



Applying the Consultation Competency

The central concept of the Consultation competency is that HR practitioners must *have* the knowledge and then *be able to apply it* to assist various stakeholders in achieving their overall goals.

Have the students complete the prereading—SHRM research titled *Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)* available here:

https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Documents/SHRM_Survey_Findings_Strategic-Benefits-Flexible-Work-Arrangements.pdf

In the previously assigned small groups, one student should play the role of the HR manager. Another should be the museum curator. These are the two principal roles in the exercise and are described below. The other students are observers and will offer feedback at the end of the activity.

Flexible Work Arrangements on Display

The following scenario takes place in a museum in your city. It is a large, well-known, well-established museum with an excellent reputation not just in the city, but also internationally.

The First Student Role

You are the HR manager. The head curator of your museum has made an appointment with you and wants to explore possible flexible work arrangements (FWAs) that might improve the quality of life for the curator's staff. However, the head curator is quite adamant that doing so should not interfere with productivity or the quality of your prestigious institution, and the curator does not want to jeopardize that hard-won prestige.

1. As HR manager, play the role of internal consultant.
2. Discuss the full range of possible benefits of implementing FWAs.
3. Discuss challenges or limitations of implementing FWAs.
4. Discuss potential options available.
5. Identify next steps and the responsible parties.

The Second Student Role

You are the head curator. You have heard a lot in the media about FWAs, and you have friends and family members whose employers offer FWAs, so you are intrigued. However, you are not completely convinced that it will work in your organization. You are open-minded enough to want to discuss the possible options, and how it may help to engage your workforce. But since you are not very familiar with the available options and the benefits and drawbacks of each, you feel it is important to schedule time to meet with the museum's HR manager to discuss this topic. Then you can make an informed decision on how best to move forward.

The Remaining Students' Roles

1. Observe the interaction between the HR manager and the curator.
2. How did the HR manager start off the meeting?
3. How did the curator respond?
4. What did the HR manager do well?
5. Did the HR manager provide both advantages and disadvantages to each of the options?
6. Based on your understanding of the prereading, was there anything that was left out that you believe would have been helpful to add?
7. Was there anything discussed that you would have chosen to leave out?
8. Was it clear at the end what the chosen course of action/next steps would be?
9. Do you think the curator now has a clear understanding of the benefits and challenges of initiating any FWA programs? Why or why not?

Wrap-up

For students who played the HR manager role

1. What was easiest about being an "internal consultant"?
2. What was most difficult?

For students who played the curator role

1. Do you think the HR manager took the time to understand your issues and concerns?
2. Did the HR manager bring you valuable information?
3. Did the HR manager bring a predetermined solution, or attempt to collaborate with you to create a solution?

For all students

1. Reflecting on this scenario, discuss the value HR professionals provide to the organizations they serve by acting as effective internal consultants.
2. Compare the outcomes of the simulation to what you read about the duties of consultants and consulting firms in your prereading. How similar or different do you think the outcomes were to your reading?
3. Can you see *yourself* acting in an internal consultation role in your future?