Think Bigger in Consulting

Idea In Short

Start with the operating decision, not the tactic. For think bigger in consulting, the strongest approach is to define the business outcome, make the relevant assumptions explicit, and then use a small number of measurable actions to test them. Consultants should protect the parts of the work that depend on judgment while standardizing repeatable tasks, reviewing evidence at a fixed cadence, and changing the approach when results contradict expectations. The practical objective is a consulting practice that creates clearer client value and stronger economics without relying on vague positioning, uncontrolled scope, or founder memory. Use the framework as a decision aid, not as a checklist, and adapt each step to the firm's market, capacity, and client context.

Consultants can mistake a current limitation for a permanent rule. Examples include assuming a market is too small, a price is too high, a team cannot be hired, or a service cannot be delivered remotely. The useful response is to write the assumption down and ask what evidence would prove it wrong. This turns vague self-limitation into a business hypothesis. The operating implication is straightforward: the consultant should make the underlying decision visible and test it against evidence rather than relying on habit. Create a constraint log and label each item as fact, assumption, or unknown. A written record of the assumption, evidence, and result makes the lesson reusable across engagements. 1

Set an ambitious but measurable target

Large goals can be useful when they change the decisions a consultant is willing to consider. The target should still connect to measurable economics such as revenue, margin, client count, market share, or founder capacity. An ambitious target without operating measures becomes motivational rather than strategic. The target should force a different set of options onto the table. This matters because consulting work creates value through decisions, not through activity alone. Set a target that requires at least one material change in the current operating model. The consultant can then compare the result with the original assumption and adjust the operating method where the evidence points to a better approach. 2

Design alternatives around roadblocks

Once a constraint is visible, generate several possible responses rather than defending the first one. A pricing barrier may suggest a different offer, proof mechanism, buyer segment, or payment structure. A capacity barrier may suggest delegation, automation, productization, or a narrower scope. The exercise is useful because it separates the problem from the first solution. The practical test is whether the approach improves a client outcome or strengthens the firm's economics without creating avoidable risk. For each major roadblock, write three credible responses before selecting one. That discipline keeps the work grounded in observable behavior and prevents a useful concept from becoming another abstract framework. 3

Test the bold option

Thinking bigger does not require an immediate large commitment. A small experiment can test whether a bolder assumption has merit. A consultant might approach a larger buyer, pilot a higher-value offer, delegate part of delivery, or enter an adjacent segment with a limited campaign. The experiment should have a success condition and a deadline. The operating implication is straightforward: the consultant should make the underlying decision visible and test it against evidence rather than relying on habit. Choose one high-upside experiment that can be tested without putting the core business at risk. A written record of the assumption, evidence, and result makes the lesson reusable across engagements. 4

Schedule action

A good idea without a date becomes a recurring intention. Assign the next action, owner, and deadline, then review the result. The point is not to execute every ambitious idea. It is to create a system in which meaningful opportunities are tested rather than dismissed reflexively. Learning from a failed experiment can still improve the firm's decision quality. This matters because consulting work creates value through decisions, not through activity alone. Put the first experiment on the calendar before moving to another strategic issue. The consultant can then compare the result with the original assumption and adjust the operating method where the evidence points to a better approach. 5

Compound what works

Growth becomes durable when successful experiments become operating practices. A new pricing method can become the default proposal structure, a delegated task can become a documented process, or a successful market test can become a defined segment. The consultant should distinguish temporary experiments from permanent changes. This prevents the business from accumulating half-finished initiatives. The practical test is whether the approach improves a client outcome or strengthens the firm's economics without creating avoidable risk. At each review, decide whether to standardize, modify, or stop the experiment. That discipline keeps the work grounded in observable behavior and prevents a useful concept from becoming another abstract framework. 6

Put the method into practice

The next step for think bigger in consulting is to convert the framework into an operating experiment. Start with one decision that is currently creating friction, define the expected result, and identify the smallest intervention that could change the outcome. Record the baseline before making the change so that improvement is not inferred from memory. Then set a review date and decide in advance what evidence would justify keeping, modifying, or stopping the approach.

A disciplined review also protects originality in the firm's method. Consultants should avoid copying a framework mechanically when client context differs, and they should document the adaptations that improve performance. Those adaptations can become reusable intellectual property when they consistently solve a recurring problem. Over time, this creates a practice that learns from its own engagements rather than depending entirely on external playbooks.

The strongest operating systems are selective. They standardize what repeats, preserve judgment where the situation is uncertain, and make the economic consequences visible. That combination lets a consulting practice improve without turning professional work into a rigid production line.

- 1U.S. Bureau Of Labor Statistics
- 2U.S. Small Business Administration
- 3Project Management Institute

- 4National Institute Of Standards And Technology
- 5Organisation For Economic Co-Operation And Development
- 6U.S. Securities And Exchange Commission

Summary

Think Bigger in Consulting works best when it becomes part of the firm's operating rhythm. The consultant should translate the core idea into one measurable decision, one experiment, and one review point. That sequence preserves the useful parts of the original concept while removing personal or promotional framing and keeping attention on business performance. Over time, the result should be a more deliberate practice: clearer choices about clients, stronger evidence for recommendations, better control of delivery economics, and a more resilient relationship between expertise and revenue. The standard is not theoretical completeness. It is whether the method helps a capable consultant make better decisions and produce better client outcomes.