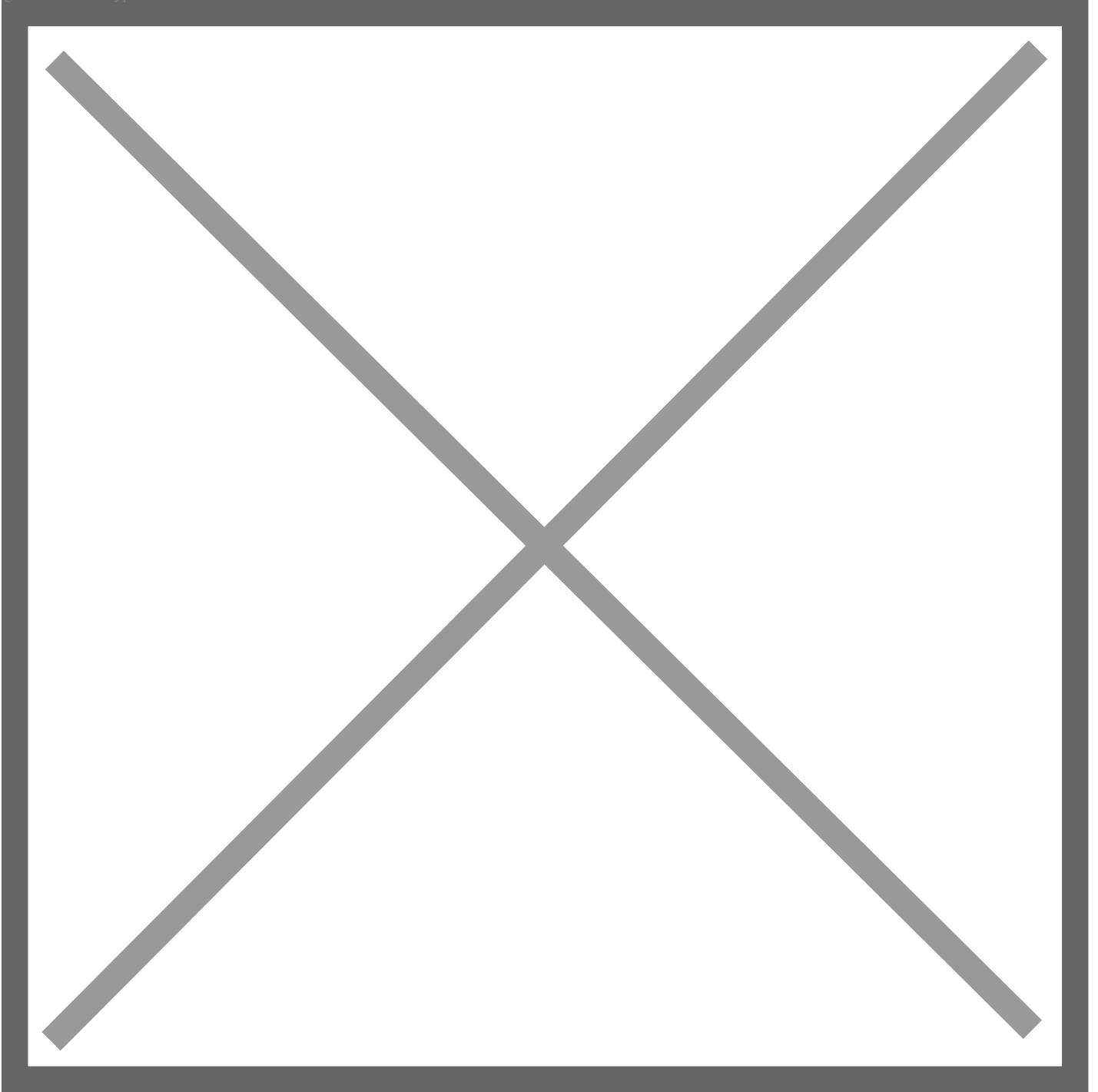


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# The Report or the Change?

## Description

## The Report or the Change?

My partner Robyn and I had a great discussion the other day about how nonprofits typically hire consultants to do one of two things. The first is to study an organization and provide observations and recommendations in an area the organization wishes to improve. The second is to create an organizational document deemed essential. Strategic, fund-raising, and succession plans are examples. In both cases the work ends when the consultant's product is received and approved. The organization is now left to implement the guidance. And how does that work out? Often, not well.

One reason is time lag. Consultants spend time sizing up a group and its practices and then writing the report or the plan. More time is spent in explaining the plan through a series of meetings that are tough to schedule. Weeks go by. Urgency and energy fade. Another reason is ownership. The findings are in a document written and branded by the consultant, regardless of how interactive the process used to create it. While the new strategic plan is called that of the organization's, it is not based on the zest and commitments of staff who created something. Excitement and an itch to act go down without internal ownership that says, "This is ours."

The third reason is the most critical: the separation between planning and doing. They belong together. You can best achieve this by the consulting relationship you structure. It begins with the premise that you are buying a change not a report or other "deliverable." Ask the consultant to engage in a two-part gig. First, they create recommendations or write the plan. Second, they guide you in implementing it to achieve specified targets.

Will it cost more to buy change rather than a document? Sure, but look at the value. If a product (with all the process to create it) is worth \$7,500 is not a successful change worth \$15,000? Will some consultants be willing to play in this arena—to the point of tying a good part of compensation to successful use of their products? Absolutely. We would be one of them.

If you want to dig into an example of how this works, read the article ["Result-based Consulting"](#) and other resources on the [Results1st Resources page](#).

### **Date Created**

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