

# Re-engineering A Professional Business

by David Maister

When doing strategy work with professional businesses, I sometimes ask the people in the firm (senior and junior) to choose the four or five key things they would work on changing if they became their firm's czar or czarina,

Among the possibilities:

1. The range of services (more or fewer)
2. How we compensate people
3. Which clients / market segments we serve
4. Ownership structures (Equity v. Partnership, etc)
5. What we train people in
6. How we are organized
7. Financial controls/measures
8. Performance appraisal criteria
9. Degree of specialization of people
10. How we decide investments
11. Use of technology
12. Degree of worldwide integration
13. Change way we staff projects
14. Disseminate knowledge and skills around the practice
15. Use of paraprofessionals
16. Approach to dealing with underperformers
17. Who we hire
18. Number/location of offices
19. Approaches to R&D
20. How we market ourselves
21. How we train and coach
22. How we choose managers and other practice leaders
23. How we gather market intelligence about what clients want
24. How we price services
25. What we invest in
26. Use of Methodologies rather than treating each assignment as unique
27. Retirement policies
28. How we do quality assurance
29. How we use support staff
30. Management of overheads
31. How we hire

This is obviously not a complete list. But if you were concerned about strategic strength (and not just short-term profit gains) which 5 would you pick to focus on?