

# Start My Consulting Business

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## Breakthrough Consulting

### Week 3: Target a Profitable Consulting Niche

#### Homework

For this week's homework, you're going to do 3 things:

1. Identify potential consulting niches.
2. Narrow down your list of potential consulting niches to about 5 niches you think might be promising.
3. Research your short-listed consulting niches.

The goal will be to narrow your focus to at least 1 profitable consulting niche, which you'll then focus on for the remainder of Breakthrough Consulting.

Your research may take a few hours, so be patient; this step is extremely important in creating a solid foundation for your business.

#### Part I: identify potential consulting niches

As you go through Part I of the homework, you'll probably have a tendency to be too broad and general when thinking about niches. That's OK, but you'll want to also think of more narrow, specialized niches as well.

Keep in mind that in this step, you are NOT going to evaluate the potential consulting niches. Instead, your goal is to brainstorm as many potential consulting niches as possible; we'll do the filtering later, in Parts II and III.

1. Identify your skills, experience, and specialized knowledge that you have access to. A good way to get started is to review your resume, and extract your skills, knowledge, and experience from it into a list.

Next, you'll also want to think about any other experience, skills, or knowledge that you have that might not necessarily be work-related. In this week's lesson, I mentioned how my past experience as a graduate student could be used to identify a potential niche. Similarly, if you have or have had hobbies or experiences where you've obtained specialized knowledge, skills, or insights, you may want to list those as potential niches.

Last, you'll want to consider other domains where you have access to specialized information, and list those as potential niches. Like I mentioned in the video, these could be areas where a spouse, friend, or family member has experience, and through which, you've obtained some special knowledge or insight into that market.

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2. Identify problems you've seen or experienced, and consider how you might use your skills and experience to solve the problems. This can be pretty broad at first, but something that's helpful is as you go through your days, to be on the alert for problems. Jot down those problems, then come back later to think how you might be able to solve them. Those problems are a source of potential niches that you could pursue.
3. Review your current situation and business model, and think of ways you could re-position your services, reach a new market that you haven't yet served, or otherwise adjust what you're doing to create a niche for yourself.

Whether you're currently employed or you already have a consulting business, this exercise requires you to step outside your current mindset and worldview--which isn't always easy. You may find that talking with your spouse or a friend over lunch about this could help give you some insights on this, and by doing so, generate some potential consulting niche ideas.

You may want to go back to the examples I covered in this week's video lesson so you can adjust your thinking about your current situation, which may help you get your thinking unstuck to more easily brainstorm niche ideas.

## Part II: filter your potential consulting niches

Now that you've generated a hopefully long list of potential consulting niches, in this part, you'll do some preliminary filtering.

The goal is to come up with 5 potential consulting niches that you'll research in Part III.

To start, you'll want to scan down your list of potential consulting niches, and flag niches that get you excited or that you're eager to start working on right away; having some interest and passion for a niche isn't a requirement, but it helps keep you motivated as you build your business.

Next, you'll want to flag potential consulting niches that you intuitively think could be large enough (but not too large), have relatively low competition, and are reasonably profitable. In this step, you're NOT doing the more extensive research on the niches that we'll do in Part III. Here, we're just doing some preliminary filtering.

After you've gone through your list of niches and flagged the ones you're interested in, if you have more than 5 potential niches, you'll need to narrow things down a bit more. As you look at your short-list of niches, pick only 5 that you think could create a viable, profitable consulting business for you, given your skills, experience, knowledge, insight, and interest.

## Part III: research your short-listed consulting niches

Now that you've narrowed down your long list of potential consulting niches down to just 5 niches, you're going to run them through the tools that I covered in the video to get some data on them.

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1. For starters, you're going to use either Google Keyword Tool or Market Samurai to get quantifiable data on your niches. Below are the links that take you to those tools:

- [Google Keyword Tool](#)
- [Market Samurai](#): This is a paid tool (one-time payment of \$97), but they have a free 30-day demo version that you can use. Note that this is an affiliate link, but it's a product that I use and highly recommend. There are other similar tools, but many of them have similar features, but cost significantly more.

As you research your 5 potential consulting niches, you'll want to enter related keywords in order to get a more complete picture of your niches. Both Google Keyword Tool and Market Samurai provide additional related keywords that you can peruse and that will help you in your research.

You can download the details into a spreadsheet, and then sort through the various keywords and compare your niches to each other.

2. Next, you'll want to do some search-related research on your short-listed niches.
  - Use Google Trends and Google Correlate to get additional information about trends for your niches, and potentially related searches.
  - Using Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc., perform searches for your keywords, and write down the number of search results in your tracking spreadsheet. You may want to search using synonyms (using the ~ character in Google searches), using double quotes around your search terms, and searching locally or within a particular region if you plan to have a more locally-specific business.
  - As you gather search data, look at the paid search results at the top and right of the page, as well as the organic search results. These results can give you valuable information about your competitors, their pricing, and their marketing. In addition, you may be able to identify niche-specific forums, trade organizations, blogs, etc. that pertain to your niches.
  - Search groups to find ones that pertain to your niches. I find Yahoo Groups a good first option, since it's easy to get data on the groups' age, # of members, and activity; the following link takes you directly to [Yahoo Groups](#).
3. Finally, you'll want to do LinkedIn related research on your niches. The following link takes you directly to [LinkedIn](#).

Once you're there, you'll want to search for groups using the keywords you identified earlier while using Google Keyword Tool or Market Samurai. Look for groups focused on your niches, and then look at the # of members, how old the groups are, how active they are, and demographic info on their members.