

Independent Consulting

Retail & Consumer Services in review, H1



Over the course of H1 this year we have seen a steady increase in demand for independent consulting talent across Retail & Consumer Services. In the weeks that account for H2 so far, this demand has continued to accelerate further. Whilst our global network is utilised for ad hoc projects, we have observed a surge in a few key areas; Setting Strategic Vision, Data Analytics/Customer Insight and PMO Support to CFO functions.



Setting Strategic Vision

With vaccine roll-outs underway and businesses being able to open up again, a recent McKinsey report suggested that economies will grow beyond their 2019 levels sometime between Q3 of 2021 and Q1 of 2022. Organisations have recognised that Covid-19 has created some new trends, but for the most part has amplified those that were already present – sustainability and new digital technologies for example. So depending on sector the need for wholesale change to a strategy might not be necessary, but rather some targeted updates. We have witnessed a number of projects focused on reframing strategic positions, identifying possible growth opportunities and developing a roadmap to link a strategy to delivering those opportunities.

Recent project examples

Global Food & Beverage Business – Setting 2030 Vision

- As Covid lockdowns ended and the high street began to re-open, the Chief Exec and FD identified that growth opportunities needed to be defined.
- Whilst the strategy didn't need to be re-written entirely, there was a need for someone to articulate the plan, join the dots with growth opportunities and both support/challenge current thinking with stakeholders. This would include a presentation of findings to the PE-backers.
- The successful independent consultant was a former L.E.K consultant, with an additional 5 years of sector experience in customer centric strategy roles.

High-end Retail Group – 5-year Strategy Plan Review

- As sales had remained resolute (mainly through online) during a tough period for the sector, it was deemed a good time to review the 5-year business plan.
- With a large amount of business content and data available, support was needed to partner with senior stakeholder to properly leverage this data and produce clear messaging.
- The successful independent consultant was a former BCG with experience of articulating strategy, producing clear and concise decks, as well a strong market/competitor analysis skills.



Data & Analytics

The pandemic caused a rapid escalation in the shift to e-commerce for a number of temporary reasons, but a shift in consumer behaviours could well be a permanent one. Despite lockdowns, customers continued to shop online at increased volumes (some reports suggest the retail sector gained 35% in market capitalisation from Q1 2020 to Q2 2021), bringing with it a huge amount of valuable customer insight. This was exemplified by a number of projects focused on extrapolating more analysis from this data on a range of topics such as business performance, pricing, customer retention, competitor analysis and growth opportunities.

Recent project examples

Leading UK Retail Department Store – Customer Data Insight

- The business wanted to introduce a new brand proposition to help deliver commercial growth for the business.
- It was felt that the business already possessed a vast amount of valuable customer data & insight – but in order to properly set the strategy and define/own the new brand proposition this data needed to be analysed to highlight patterns and meanings.
- The successful independent consultant was an ex-Bain consultant focusing on retail and consumer clients. They had developed additional experience working closely with marketing a brand functions assessing data to help develop commercial goals and identify potential growth and innovation opportunities.



Premium Food & Beverage Producer – Retail Data Analysis

- The organisation had invested heavily in retail data to understand dynamics around performance, competitors, pricing and general trends.
- A consultant was required to help set up the analytics processes to best allow the business to utilise the acquired data.
- The successful independent consultant was a former Strategy& consultant with experience of analysing data sets, converting raw market data into detailed analytics and developing data sharing platforms.



Supporting CFO Mandates - PMO

It has been widely recognised that the role of the CFO has continued to evolve in recent years for a majority of organisations. CFO's are now having to adopt a much broader approach than they might have before, often acting as a strategic advisor but also in delivering change agendas. With the move to digital platforms being such a dominant trend in the sector, it is perhaps unsurprising that we have observed projects to help structure and define these programmes for the best chance of success.

Recent project examples

UK Retailer of Outdoor Products and Services – Digital Enhancement Transformation

- As the business sales moved heavily towards online during the pandemic, the CFO was tasked with delivering a digital transformation that would increase sales as well as improving brand experience for the different divisions of the group.
- The consultant chosen was a former BCG Principal with experience of leading digital programmes. They had a background in defining digital strategy, developing implementation plans and delivering increase sales and customer experience as a result.

Global Consumer Goods Business – PMO Design & Deployment

- The CFO was running a large cross-functional transformation programme. Some initial work was deemed not fit for purpose and not rigorous enough in its structure.
- The need was for a PMO consultant to help review the current design and set up the new framework and structure.
- The consultant chosen was a former Deloitte Manager with experience of initiating and running large scale transformation programmes across a number of sectors with large multinational businesses.

Independent Consulting at The Barton Partnership

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We have delivered over 1,600 Consulting projects since launching the proposition in 2014.

With 98% of clients saying we, or our Independent Consultants, have met or exceeded their expectations.

Our extensive global network means we can provide consultant shortlists within 48-72 hours of engagement.

- We maintain an extensive, global network of 5,000 Independent Consultants, from consultants to partner level, who have supported the full range of FS businesses across London, Europe and North America.
- Our Independent Consultants have a combination of consulting and industry experience, offering pragmatic advice on Strategy, M&A, Transformation and Data & Analytics.
- The Barton Partnership's own leadership team includes former Independent Consultants with experience from Bain & Boston Consulting Group along with industry experts.

