Category

Consulting

Independent / Boutique Consulting Firm Setup Playbook

A founder-level setup sequence covering entity structure, positioning, pricing, and pipeline for launching an independent or boutique consulting practice.

- Executive
- Advanced
- Template Included

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- 7 minute(s)

Overview

A founder-level playbook for setting up an independent or boutique consulting firm -- entity structure, positioning, pricing, and a 90-day pipeline plan, in the right sequence.

How much personal runway should I have before going independent?

Most experienced founders target 6-12 months of personal expenses covered by savings, separate from any firm reserve, though the right number depends on how established your warm network is and how quickly your positioning allows you to close a first engagement.

Sole proprietorship, LLC, or S-corp -- which should I choose?

It depends primarily on liability exposure and expected revenue: sole proprietorship is simplest but offers no liability protection, an LLC adds liability protection with manageable overhead, and an S-corp election typically becomes worth the added complexity once net income consistently exceeds roughly $80,000-$100,000 a year, due to self-employment tax treatment -- confirm specifics with an accountant in your jurisdiction.

Is niching down really worth the risk of turning away work?

Yes, in almost every documented case — a narrow, specific positioning statement is what makes referrals easy to make ("call her, she does exactly this") and is what lets you charge a premium as a specialist rather than compete on price as a generalist; you can always expand the niche later once the practice is established.

How many core service offers should a new boutique firm have?

Two to three, no more — a founder with five or six loosely defined offers ends up re-explaining and re-scoping from scratch on every call, while two or three well-packaged, named offers speed up both the sales conversation and the delivery.

When should a boutique firm bring on its first associate or subcontractor?

Typically once pipeline consistently exceeds what the founder can personally deliver without compromising quality or turning away qualified work — bringing on help too early, before positioning and pricing are proven, usually means subsidizing someone else's ramp-up out of thin margins.

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