

When is the ***Right Time*** to Bring in Operations Consultants?

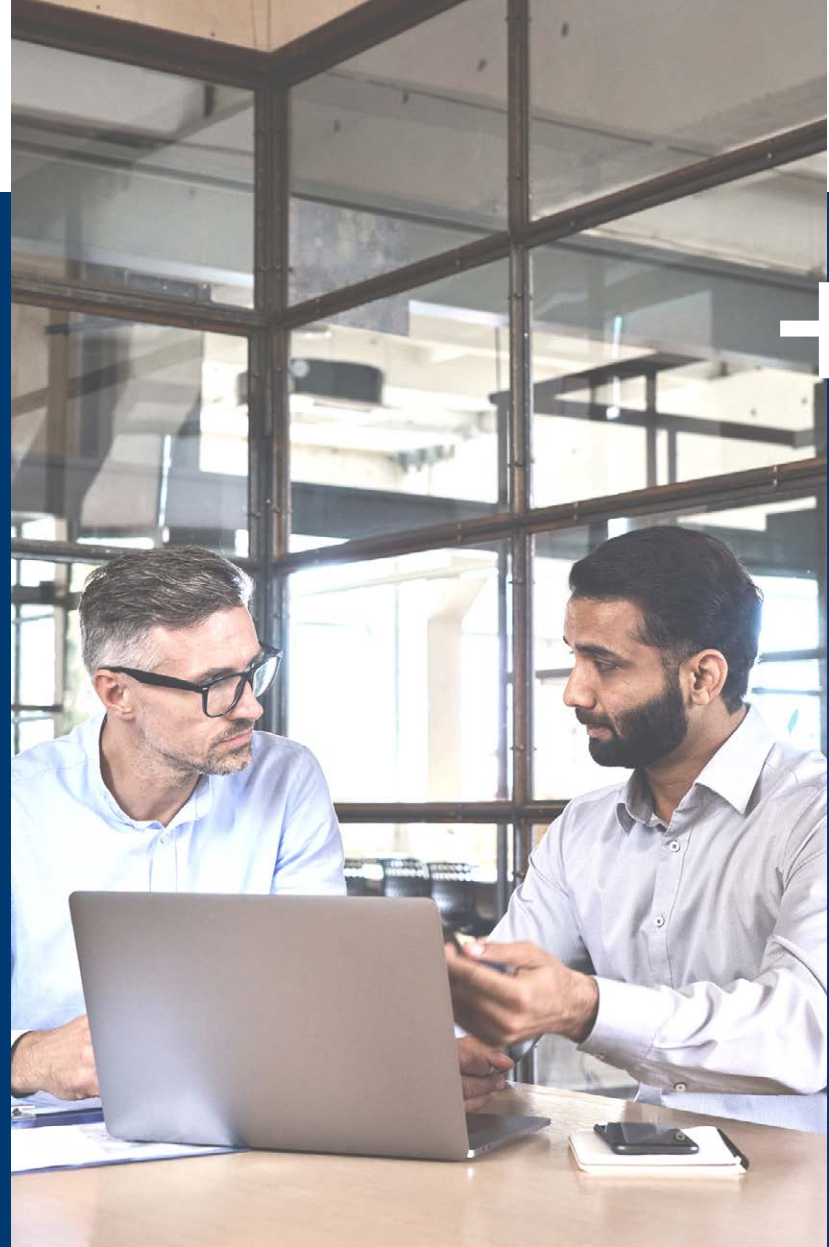


USC CONSULTING
GROUP™

Empowering. Performance.

When is it time to bring in an operations consultant? USC Consulting Group has been helping businesses with process improvements for 55+ years, and we find many prospective clients aren't sure when it makes sense to bring us on board. In general terms, it boils down to dissatisfaction with the status quo, problems they can't seem to overcome, and challenges they're not equipped to solve. But, like many things in life, it's not that simple.

In this eBook, we'll highlight the most common reasons businesses turn to operations management consultants, explain why it makes sense, and bust some common myths that prevent people from seeking outside help.

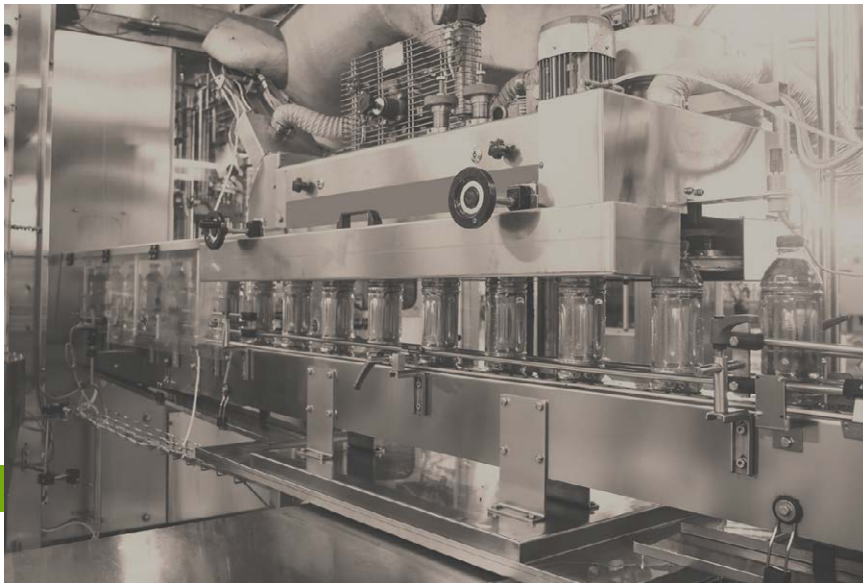


What is an operations consultant?

Operations consulting, simply put, is a discipline designed to improve your company's internal operations and processes, making them more efficient, streamlined and, ultimately, profitable.

Operations consultants are outside experts who can look at your operations with a fresh set of eyes. If your business has a problem or obstacle you can't solve — a slowdown in throughput, trouble on the line, machinery problems, supply chain issues, demand outweighing supply and more — it's time to bring in an operations consultant. Operations consultants will first look at your current operations model, systems and day-to-day processes of getting the job done.

USC Consulting Group's operational excellence experts talk with frontline workers, executives and everyone in between. Listening, being the ear doctors, as we term it, is a big part of the job. We employ methodologies like Lean Six Sigma, SIOP, the Five Ms and other tactics to uncover what's bedeviling your operations and create ways to solve those problems.



Common myths about consulting: BUSTED!

MYTH:

Operations consulting is only for the manufacturing sector

USC Consulting Group works within a wide range of industries, including food & beverage, mining & metals, building products, chemical processing, forestry products, life sciences, oil & gas, transportation & logistics, private equity, and yes, manufacturing.

BUSTED!!

MYTH:

Consultants work only with the C-suite

We meet with the top brass, but the secret weapon to our success is getting down on the shop floor and listening to your frontline employees. Involving them from the outset is the key as ultimately they are your change agents.

BUSTED!!

When should I bring in a consultant?

USC Consulting Group has been empowering operational excellence for more than half a century, and with that, we've been exposed to various situations around the world. While each business and situation is different, we find companies seek us out due to one or more of these common reasons.

Current processes aren't getting the job done. When your tried-and-true processes aren't delivering the expected results, costs are creeping up and the bottom line is flattening out, it's time to take a hard look at why. Uncovering those reasons oftentimes takes a seasoned detective.



MYTH:

Consultants offer cookie-cutter advice

Every company is unique, even if they work in the same industry. You can't just overlay one company's solution onto another company's problem. USC Consulting Group uses tried-and-true techniques that we customize and tailor to each individual challenge or situation.

BUSTED!!

You need fresh eyes. You know what they say about forests and trees. Sometimes, people are simply too close to the process to spot the trouble, inefficiencies or hidden opportunities to improve. Fortunately, that's our specialty.

Objectivity. Those fresh eyes also bring objectivity. Operations consultants are unbiased, third-party advisors who aren't involved in a company's internal politics or fray. This is especially valuable when dealing with people who aren't receptive to transformational change. These may be senior tenured employees whose feathers can get ruffled when change is proposed, especially if that change involves *"the way we've always done it."* The change recommendations go down easier when delivered from an outside voice of reason.

Process improvement expertise. It's a fair bet most companies don't have a team of black belt experts in Lean Six Sigma on staff. The methodology for increasing speed of throughput while also decreasing waste requires a delicate balance that takes years to perfect. Operations consultants are experts in Lean Six Sigma and other methodologies designed to bring about process improvements; you don't have to be.

When you don't know if it's time to upgrade assets.

Upgrading machinery in a manufacturing plant is an enormously costly endeavor. But not every problem can be solved by upgrading to the latest and greatest technology. Looking at your assets — and your processes — with a critical eye can help determine whether it's the machine or the process that needs to be upgraded.

Time and workload snags. If you know you need process improvements but simply can't dedicate the time or in-house personnel to the task, an outside consultant can



get that job done quickly. By using consultants, you can allow your teams to perform their core functions while the consultants facilitate the improvements, training your team along the way.

Resistance to change. Change is difficult under the best of circumstances. It takes skill and expertise to manage the process effectively so those changes stick and ultimately lead to your goals.

Planned shutdowns or outages. In operations that run 24/7/365, it's necessary to conduct regular outages for equipment maintenance and other factors that head off problems before they become crises. These planned downtimes are essential to ensure against any unplanned downtime.

When you need to reduce operating costs or improve throughput and efficiency. It boils down to this. Companies want to be more efficient and increase throughput. Operations consultants can be the 'horsepower' your team needs to achieve improvements quickly and effectively.



MYTH:

Consultants think they know best

This may be the most common beef out there for companies considering or avoiding hiring an operations consulting firm — consultants swoop in, tell everyone what they're doing wrong and offer their lofty advice on how to fix it. When USC Consulting Group undertakes a new project, our first job is to listen and learn. The more we learn, the better we can provide assistance to a client's operations.

BUSTED!!

Areas of expertise

Every project has unique circumstances and endless variables, but there are some common problems operations consultants tackle on a regular basis.

Process improvement. This is USC Consulting Group's specialty. We help companies make their processes more efficient by eliminating wasteful practices, finding lagging indicators in their processes, and uncovering hidden opportunities for efficiency that you might not see.

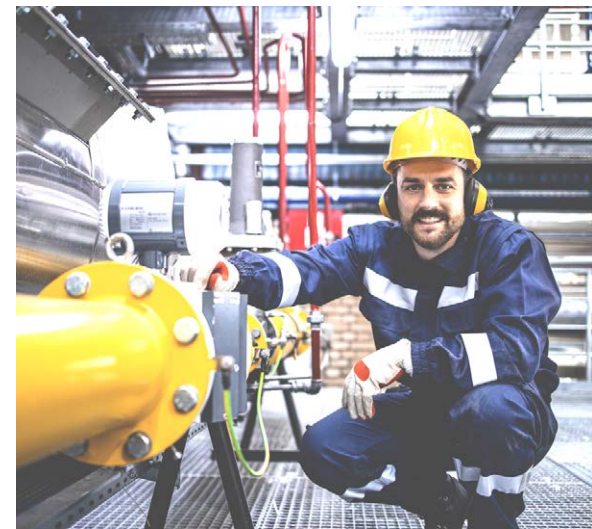
Improving manufacturing cycle time. Cycle time is how long it takes to complete a unit of product, from the beginning of the manufacturing process until the product is ready to ship. Quickening the pace can mean streamlining the process as a whole, improving equipment and systems, investing in employee training, and more. Operations consultants enable your team to manufacture products in the least amount of time while maintaining the utmost quality.

Outage management.

Outages are necessary in some industries, but they are not all the same and can be incredibly complex. When done wrong, they can cost companies money and time. Planned outage management is the key to shortening downtime and getting back to business quicker.

Lean Six Sigma. Lean and Six Sigma are widely used process methodologies.

Two sides of the same coin, Lean looks at making processes more efficient and reducing lead times, while Six Sigma focuses on cutting down on defects. Both are useful goals when aiming to optimize your processes, throughput and your bottom line. Together, they are a powerful force in achieving operational efficiency. But they take years to master. USC Consulting Group has a team of black belts in LSS who train your employees in the process.



MYTH:

Consultants set it and forget it

Some might. We don't.
We want to make sure the
changes we implement
are sustainable, thus
we train, educate, support and
empower your team to ensure continuity of
operational excellence.

BUSTED!!

SIOP. SIOP, or Sales, Inventory and Operations Planning, is a method we use at USC Consulting Group that emphasizes inventory as a strategic tool to allow businesses to get a better look at their operations and formulate superior strategy decisions. SIOP takes advantage of the wealth of digital data available to business owners to gain a strategic advantage. Having the ability to capture, analyze, integrate and interpret high-quality data is the key to staying ahead of the market. The aim is to achieve process automation and glean predictive analytics, which allow you a clearer look at your operations to make better-informed decisions.

Supply chain management and optimization. Most industries have been bedeviled by supply chain disruption. Helping your business through that disruption can be an invaluable service. It's about finding solutions for time, pricing, production, inventory and information.

Change management. When thinking about change management, it's natural to think of change coming from outside forces. Economy shifts. Supply chain disruptions. Even sudden changes in demand for what you produce. But some change comes internally, as well. Longtime leaders get their gold watches and retire. Companies restructure. Mergers and acquisitions happen. Company culture suddenly takes a nosedive and nobody knows why. Change inevitably happens, so having a plan in place to manage transformational change correctly helps companies react quickly and effectively.

If you have questions about operations consulting and what it can do for your business, give us a call or email us at info@usccg.com. We're happy to walk you through the process of achieving operational excellence, so you can feel comfortable and confident bringing in some help.

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