

GUIDE FOR DECISION-MAKERS

5 Questions Every Leader Should Ask Before Hiring an OD Consultant

A practical filter to separate substance from slides.

Most organizational development engagements are commissioned under pressure. A restructuring is stalling. Engagement scores are dropping. A new strategy needs people aligned behind it, fast. In that urgency, the selection of who will do the work often gets less rigor than the work itself. These five questions will help you evaluate any OD consultant—including us—with the same discipline you would apply to any strategic investment.

01 Will the person who sells the engagement also deliver it?

In large consultancies, the partner who wins the business often disappears after the kickoff. The actual work gets delegated to junior consultants who lack the organizational intuition and executive credibility to navigate sensitive dynamics. Ask directly: who will be in the room with my leadership team on day 30? If the answer is different from the person sitting across from you now, that tells you something important about how the firm values your account.

Look for: A named lead consultant who will be personally accountable throughout the engagement, not a team staffing model.

02 What diagnostic data will you collect before recommending anything?

Any consultant who arrives with a pre-packaged solution before understanding your specific context is selling a product, not providing advisory. Rigorous OD work begins with structured diagnostics: validated assessments, stakeholder interviews, organizational scans. The quality of the diagnosis determines the quality of the intervention. If a consultant cannot explain exactly how they will collect and interpret data about your organization before proposing a course of action, keep looking.

Look for: A clear diagnostic methodology with named tools, not just ‘we’ll do some interviews and get back to you.’

03 How will you measure whether this engagement actually worked?

This question exposes the difference between consultants who deliver activities and those who deliver outcomes. Too many OD engagements end with a workshop debrief and a slide deck of recommendations, with no mechanism to track whether anything actually changed. Before signing, agree on what success looks like in concrete terms: retention metrics, alignment scores, capability benchmarks, timeline milestones. If your consultant resists defining measurable outcomes, ask yourself why.

Look for: A willingness to define success criteria upfront and track them jointly, not vague promises of ‘culture change.’

04 What happens after you leave?

The most valuable thing a consultant can build is not a deliverable. It is capability. If your organization cannot sustain the changes after the engagement ends, you have not received consulting. You have received temporary staffing. Ask how the consultant plans to transfer knowledge and embed new practices into your existing teams and systems. The answer should involve coaching internal champions, building toolkits, and creating governance structures—not just training sessions.

Look for: An explicit capability transfer plan, not a dependency model that requires ongoing consulting fees to maintain.

05 Have you worked across the cultural contexts that matter to us?

OD interventions that work brilliantly in one cultural context can fail completely in another. A competency framework designed for a European headquarters may be irrelevant in an Asian subsidiary. A change management approach built on open confrontation may backfire in a culture that values indirect communication. If your organization operates across borders, your consultant needs more than technical expertise. They need demonstrated fluency in the cultural dynamics that shape how your people actually work, make decisions, and build trust.

Look for: Specific examples of cross-cultural delivery, multilingual capability, and awareness of how culture shapes organizational behavior.

The Right Questions Lead to the Right Partner

These five questions are not designed to favor any particular consultant. They are designed to favor rigor. Any credible OD practitioner should welcome them. If asking these questions makes a consultant uncomfortable, that discomfort is diagnostic in itself.

ABOUT MINGBAI CONSULTING

MingBai Consulting is an organizational performance advisory led by Dr. Patrick Behar-Courtois, with 25+ years of international experience across 20+ countries. We deliver assessments (powered by ProfilAS, our proprietary 138-marker diagnostic platform), organizational development, change management (using our ColQ-Change framework), and evidence-based executive coaching. Our work spans French, English, and Chinese.

Ready to apply these questions to your next engagement?

Book a discovery call: calendly.com/patrick-ming-bai | contact@ming-bai.com | ming-bai.com

Further reading: *Maximizing Organizational Performance: A Guide to Effective Performance Coaching* by Patrick Behar-Courtois, PhD (Koehler Books, 2025). Available on Apple books, Amazon, Barnes and Noble and patrickbehar.com.