

RISING UP FROM THE STRATEGY SWAMP

A point of view on what I see happening in the consulting market and how to navigate it...

WELCOME TO THE STRATEGY SWAMP



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“ There’s a quiet crisis playing out across our industry, and it’s starting to scream.

Freelancers are flooding the market.

Not by choice, but by force. Laid off, burned out, or boxed out of a shrinking set of full-time roles.

The gigs that do appear are underpaid, over-applied for, and gone in hours.

We’re in what I’ve started calling **The Strategy Swamp.**

It’s dense. Overgrown.

Everyone’s stuck in the same place, chasing the same work with the same deck and the same value proposition.

A bog of sameness. And no one’s winning.”

READ [‘GOING SOLO’](#) SUBSTACK POST FOR ZOE’S TOP TIPS

WHAT I SEE HAPPENING

AI will have a bigger shift than covid did on the way we work.

There are no senior jobs.

The only people hiring are tech / platform businesses and media businesses. Both these sectors give me the ick. The outrage, attention, social media, convenience economies are thriving. A mirror of society perhaps - the fact that we are consumers ahead of being citizens.

Professional services businesses are either holding off of hiring, or they are re-structuring teams making them flatter, driven by the promise of ai productivity / efficiency gains.

Clients are less brave in this market, so the more ambitious, ill-defined and riskier innovation work gets squeezed out in favour of things they feel more certain about, or fixing known problems.

Client teams too are being re-structured making them leaner and resource constrained.

In order to get work done clients will either be **buying capacity or buying capability** - sometimes both.

It's likely the future for freelancers is **expertise being pointed at business critical activities** that a client needs help moving on.

THE ACCIDENTAL FREELANCER

It's the 6th of Dec 2024 and I find myself back in the 'jobs market' for the second time in just 18 months, after two decades of full employment.

15 years with ?What If! and 9 with Accenture.

My biggest fear is that I wouldn't get to answer great client questions again...

That I was done.



I'M NOT IN THE PROJECT BUSINESS

I'm in the **helping clients with new thinking business.**

Surfacing it, shaping it, building excitement and commitment to it with internal teams, landing it with paying customers. Commercialising it and scaling it.

Project level thinking:

- Is too small and narrow - this is about careers and reputation.
- Is transactional - where counting billed days is more important than outcomes.
- Anchors you to an agency and consulting world, where they have large teams - what we do should be a very personal buying experience.

CURIOSITY AS A SUPER POWER

**Make yourself
Interesting (as an authentic hook)**



**Develop
points of view (and share them)**

- Experimentation Cultures & Capability
- Adaptive Strategy / Futures
- Business Model Innovation
- Corporate Patience
- Innovation Frameworks
- Diversity of Thought / Original Thinking
- Curiosity, Creativity and Collaboration
- AI x Professional Services



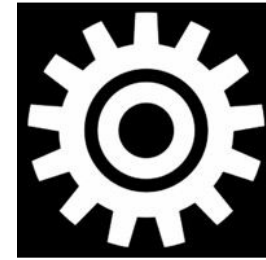
HANG OUT WITH YOUR IDOLS

Your network is your net worth.

Be highly selective on the company you keep. I
am not a freelancer, but an associate.

I know how to add value to the work this group
are famous for and how to raise the ambitions
and capabilities of their teams.

It's through thinking differently.



WSTM

TRIP TK

.YONDER

15 DIFFERENT WAYS TO BUY

Break the project delivery mode, it's only one way for you to add value to the work or a team.

Being in professional services these days means thinking like a product business.

I am a resource for my clients. I don't need to turn everything into a bloody project!

METHOD COACH	WORK DESIGN	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT / PITCH	THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
AGENCY PRODUCT & OFFER / GTM	SPEECH	SAFARI	NETWORKED EXPERTS
CAPABILITY BUILD	LEARN / DO	REFERRAL + COMMISSIONS	BUILD A TEAM
ADVISORY	EQUITY	VALUE OUTCOMES	PROJECT DELIVERY: LEAD / QA / THOUGHT PARTNER / SMA / CLIENT RELATIONSHIP / ON-SELL

KEY: FY 2025 INCOME

STAY HUNGRY STAY HUMBLE BE GENEROUS

Reframe business development as gardening.

It's about nurturing relationships, investing in people, their careers and staying curious.

Feedback as a gift

Always ask for feedback at the end of the work. It helps you understand what your secret sauce is. As well as where you need to tighten.

Diversity of thought

If you can afford to feed others with your work, then the work will always be better (and more enjoyable).

The power of emotion

Public referrals on LinkedIn show that you are a great practitioner and a loose format allows clients to talk about how you made them feel. Emotions are super important in b2b selling, as we want people to back us.

The goodness engine

In networks there are givers and takers, nurturers and transactors. By cultivating a healthy interest in others being successful, the universe has a habit of repaying that back. My old firm used to call this goodness. I still believe in this type of business karma.

**BEING
SUCCESSFUL =
DEVELOPING A
POINT OF VIEW**

QUESTIONS

+

DISCUSSION

THANK YOU



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