If these consultants meet certain criteria they will be eligible for inclusion on the IMI database. Although the IMI is not endorsing the work carried out by these consultants. It must be clear that the IMI is identifying these individuals as a group of consultants who have demonstrated their competence and are committed to working ethically. This is, in effect, another form of recognition for individuals.

MICg meetings are held four times each year. Events are organised, and generally hosted, by the IMI and usually revolve around a core, topical subject. The meetings have two principal objectives:

- To provide relevant information and enable members to share best practice;
- To provide an opportunity for members to network with their peers.

Inclusion on the IMI Consultant's Database

Some of the MICg participants (40) have sought further recognition and promotional opportunities by subjecting themselves to the scrutiny of the MICg application process. This involves completing an application form which must be submitted with supporting evidence of qualitiesⁱⁱ, qualifications and experience.

MICg Application Process

The application form, together with supporting evidence, is passed to the membership department. The validity of claimed qualifications is checked and membership records are updated. The application is then endorsed with the signature and comments of Caroline West and passed to the Selection Panel (see details below). The Selection Panel will verify any claims of experience by checking references and collecting clients' testimonials. The Panel can also request the support of experts to verify any specialist claims of expertise. The Panel may request further information from the applicant and can refer the complete application for resubmission. All applications require at least 3 signatures - 2 from panel members, and Caroline West's.

The Minimum Criteria:

1. IMI membership;
2. Minimum of one year's experience as a consultant in field of expertise;
3. Attendance at 1 MICg meeting in any 12 month period;
4. Proof of a minimum of £500k Professional Indemnity Insurance;
5. Proof of a minimum of £500k Legal Protection Insurance;
6. Evidence of a client list;
7. Evidence of adequate financial controls eg a correlation between quotations and invoices, consistency in pricing and good debtor controls.
8. Endorsements from clients that support claims of expertise;
9. Review of consultant's membership to be undertaken every 5 years.

Steps:

1. IMI member completes application – submits with supporting evidence;
2. Administrator to collect and file all evidence and contact existing clients for endorsement (this is done by the Panel at the moment);
3. Verified application is submitted to the Selection Panel (further checks can be applied including asking for an expert opinion);

4. Candidate is either elected or advised that more evidence is required – appeals can be submitted to the Membership Standards & Grading Committee (MSGC);
5. Administrator will continue to check clients – ongoing.

MICg Structure

The Selection Panel

The remit of the MIC Selection Panel is to scrutinise and evaluate applications from consultants, who are IMI members, for membership of the MIC group. The Selection Panel comprises a Chair and at least three members who are already MIC members and who wish to volunteer their services for the Panel. In addition, the Panel has, at its disposal, the input of experts from a range of backgrounds to assist with the selection process. Each application is verified by the Group Administrator then processed by one Panel member who can either conduct the selection process remotely (e.g. email) or in person in scheduled meetings.

Chair and Administration

The Chair of the MIC group is elected for a period of six months, is a member of the MIC Selection Panel and is responsible for organising and chairing two MIC meetings. The Chair is assisted by a Chair Elect, the MIC Secretary and the MIC Administrator.

The Responsibilities of the Chair Include:

- Considering, in conjunction with the Selection Panel, proposed agenda items then finalising and overseeing circulation of the agenda;
- Ensuring appropriate preparation for meetings by circulating agenda, together with written background information, well in advance of scheduled meetings and checking that those responsible for agenda items know their roles;
- Chairing the meeting (more details below);
- Evaluating the meeting:
 - gathering feedback from MIC members on what went well and what needs improvement and using feedback to alter procedures, change the method of chairing and plan future board meetings;
- Follow-up with those assigned tasks.

The Group Secretary

The Group Secretary should be a senior member of the MIC group and will be employed by or contracted to the IMI the position should be held for one year.

The Responsibilities of the Group Secretary Include:

- Acting as main point of contact for the Group and the IMI;
- Organising meetings at the request of the Chair, which includes:
 - preparing agenda
 - circulating agenda
 - collating any background information and ensuring this is made available when required
- Circulating application forms to the Selection Panel;
- Representing the views of the MIC group to the IMI and the industry;
- Aiding customers when selecting consultants from the database;
- Overseeing the building, development and maintenance of the database;
- Overseeing the development and maintenance of the website.

The Responsibilities of the Chair Elect:

- To assist the Chair in all matters and ensure that continuity is maintained when they take over as Chair.

The Key Skills of the Chair Elect:

- As for Chair.

The Group Administrator:

The Group Administrator is employed by the IMI and has additional SIG responsibilities outside the MIC group.

The responsibilities of the Group Administrator include:

- Booking events;
- Maintenance of the MIC database;
- Maintenance of the MIC website;
- Acting as central point of contact for group members;
- PA to the Chair and Group Secretary;
- Minuting meetings;
- Authentication and processing of applications;
- Maximising PR for the group.

ⁱ A Definition Of A Consultant

A consultant (from the latin consultus meaning "legal expert") is a professional who provides expert advice in a particular domain or area of expertise such as accountancy, technology, the law, human resources, marketing, medicine, finance, public affairs, communication, or more esoteric areas of knowledge, for example engineering of different kinds, scientific specialties such as materials science, instrumentation, avionics, and stress analysis.

Ways In Which Consultants Work

Often a consultant provides expertise to clients who require a particular type of knowledge or service for a specific period of time, thus providing an economy to the client. In other situations, companies implementing a major project may need additional experienced staff to assist with increased work during that period.

More recently the term is also used somewhat euphemistically for temporary staff. That resource is only temporarily employed by a company to augment the company's core set of employees without providing any unique expertise. This usually indicates that the consultant could be expended when demand for that particular skill diminishes, though this expendability is sometimes recompensed with higher pay.

Sometimes a consultant is not an independent agent but is a partner or an employee of a consultancy, that is a company that provides consultants to clients on a larger scale or in multiple, though usually related, skill areas. This has advantages both to the client and to the consultant by:

- Providing a pool of talent that can be quickly mobilised as required
- Reassuring the client about the quality of the consultants supplied
- Giving the client access to the experience and methodologies of the whole consultancy rather than an individual
- Introducing the consultant to new experiences and techniques which may, eventually, permeate through the consultancy as a whole

A consultant giving career advice and training to an individual or a team is often termed a coach, and a consultant assisting an organisation to develop a new strategy or solve a particular problem is sometimes referred to as a facilitator.

Strategy consultants are common in upper management in many industries. There are also independent consultants who act as interim executives with decision-making power under corporate policies or statutes. They may sit on specially constituted boards or committees.

ⁱⁱ The Most Common Qualities of a Successful Consultant:

- They are much more pro-active;
- They are more client centred than self centred;
- Their objectives are more to do with resolving problems and educating clients – not just getting the business;
- They treat client interactions as partnerships, shared ventures and learning experiences;
- They are more persistent and find ways to overcome problems;
- They have positive feelings, think positively and respond to challenge;

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- They enjoy dealing with clients, create the right frame of mind and don't judge their failings negatively;
 - They are more focussed on the big picture but make sure they understand how the detail fits;
 - They will challenge views of senior people and don't just tell you what you want to hear;
 - They network, keep updated and have a breadth of knowledge;
 - They act in the best interests of the client – even it involves referring business to another consultant;
 - They document, measure and feedback.