

## Foreword

Professional business service firms are one of the most dynamic and advanced industries in the modern economy. Interestingly, the increasing economic significance of professional business services in all developed economies has been accompanied by increasing client dissatisfaction with those services. As a result, there has been a growing academic interest in the nature of the client-consultant relationship, and it has been recognized that the integration of the client in the consulting process is the most important success factor for professional business service firms. However, existing approaches are contradictory in their theoretical foundations and scientific objectives. Most importantly, they do not address the complexity of the client-consultant relationship offering only restricted view of its nature and success factors.

This thesis concentrates on the relationship between client organizations and professional business service firms. Based on a comprehensive critical discussion of the existing literature on client-consultant relationships, Natalia Nikolova develops an innovative conceptual framework - the “interpretative model” - of the client-consultant interaction. The framework represents an analytical tool that sheds light on two interrelated issues: the cultural relations between clients and professional service providers and their political relations. By showing the connection and the interrelation between the cognitive and political dimension of consulting, the author provides a more nuanced view on the client-consultant relationship and provides new avenues to overcome long existing boundaries between different research streams and perspectives. The result is a multidimensional and multi-disciplinary view of the client-consultant interaction that sheds light on a number of hitherto under-explored issues and makes a significant contribution to the literature on client-consultant relationships. This remarkable thesis deserves high praise in the academic discussion as well as in the business community. The academic advisor and editor of this series as well as Natalia’s mentor wish this work a very positive reception.

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**Source/Quelle:**

Natalia Nikolova: *The Client-Consultant Relationship in Professional Business Service Firms*, Kölner Wissenschaftsverlag, Köln, 2007.

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