

Louvain School of Management

**“Bridging the Gap: Preparing
Consultants for AI Integration – An
Evaluation of the Louvain School of
Management's Competency
Framework”**

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Abstract :

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing various aspects of our daily life and professional environments. Leading authors and researchers claim that educational institutions must rethink their curricula to meet the growing demand for AI-related skills. Among the sectors impacted is consultancy, a popular career choice among LSM graduates.

In the literature, a notable gap persists: understanding the specific competencies needed to successfully navigate AI-enhanced environments. Therefore, our research question is: *"What are the key competencies required to leverage AI effectively in consultancy, and how well does the Louvain School of Management prepare its students for these roles according to the LSM Competency Framework?"*.

The primary aim of this study is to provide the Louvain School of Management (LSM) with insights into whether the emergence of AI necessitates a complete revision of the curriculum. Focusing on the consulting industry, it identifies the key competencies required to integrate AI effectively in this field and evaluates how well LSM prepares its students for these roles, using the LSM Competency Framework as a benchmark.

Through qualitative research methods involving interviews with industry experts, LSM alumni, and AI specialists, this study captures the perception of the consulting community. Key insights include the continued relevance of traditional consultancy skills such as change management, project management, stakeholder management, and data analysis. In addition, the integration of AI necessitates additional technical skills and knowledge in AI tools and applications, as well as enhanced soft skills like critical thinking, adaptability, and communication. Ethical awareness regarding AI's societal implications as well as the importance of continuous learning are also paramount. Findings reveal that LSM's Competency Framework aligns well with these requirements and provides actionable recommendations to further equip students with the requisite competencies to thrive in an AI-enhanced consultancy landscape.

While consultancy is a central focus, it is essential to remember that the primary objective of the LSM extends beyond preparing students solely for careers in consultancy. Hence, further exploration across diverse sectors is required before generalized results.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing various aspects of our daily life and professional environments, reshaping industries, and creating new opportunities and challenges. Leading authors and researchers claim that it is imperative for educational institutions to rethink their curricula to meet the growing demand for AI-related skills (Xu & al., 2021). Among the sectors impacted is consultancy, a popular career choice among LSM graduates.

The Louvain School of Management (LSM), part of UCLouvain with campuses in Louvain-la-Neuve, Mons, and Charleroi, has historically prided itself on preparing graduates who are well-equipped for the challenges of the business world and committed to responsible leadership (UCLouvain, n.d.). However, with the increasing incorporation of AI in consultancy, questions arise about whether LSM's curriculum sufficiently arms its students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in AI-enhanced roles. This thesis seeks to bridge the gap between academic preparation and professional requirements by evaluating LSM's Competency Framework (or LSM Compass) in the context of AI-driven consultancy.

1.2 Research question

While existing literature does underscore AI's broad impacts, there remains a notable gap in understanding the specific skills needed to effectively navigate AI-enhanced environments. This study focuses on the consultancy sector, highly chosen by LSM graduates, to assess how AI is integrated into daily tasks and what competencies consultants deem essential. The goal is to identify the key competencies required to leverage AI effectively in consultancy and to evaluate how well LSM prepares its students for these roles using the LSM Compass as a benchmark.

Therefore, our research question is "*What are the key competencies required to leverage AI effectively in consultancy, and how well does the Louvain School of Management prepare its students for these roles according to the LSM Competency Framework?*".

1.3 Scope of the research

This research primarily gathers insights from consultants about the skills crucial for integrating AI, providing a subjective assessment influenced by their experiences.

The study focuses on the LSM 120 Masters, chosen for their foundation on the LSM Competency Framework, their shared characteristics, and my participation as a student in one of these programs. Moreover, by using the LSM Competency Framework, we do not go into the detailed curriculum of each course, thereby providing a broader perspective on the competencies that LSM aims to impart to its students, regardless of their chosen specialization track.

While consultancy is a central focus, it is essential to remember that the primary objective of the LSM extends beyond preparing students solely for careers in consultancy, aiming to equip students with a broad range of competencies applicable across various industries and contexts, fostering responsible leaders who prioritize human values. Therefore, while the findings of this paper offer valuable insights into the alignment between the competencies required to leverage AI within consultancy and those acquired at the LSM, these results should not be generalized to every sector and context without further research. The same consideration applies to the suggestions provided, which are specifically tailored to fully prepare students to use AI in consultancy.

1.4 Method to answer the question:

H1: Traditional consultancy skills: Despite the growing integration of AI technologies, traditional key consultancy skills such as change management, project management, stakeholder management, and data analysis remain vital for effective consultancy practices.

H2: Technical competencies: To maximize the utilization of AI in their professional activities, consultants must possess foundational AI technical knowledge and skills, encompassing its historical evolution, identification of the primary tools, awareness of their constraints, and a practical comprehension of their applications in consulting contexts and their potential benefits.

H3: Increasing importance of soft skills: The integration of AI into consultancy practices enhances the importance of consultants' soft skills, with the most crucial being communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and flexibility.

H4: Awareness of ethical concerns: Consultants need to grasp the societal implications, including ethical, social, and ecological aspects, stemming from the integration of AI in consultancy and they should stay informed on best practices to mitigate them.

H5: Preference for generalists: To effectively leverage AI technologies, consultants must possess a broad range of skills and knowledge (“generalists”) rather than those deep expertise in a narrow field (“specialists”).

The methodology employed to verify these hypotheses consists of qualitative research methods, primarily through interviews with consultants, LSM alumni, and AI specialists. Subsequently, a comparative analysis between the verified hypotheses and the LSM Competency Framework, which outlines the competencies expected of graduates, was conducted to analyse their alignment and suggest ideas.

1.5 Primary findings

The main findings reveal that traditional key consultancy skills such as change management, project management, stakeholder management, and data analysis continue to be pertinent. In addition, the integration of AI necessitates additional technical knowledge about AI tools and applications, as well as enhanced soft skills like critical thinking, adaptability, and communication. Ethical awareness regarding AI’s societal implications as well as the importance of continuous learning are also paramount. Furthermore, the study indicates that AI integration does not necessitate a complete transformation of the LSM’s curriculum and suggests actionable recommendations to fully prepare students for future challenges in AI-driven environments.

1.6 Expected contribution of the work

The primary aim of this study is to provide the LSM with insights into whether the emergence of AI necessitates a complete reevaluation of the curriculum. Additionally, the study offers benefits to other stakeholders. For the consulting community, it identifies the essential skills required to thrive in an AI-driven landscape. For students aspiring to enter the consulting profession, it offers insights into the evolving nature of the job and the competencies they will need to develop to succeed in a rapidly changing environment.

1.7 Structure

The structure of the paper is as follows: it begins with a literature review, which synthesizes previous research to provide insights into fundamental concepts relevant to the study. This review establishes the context for the research question and defines key terms. Building on this theoretical framework, several hypotheses are developed to guide the subsequent practical

analysis phase. In this phase, qualitative data is gathered through interviews with consultants, LSM alumni, and AI specialists. These interviews are further enriched by discussions with LSM academics. After the interview phase, adjustments may be made to the set of hypotheses based on insights obtained. Findings from interviews and verified hypotheses are then compared with the LSM Compass. The paper concludes by presenting the main findings, along with concrete recommendations for potential AI integration into the LSM's curriculum. Additionally, it addresses the limitations of the thesis and suggests avenues for further research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This section synthesizes relevant research on the integration of AI within the consultancy sector along with implications for educational curricula in higher education institutions. Despite the abundance of non-scientific literature on the topic, this review prioritizes the inclusion of scientific sources to ensure our findings' reliability. Finally, to establish a clear foundation for this discussion, it is important to interpret the central terms according to their definition in the following literature. A table summarizing these definitions can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

2.2 Existing literature

Understanding Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence

AI has been defined differently across different contexts due to its broad applications and continuously evolving technologies. At its core, AI seeks to replicate aspects of human intelligence through technology (Wang, 2008). For this study, we adopt the definition by Kok and al. (2009), which refers to AI as “the simulation of human intelligence in machines, enabling them to perform tasks and make decisions that typically require human intelligence”.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

Generative AI (GAI), a subset of AI, places the emphasis on creating new content such as text, audio, or video, using machine learning models trained on existing data. The prominence of GAI surged with the release of ChatGPT in November 2022 (Lund & Wang, 2023).

Chat-GPT

ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, stands as a prominent example of GAI applications. It produces human-like text based on prompts, offering utility in tasks such as text completion, conversation generation, and language translation. (Ramanathan, 2024). The democratization of this technology by Open AI has led to its widespread adoption, with over a million users within five days of its launch. However, ChatGPT also raises ethical concerns, emphasizing the nuanced impact of AI technologies on society (Lund & Wang, 2023).

Historical overview

The roots of AI can be traced back to ancient mythologies, but its modern conception was initiated by Alan Turing's pivotal question "Can machines think?" posed in 1950. The term «artificial intelligence» was first coined in 1956, by John McCarthy, a mathematics professor at Dartmouth University. Since then, research on AI has burgeoned across various disciplines, often characterized by limited interdisciplinary interaction, which occasionally results in fragmented knowledge on the subject. Nevertheless, this fragmentation has not impeded the proliferation of research into numerous applications of AI worldwide (Loureiro & al., 2021). In the realm of business, AI's initial significant application emerged in the 1980s with expert systems aimed at emulating human decision-making processes (Klondike, n.d.).

AI in business and organizations

AI is swiftly revolutionizing the operational landscape of businesses and organizations across all sectors. Its transformative potential extends to fundamentally reshaping every aspect of an organization's value chain, thereby ushering in substantial changes in how businesses operate and compete. The impact of AI is profound and multifaceted, with far-reaching implications for various business functions and business processes (McInerney & Sollosy, 2022).

For instance, a comprehensive study conducted by Harvard Business Review highlighted the significant improvement that AI can bring to sales processes. According to the study, AI implementation could potentially enhance sales leads by over 50%, reduce call times by 60–70%, and decrease customer acquisition costs by up to 60% (Sadat, 2023). These statistics underscore the transformative potential of AI in optimizing sales and operations and enhancing overall business efficiency.

Nevertheless, the incorporation of AI into business operations presents substantial challenges and demands meticulous implementation. A survey conducted in 2020 survey by MIT Sloan and BCG revealed that 70% of AI-related projects encounter failure (Ransbotham & al., 2020). Primary hurdles include data quality and availability issues, high implementation costs, ethical considerations, risks associated with data privacy and security, constraints within AI technology and its applications, transparency deficiencies, seamless integration with existing processes, and a deficiency in technical expertise and knowledge. Overcoming these challenges is paramount for the effective adoption of AI and underscores the necessity for a skilled workforce proficient in AI technologies (Gurjar & al., 2024).

Skills required to use AI

Recognizing the imperative for an AI-proficient workforce, there is a shifting demand for skills and competencies in the era of AI systems (Makridakis, 2017). Companies are actively seeking individuals capable of navigating workplaces where AI assumes a prominent role (Babaian & Xu, 2021). National initiatives are underway to propel AI research forward and to equip the workforce for the AI era, emphasizing the critical importance of skilled talents and the pivotal role of educational institutions (National Science & Technology Council, 2019).

Despite numerous studies emphasizing the importance of skilled talent in an AI-driven landscape, few authors delve deeply into the nature of these skills, with varying categorizations or interpretations.

Zeidan & Bishnoi (2020) categorize essential skills into hard and soft skills. Hard skills, often referred to as technical skills, encompass technology-based or discipline-based knowledge, such as computer use, programming languages, database management, optimization, and key areas in managerial accounting, finance, and operations management. According to a Boston Consulting Group Report, Industry 4.0 demands a diverse set of hard skills, requiring workers to integrate job-specific know-how with IT competencies ranging from basic to advanced levels (Rübmann & al., 2015). Workers need to have foundational knowledge of AI tools, their benefits, and how to use them efficiently (Moore & Miller, 2023).

Soft skills refer to “intra- and interpersonal (socio-emotional) skills, essential for personal development, social participation, and workplace success. They include skills such as

communication, ability to work on multidisciplinary teams, adaptability, etc.” (Kechagias, 2011). The need for a wide range of hard, or technical skills, means that “soft” skills will become more important than ever. For instance, employees must be more open to change and adapt to new roles and technologies (Zeidan & Bishnol, 2020).

Another study supports this view, indicating that individuals need balanced proficiency in both soft and digital skills to succeed in a technologically advanced future (Polakova & al., 2023). In this context, several authors suggest that the most important soft skills for future graduates to thrive in an AI-driven landscape are the « four Cs », referring to “communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity » (Pence, 2019). Additionally, some argue that flexibility should be included, as digital technologies require adaptability in ever-changing job landscapes (Zeidan & Bishnol, 2020).

Bongomin, et al., (2020) propose that companies will prioritize hiring "generalists" over "specialists" in various industries. They argue that organizations will require employees with a broad range of skills and knowledge, rather than individuals specializing in a narrow field (Zeidan & Bishnol, 2020).

Next to that, it is emphasized by Polakova & al. (2023) that ensuring responsible technology is essential. Addressing the social and ethical implications is deemed crucial for successful AI implementations, including considerations such as bias and discrimination, privacy concerns, and potential impact on jobs and the workforce. This necessitates the endorsement of employees at all levels, not solely top management (Gurjar & al., 2024). Additionally, a profound understanding of the social, ethical, legal, and regulatory dimensions of AI deployment is crucial for achieving responsible outcomes. (Russel & al., 2023)

Understanding Consultancy

Consultancy

The Cambridge Dictionary defines “consultancy” as « a company that gives advice on a particular subject » (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). In simpler terms, a consultancy firm is a business entity that offers guidance to other businesses.

As per the Management Consulting Association’s classification, consulting firms can be grouped into four primary categories. Initially, generalist firms like Accenture and Deloitte,

provide a wide array of services encompassing strategy, human resources, and IT consulting, often originating from audit firms or IT service providers. Secondly, strategy consulting firms such as McKinsey and Boston Consulting Group specialize in providing strategic advice on a project basis. Thirdly, human resource consulting firms, like Mercer and Watson Wyatt concentrate on delivering specialized HR services such as salary reviews and leadership development. Finally, niche firms such as Everis and Roland Berger, typically established by former consultants from larger firms, offer specialized services or sector-specific expertise (Aguilar & Vallejo, 2007).

Clients seek consultancy services primarily for two reasons: to leverage consultants' management skills acquired through exposure and experience across various industries and to gain an external, objective perspective on their problems (Zeidan & al., 2020) .

Traditional skills of successful consultants

The primary resource in consultancy is the consultant (Alexandre & Blanckaert, 2020), whose skills are vital for successful outcomes. While opinions differ throughout the available literature in the field regarding essential skills for consultants, commonly mentioned skills include change management, project management, stakeholder management and data analysis. Markham called them “timeless consulting skills” (CMCE, 2018).

Additionally, a study conducted in 2006 stressed upon the importance of experience, functional skills, the ability to listen and question, objectivity, and self-awareness. These skills help consultants understand and adapt to client problems, provide optimal recommendations, and guide clients effectively (Kakabadse & al., 2006).

AI in Consultancy

The consulting industry is impervious to the impact of AI on various sectors. This technology brings fundamental changes in how consulting services are delivered, adding opportunities and challenges to the market (Samokhvalov, 2024).

Applications and benefits of AI in consultancy

AI offers a multitude of benefits for consultancy firms, improving service delivery. Here are some examples:

AI tools are immensely valuable in analysing data from diverse sources, identifying patterns, and offering insights that human consultants may not have the time or expertise to uncover. This is especially beneficial in the consulting field, which deals with large volumes of data (Zharovskikh, 2023). Additionally, AI can automate various time-consuming tasks, allowing consultants to dedicate more time to understanding clients' needs and devising tailored solutions. Furthermore, AI has the potential to enhance collaboration among consultants by providing a platform for sharing knowledge, ultimately resulting in the development of superior client solutions. These are just a few examples of the advantages and uses of AI technologies. The consultancy services industry is anticipated to increasingly adopt AI, leading to further evolution and enhanced service provision (Saxena et al., 2023).

Challenges of AI in consultancy

AI adoption in the consulting landscape presents several challenges: the democratization of knowledge and technology, which, in turn, opens doors to new competitors, managing data complexities, overcoming tool limitations and building trust in AI systems. Additionally, ensuring data security and addressing ethical issues are crucial. These ethical concerns include bias and discrimination, lack of transparency, privacy issues, and the potential for job displacement (Saxena et al., 2023).

AI impact on consulting skills

The incorporation of AI in consultancy promises huge benefits but requires careful implementation to mitigate associated challenges. A vital element for the success of consulting firms lies in their commitment to up-skilling employees, which equips them with the necessary capabilities to embrace AI. However, there is a scarcity of scientific literature identifying the nature of these skills and how they can be acquired (Samokhvalov, 2024).

Higher education institutions

Universities have historically been instrumental role in societal development (Moscardini & al., 2022). To meet the evolving societal challenges, they have continuously assessed the alignment of their teaching programs and methods with the needs of society (Palumbo & al., 2019). For example, it has been the case with the emergence of computers and their integration into education (Liu & al., 1998).

In the realm of AI, the significance of educational institutions is widely acknowledged in the academic literature. By elucidating Generative AI, it becomes feasible to effectively address the challenges it presents (García-Peñalvo, & al., 2023). Educational institutions hold a central position for various stakeholders, encompassing students, organizations, and society (Toma & al., 2024).

Concerning students poised to enter the workforce, there exists considerable interest in the applicability of their skills and competencies acquired through education (Toma & al., 2024). Students across diverse disciplines, beyond those in computer science or engineering, aspire to maintain relevance in the era of AI. Consequently, there has been a growing demand among business students for AI training. Furnishing them with the necessary skills and understanding to navigate AI throughout their academic journey not only enhances their prospects of employment today but also in the future (Xu & al., 2021).

Technologies, such as AI, have already initiated a significant transformation in workplaces, thereby engendering fresh demands for workforce skills (Pandya & al., 2023). To capitalize on opportunities and address challenges linked with artificial intelligence, organizations will necessitate employees with a robust comprehension of AI principles and methodologies. These individuals should adeptly apply their knowledge and skills to navigate AI-integrated work environments and collaborate effectively with AI tools (Ransbotham & al., 2017). Universities possess the capacity to furnish students with the requisite knowledge and skills essential for becoming adept members of the future workforce (Pandya & al., 2023).

Above all, in addition to addressing employability and meeting the demand of companies for graduates with the requisite skills, universities play a central role in fostering the cultivation of a responsible society. Educational institutions serve as crucial hubs for comprehending how to judiciously harness technologies, not solely in the context of AI but in the context of social media or the internet's emergence (Cornu & al., 2014). The European Commission explicitly acknowledges the vital role of education in equipping young people with essential skills to shape the future of Europe, such as democracy, solidarity, and inclusion (Popescu & al., 2019). In the context of AI, associated technologies are accessible to anyone, including the "bad" individuals. Consequently, it becomes crucial for various stakeholders, including academic institutions, to unite and educate society about the ethical utilization of these tools, safeguarding against unethical practices.

The embracement of AI advancements, encompassing AI, while concurrently addressing pertinent challenges in a responsible manner, holds promise for fostering a fairer and more prosperous society (Mannuru & al., 2023). Through the integration of AI courses into academic programs, students are better prepared to grapple with ethical and societal dilemmas associated with these technologies (Tominc & al., 2023).

Numerous universities worldwide have recognized the necessity of equipping individuals with the competencies essential to navigate the realm of AI and the potential imperative to adapt themselves in order to confront the ongoing transformations propelled by this era (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). While certain authors contend that the requisite skills are not novel and that there have been longstanding appeals to underscore these proficiencies, other elucidate that there have been evolutions within each of these competencies (Pence, 2019).

However, there is a consensus that integrate AI courses into educational institutions is an onerous challenge, even for engineering programs (Xu & al., 2021). The challenge for business and management schools lies primarily in the lack of model curricula for non-technical audience (Xu & al., 2021).

While numerous recent scientific papers delve into the incorporation of AI as an education and pedagogical tool, elucidating the associated opportunities and concerns, there exists a paucity of research on the content of curricula and teaching methodologies for AI training geared towards students with limited technical background. The scarcity of educational materials and research in this domain is understandable given the recent surge in demand for AI expertise. However, as AI technologies become increasingly prevalent in professional settings, it becomes imperative to ensure the efficiency of teaching resources in imparting AI knowledge to non-technical audiences (Xu & al., 2021).

At the core of this central role played by universities are the professors. The scholarly consensus affirms that AI advancement will not replace teachers; rather, it underscores their importance in preparing students. The digital revolution unequivocally does not eliminate the need for educators, albeit it may entail transformations in their vocation. They are ideally positioned to develop the novel teaching methodologies requisite for society, provided they possess the requisite skills (Cornu & al., 2014).

2.3 Additional Information

This section offers a brief overview of the LSM and Accenture to ensure clarity for all readers, including those who may be unfamiliar with LSM or the consultancy industry.

Louvain School of Management

Overview

The Louvain School of Management (LSM), formerly known as the Institut d'Administration et de Gestion (IAG), is one of Belgium's esteemed business schools. It operates across campuses in Louvain-la-Neuve, Mons and Charleroi (UCLouvain, n.d.).

Mission, vision, values

The mission of the LSM is to “form responsible leaders, who care about people and places, who put human values at the center of the enterprise”. Its vision is to be the preferred international management school in Belgium and one of Europe's leading responsible management schools, focusing on people and corporate citizenship. Ethics, responsibility, and sustainability are fundamental principles integrated into LSM's curriculum, faculty's research and daily operations (UCLouvain, n.d.).

Competency Framework

To guide stakeholders in implementing its mission and values, LSM developed a “Competency Framework”. This framework, created through collaboration between faculty members, students, alumni, and industry partners, is presented as a 9-point diagram resembling a compass. It outlines the essential competencies expected from graduates of the Master's programs in Management and Business Engineering. The framework ensures that students cultivate these competencies, guiding professors in structuring courses and helping students prioritize their learning objectives. (Uclouvain, n.d.). Following is an overview of the framework. The detailed Competency Framework can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

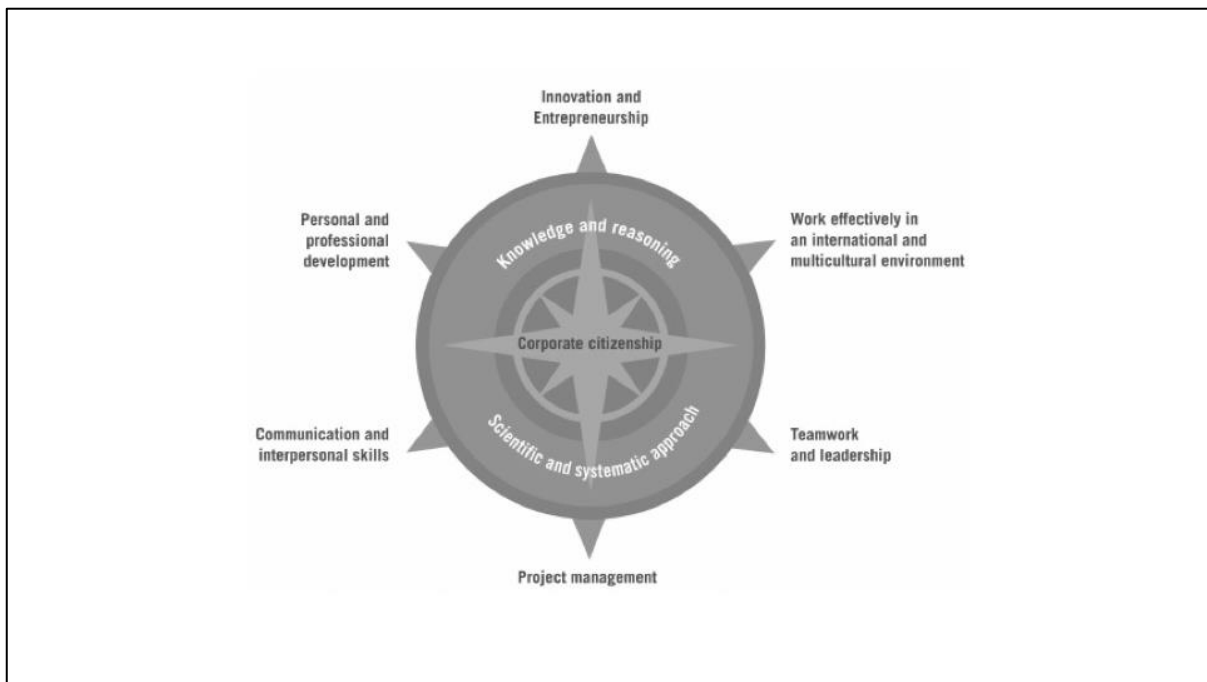


Figure 1: LSM Competency Framework (UCLouvain, n.d.)

Accenture

Accenture stands as a multinational corporation offering an extensive area of services in strategy, consulting, digital, technology, and operations. Leveraging its consulting arm, Accenture aids organizations in enhancing their performance and fostering enduring value for stakeholders across various sectors such as financial services, healthcare, government, and energy, among others. With a global presence spanning over 120 countries and employing over 500,000 individuals worldwide, Accenture has earned acclaim for its expertise in technology, digital innovation, and operational excellence (Case Interview, n.d.).

2.4 Gaps in the literature

The literature review provided valuable insights into the current state of research around artificial intelligence and consultancy. It has revealed the significant impact AI can have on businesses, especially within consultancy. It showed that AI presents promising opportunities but also significant challenges, underscoring the pressing need for a skilled workforce adept at leveraging its potential. However, amidst the wealth of literature, a gap persists: the concrete nature of the skills and knowledge needed for effectively employing artificial intelligence in consultancy.

Hence, to this identified gap, our research question emerges as a natural response: what are the skills and knowledge required to leverage artificial intelligence within the consultancy sector?

At the same time, we identified a consensus around the vital role of educational institutions, such as the Louvain School of Management, in preparing students to integrate AI successfully and ethically. With some authors advocating for a rethinking of curricula in response to the rise of AI, claiming that it is imperative to assess and adapt educational programs. Therefore, our research will extend to compare the competencies identified in the initial question with those emphasized by the LSM in its Competency Framework. This comparative analysis seeks to explore the extent to which LSM graduates are prepared to effectively navigate the landscape of AI integration within the consultancy field.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this section, we explain the methodology utilized to address the research inquiries, structured to accommodate the dual nature of the study: identifying the skills required to leverage AI in consultancy and comparing them with those acquired during a master's degree at the LSM.

3.2 Hypotheses

Based on the existing literature, our hypotheses are as follows:

Sutton's research (2019), based on "The Consulting Skills for 2030" study conducted by the Centre for Management Consulting Excellence in 2018, allows us to propose that:

H1: Traditional consultancy skills: Despite the growing integration of AI technologies, traditional key consultancy skills such as change management, project management, stakeholder management, and data analysis remain vital for effective consultancy practices.

The research conducted by Zeiden et al. (2020), Santana & al (2022) and Polakova et al. (2023) leads us to consider the two following hypotheses:

H2: Technical competencies: To maximize the utilization of AI in their professional activities, consultants must possess foundational AI technical knowledge and skills, encompassing its

historical evolution, identification of the primary tools, awareness of their constraints, and a practical comprehension of their applications in consulting contexts and their potential benefits.

The research conducted by Zeiden et al. (2020) and Polakova et al. (2023) prompt us to contemplate following hypothesis:

H3: Increasing importance of soft skills: The integration of AI into consultancy practices enhances the importance of consultants' soft skills, with the most crucial being communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and flexibility.

The research conducted by Saxena et al. (2023) and Ginguta et al. (2023) allows us to formulate this hypothesis:

H4: Awareness of ethical concerns: Consultants need to grasp the societal implications, including ethical, social, and ecological aspects, stemming from the integration of AI in consultancy and they should stay informed on best practices to mitigate them.

The paper of Bongomin & al. (2020) leads us to the last hypothesis:

H5: Preference for generalists: To effectively leverage AI technologies, consultants must possess a broad range of skills and knowledge ("generalists") rather than those deep expertise in a narrow field ("specialists").

3.3 Overview of the methodology

We employ a two-fold methodology to address the research questions and verify the hypotheses. Initially, we verify the hypotheses utilizing qualitative research methodologies, particularly semi-structured interviews, facilitating a connection between theoretical concepts and real-case scenarios (Hayashi & al., 2019). Subsequently, we compare the results with the LSM Competency Framework to assess alignment, leading to conclusions and recommendations.

In the following sections, we delve into the sample used, the interview approach, and the data analysis methods. Finally, we discuss the methodology's limitations.

3.4 Sample

In order to provide clarity, a table has been included in [Appendix 3.1](#) containing information about the participants of the study and their categorization into groups.

Ten interviewees representing consulting firms were involved in the study, classified into three distinct groups: LSM alumni currently employed as consultants, professionals holding managerial roles within the same consulting firm, and consultants from various other companies, with additionally a specialization in the field of AI. This categorization helps us understand their perspectives and identify relevant questions.

The individuals comprising the first two groups exclusively work at Accenture. The deliberate decision to focus primarily on one company was driven by practical considerations. Given the constraints of time, instead of dispersing our efforts across multiple firms, we prioritized depth over breadth, opting for a thorough analysis within a single organization. However, to validate the relevance of our findings within the broader industry context, we included the last group, comprising members from other consulting companies. Furthermore, the selection of Accenture was influenced by various factors. Firstly, our internship experience at the firm facilitated access to individuals for interviews. Additionally, Accenture's reputation for expertise in digitalization and innovation rendered it an ideal candidate for studying the latest trends and practices in AI implementation within the consultancy industry. By focusing on Accenture, we aimed to glean insights from one of the most cutting-edge consultancy firms in terms of digital transformation, thereby ensuring the relevance and timeliness of our research findings (Case Interview, n.d.).

The first group encompasses young LSM alumni consultants, including two graduates and one intern at the end of its cursus. This group provides insights into their utilization of AI, the encountered challenges, valuable competencies, and reflections on the preparedness provided by LSM. Two of them have experienced the introduction of ChatGPT, providing perspectives on its impact on their roles. In the analysis, they are referred to as Consultants A, B, and C.

The second group includes managers at Accenture occupying key roles such as an HR Manager and a Data & AI Managing Director. This group offers insights at a higher, more strategic level, shedding light on strategic approaches to incorporating AI within their organization, the diverse

challenges encountered in navigating AI-driven initiatives at both organizational and team levels, the competencies deemed essential for their team members, and expectations regarding future professionals entering the consultancy field. In the analysis, they are referred to as Managers A, B, C, and D.

The final group comprises consultants from alternative consulting firms: two from smaller firms and one from a comparable-sized firm with no specific focus on digitalization. By incorporating these participants, we can conduct comparisons across findings across various companies. Furthermore, these individuals possess specialized knowledge in AI: one serves as an AI ethicist, another provides training to companies and individuals on AI integration into their operations, and the third delivers some courses at a business school. Integrating these diverse roles provides a range of perspectives on AI integration, encompassing ethical considerations, hands-on training, and academic insights, thus enriching the study with a breadth of viewpoints. In the analysis, they are referred to as External A, B, and C.

3.5 Interviews

We conducted ten individual semi-structured interviews. While the majority were conducted online due to practical reasons, efforts were made to establish trust and foster an open dialogue with each participant. Before the interviews, we informed participants about the study's purpose and information utilization.

Subsequently, understanding participants' roles was crucial for comprehending the subjectivity of their responses and gaining a nuanced perspective of their viewpoints.

The interviews began with questions regarding AI opportunities, tools, application areas, and challenges, followed by discussions on the competencies required. This sequential approach aimed to explore the extent of AI integration and understand the rationale behind the required competencies to mitigate potential terminologies variations.

We utilized customized interview guides tailored to the specific roles of each participant to ensure the relevance of our questions. An example of the questionnaire can be found in [Appendix 3.2](#). All interviews were conducted with the participant's consent and audio recorded. Subsequently, these recordings were transcribed for analysis. This approach enabled us to be

fully engaged during the interviews, creating a comfortable environment for respondents without the distraction of notetaking.

While we structured conversations to encompass all topics, the interconnected nature of the questions often resulted in responses spanning multiple categories. To address this, we employed a structured data analysis approach, which will be elucidated in the subsequent section.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is often considered the most daunting aspect of qualitative research, as highlighted by Sapsford and Jupp (as cited in Kakabadse & al., 2006). In recognition of this challenge, we adopted a structured approach encompassing transcription, organization, categorization, and interpretation.

For the first part of the research, we organized the gathered data based on interview themes, encompassing opportunities, challenges, competencies, and employees' readiness. Subsequently, we compare findings across different interviewee groups, exploring potential similarities or differences, whether among roles or across company sizes. This systematic arrangement facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and emerging insights. Furthermore, this method enabled us to conduct a rigorous comparison of the collected data with the initial hypotheses formulated at the onset of the research. Through this comparative analysis, we were able to discern evidence either supporting, refining, or indicating the need for further investigation into our hypotheses.

Upon verifying the hypotheses, our analytical journey extended to a deeper examination of the competencies acquired within the master's program, as outlined by the LSM Compass. By aligning our findings with the competencies delineated in the program, we gained valuable insights into the efficacy of the educational curriculum in preparing students for the demands of the consultancy industry in the age of AI.

Throughout the interview phase, engaging in conversations with LSM academics has offered invaluable insights into their framework and has directed our approach to utilizing the data.

Acknowledging the constraints inherent in directly comparing our findings with academic programs, we have chosen to concentrate on the competencies acquired upon completion of the program rather than the specific teaching methods and course content. Although this study represents an initial foray into the subject, its objective is to furnish educators with valuable insights and inspiration as they endeavor to incorporate AI education into their programs.

3.7 Limits of the methodology

Acknowledging the limitations of the methodology employed is essential for gaining a nuanced understanding of its scope and implications.

Initially, we recognize the constraints associated with our sample, which predominantly reflects a consultancy-centric perspective, potentially overlooking insights from individuals from other companies, educational experts, and clients. Broadening future studies to include these perspectives could enrich the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Moreover, the research does not comprehensively explore the diverse roles and responsibilities within consultancy firms. While interviewees were categorized into distinct groups, further examination of consultant roles could provide a deeper understanding of AI integration and skill requirements within different contexts.

Moreover, the study lacks quantitative data, relying solely on qualitative insights providing subjective outcomes. Subsequent studies could incorporate quantitative data collection methods, such as surveys or statistical analysis.

Next to that, definitions of key concepts, such as “skills”, “competencies” and related terms, were not standardized across the literature, individuals involved, the consulting community, and the LSM Competency Framework potentially impacting the clarity and effectiveness of communication. Similarly, the terms “artificial intelligence” and “generative artificial intelligence” were used interchangeably.

Finally, while the study compares interview results with the LSM Competency Framework, it does not thoroughly investigate the teaching methods or course content of the master’s program. This narrow focus on end competencies may overlook nuances in their effective acquisition and development throughout the program.

4. Practical analysis

4.1 First part:

In this section, a comparative analysis is conducted between the findings derived from interviews and the hypotheses formulated based on the literature review. Initially, context derived from the interviews regarding the state of AI integration and its impacts at Accenture, where most interviewees are employed, is provided. This context encompasses the AI tools utilized, areas of applications, impacts, opportunities, and challenges encountered. This contextual approach is deemed essential due to the subjective nature of qualitative research outcomes and the limited academic literature available on the current state of AI integration within consulting firms, as well as the potential variations between them. By delving into the specific circumstances at Accenture, this approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nuance of AI integration within the consultancy industry. Furthermore, it assists in elucidating the required competencies and helps mitigate potential differences in terminologies, thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

While analysing the interviews, we considered the potential variations among different categories of interviewees, such as managers versus employees or those from large firms versus smaller firms. We specifically highlight and explain any divergences in their responses when observed. However, for clarity, if the perceptions were consistent across these groups, we do not delve into detailed comparisons for every category.

AI integration at Accenture

In the realm of consultancy, the utilization of AI can be perceived through two distinct perspectives: "AI as a tool" for daily operational tasks and "AI as a business opportunity" to present to clients. These two aspects are interconnected, as observed by one interviewee who highlighted that the internal utilization of AI tools also serves as a compelling selling point to potential clients. Internally at Accenture, the prevalent use of AI primarily revolves around chatbots. Interviewees consistently referenced ChatGPT as the most utilized AI tool within the organization. This chatbot appears to have gained widespread adoption, with one interviewee, an intern, noting that its team recommended its utilization "for everything" upon joining the company, underscoring its extensive usage across various tasks. Additionally, it was revealed that Accenture has developed its own proprietary chatbot,

exclusively available to its workforce. *Despite our inquiries about AI in general, interviewees consistently mentioned generative AI tools like ChatGPT, demonstrating it as a primary usage of AI in consultancy. Therefore, our findings reflect this emphasis on generative AI, which is why the term "AI" in this thesis predominantly pertains to generative AI.*

Accenture has adopted a proactive stance towards employee education on AI, implementing a range of initiatives to enhance their familiarity with technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence. One notable initiative is the development of the "Technology Quotient (TQ)" platform, which offers employees a user-friendly pathway to acquaint themselves with various technological concepts, including AI. Moreover, the company demonstrates a commitment to fostering AI skills and awareness among its workforce through extensive internal and external communications. This includes incorporating AI topics into conferences, integrating AI-related pitches at company events, and hosting dedicated conferences specifically focused on AI. These efforts reflect Accenture's dedication to ensuring that its employees are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the evolving landscape of AI technology effectively.

Interviewees unanimously agree that the integration of AI must be approached with caution and necessitates the acquisition of specific competencies. They express a shared sentiment that consultants currently lack the requisite preparation to effectively utilize AI technology. In their view, assistance from higher education institutions would be invaluable in equipping consultants with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of AI integration more effectively.

Opportunities and challenges

Managers and consultants alike identify numerous opportunities associated with AI integration. Among the most frequently mentioned opportunities are the potential to enhance value for clients through the delivery of more personalized solutions at an accelerated pace, the streamlining and automation of routine tasks to enable greater focus on strategic aspects of work, access to extensive datasets, bridging of skills gaps, creation of new business avenues, and the potential reduction in the number of consultants required (although this is perceived both as a challenge and an opportunity). While managers highlight these opportunities broadly, consultants offer concrete examples

of AI utilization in their daily tasks. These examples include using ChatGPT to generate Excel formulas, leveraging Accenture's chatbot for HR-related inquiries, utilizing AI support for communication writing to inspire creativity and facilitate personalization, and accomplishing tasks independently that previously required group efforts.

However, alongside these opportunities, participants also identify numerous challenges associated with AI integration. These challenges include concerns about the improper use of AI impacting company performance, heightened client expectations, the risk of over-reliance on AI-generated responses, the selection of appropriate AI tools, increased competition making differentiation more challenging, issues related to cost management, data reliability, intellectual property, and ethical considerations. Manager D (Appendix 3.3.7) also highlighted the challenge of motivating employees to embrace AI, citing awareness gaps, fear of job displacement, and resistance to change.

While young consultants identified fewer challenges, their observations were consistent with those of the managers and provided more concrete examples. They mentioned instances of erroneous AI-generated responses requiring verification, the absence of recent data in chatbots, the inability to distinguish between fiction and reality, and increasing client demands due to awareness of AI's capabilities.

Although the sample size is not fully representative, with insights previously provided coming from Accenture's professionals, the inclusion of the last group, comprising individuals from diverse companies, provides valuable insights into AI usage, opportunities, and challenges across different organizational contexts. What emerged is similarity in the applications, opportunities, and challenges, albeit a less advanced level of integration in smaller firms. For instance, while all companies interviewed utilize tools like ChatGPT, only large firms like Accenture have developed proprietary chatbots. Nonetheless, all companies express plans for further AI integration in the future.

Competencies required to leverage AI

With a comprehensive understanding of the context and the current state of AI integration within the participating companies, the focus now shifts to exploring the skills and knowledge required to leverage AI opportunities and address its challenges. Initially, we considered counting the frequency of each competency mentioned. However, due to potential variations

in terminology, we decided it would be more prudent to analyse each hypothesis individually to understand why these competencies might be important. Therefore, the subsequent analysis examines each hypothesis in detail to elucidate their significance in effectively navigating the complexities of AI integration.

Detailed analysis of each hypothesis

H1: Traditional consultancy skills:

Traditional key consultancy skills identified in the literature were change management, project management, stakeholder management, and data analysis. Based on the interviews, they seem to remain very relevant in the age of AI for various reasons.

Change management: this competence facilitates smooth transitions during the adoption of new technologies, adaptation of processes, and addressing resistance to change. This skill is essential for motivating teams to embrace new ways of working and integrating AI technologies effectively. Manager D (Appendix 3.3.7) explained that motivating people to adopt AI is one of the main challenges both internally and externally as *"AI can help with certain tasks in the clients' companies, but also in the daily routines of the consultants themselves. They need to be able to let go of some of their work and integrate generative AI"*.

Project management: this competence remains crucial for effectively capitalizing on the new project opportunities facilitated by AI. However, the significance of this skill is augmented by the increasing automation of basic tasks by AI. As AI takes on these routine responsibilities, the role and value of consultants are emphasized in the management sphere. According to Manager A (Appendix 3.3.4), *"AI increases the value of consultants, but this value lies more in their strategy and management skills"*.

Stakeholder management: in the context of AI, this skill is crucial to be the one that sells the "business opportunities offered by AI" as explained by Consultant B (Appendix 3.3.2) and fostering trust within clients as *"AI may evoke apprehension due to newness and reluctant to change"* as highlighted by Manager D (Appendix 3.3.7).

Data analysis: this skill is increasingly important but should be interpreted in a broader sense. While AI technologies can analyse vast amounts of data, consultants are needed to assess data quality, interpret results, and verify findings. Manager B (Appendix 3.3.2) explained that “*while many individuals prioritize outcomes, they often overlook the critical role of data in driving these results. Hence, mastering skills in data management, governance, and architecture is imperative for consultants*”.

In conclusion, although the context in which they are applied may be different, traditional consultant skills remain relevant and highly important in the age of AI, validating our first hypothesis.

H2: Technical competencies:

The findings from our interviews confirm a unanimous consensus among participants about the critical importance of possessing a foundational understanding of AI to maximize its benefits in consultancy.

Rationale: Technical expertise is imperative for consultants when it comes to enhancing daily tasks (“AI as a tool”) and identifying AI-driven business opportunities (“AI as a business”) effectively. It allows consultants to identify when to use AI, which tool, and effectively use it. In this regard, External A (Appendix 3.3.8) explained that “*AI can negatively impact the consultants’ work if the wrong tool is chosen or badly used*”. Moreover, consultants must be adept at explaining its complexities and potential benefits to clients while presenting AI as a business opportunity. “*Clients fear this mysterious technology, explaining how it works and demystifying it is crucial*” underscored Manager D (Appendix 3.3.7).

Additionally, a strong technical foundation allows consultants to communicate effectively with data scientists and IT professionals, facilitating collaboration and ensuring the seamless integration of AI technologies into business processes.

Nature of AI knowledge: Participants highlighted the importance of grasping the fundamentals of AI, such as the core principles, available tools, and their limitations. This foundational knowledge enables consultants to effectively apply AI technologies and customize solutions to meet client needs. External B (Appendix 3.3.9), an expert in AI integration training for

companies, explained that his courses encompass the technical aspects of AI, including its various application, including “*a brief historical overview to underscore its evolutionary roots, elucidating the diverse range of AI tools available, their technical capabilities and limitations, and demonstrating how these tools can be effectively applied within specific contexts*”.

Level of proficiency: While a deep technical mastery of AI technologies is not a prerequisite, solid foundational knowledge is non-negotiable. “*The aim is not to replace the technical teams but to facilitate effective collaboration with them*” explained Manager C (Appendix 3.3.6), before adding that it remains a very big challenge today.

This insight validates the second hypothesis and provides a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons, the specific technical skills required, and the level of proficiency needed. However, it was also recognized that technical skills alone are insufficient to fully leverage AI in consultancy. This brings us to the next hypothesis, which posits the growing importance of soft skills in this context.

H3: Soft skills:

While the literature underscores the growing importance of soft skills in the context of AI integration, there is considerable variability in identifying which specific skills are deemed most essential. To explore this, participants were initially asked whether they perceive soft skills as increasingly vital when utilizing AI. Additionally, they were prompted to pinpoint the three most critical soft skills based on their experience and perspective.

Interestingly, many interviewees spontaneously highlighted the critical role of soft skills, also referred to as “human” or “people” skills, before being specifically asked about them. This unprompted acknowledgment indicates a pre-existing awareness within the consultancy community regarding the importance of soft skills. Among the participants who did not spontaneously mention it, all agreed with the statement, except for External A (Appendix 3.3.8) who expressed some skepticism, explaining that “*soft skills have always been significant. The distinction today lies in the fact that previously, you could potentially overlook them, but now, it's no longer feasible*”. It aligns with what Manager B (Appendix 3.3.5) added, that “*consulting firms have always looked at soft skills*”.

Rationale: Interviewees articulated several compelling reasons underpinning the heightened importance of soft skills in leveraging AI in consultancy. Manager A (Appendix 3.3.4) noted that with AI streamlining routine tasks, consultants now allocate more time to client interactions, where soft skills are crucial. Similarly, External C (Appendix 3.3.10) emphasized that while AI enhances productivity, it cannot replace human interactions, leading consultants to invest saved time in strengthening client relationships where soft skills are key. Manager C (Appendix 3.3.6) highlighted that as AI addresses skill gaps, consultants' differentiation primarily lies in their soft skills. Consultant C (Appendix 3.3.3) underscored the necessity of soft skills for effectively utilizing AI tools, particularly in communication and evaluation.

According to External A (Appendix 3.3.8), the success of AI projects largely hinges on people skills, constituting 70% of the outcomes, with the remaining 30% attributed to the quality of algorithms and technical skills. These insights confirm the increasing importance of soft skills in consultancy, validating the first part of our hypothesis. Hence, they are even important “before” working as a consultant, for candidates seeking to apply with one. Manager B (Appendix 3.3.5) elaborated on their awareness that candidates can utilize AI tools for preparing their applications. For this reason, human resources departments are placing even greater emphasis on interviews, which assess soft skills.

Regarding the most important soft skills, the results obtained were critical thinking (mentioned by 80% of the participants), adaptability (70%), and communication (60%), followed by collaboration (40%) and curiosity (30%). These findings align closely with what is found in the literature: communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and flexibility. Let's explore each skill one by one to understand why they are important in the context of AI, according to our interviewees.

Critical thinking (80%): This skill is necessary to assess the output generated by AI tools, verify its accuracy, and interpret its implications. As Consultant B (Appendix 3.3.2) points out, “*while AI has enabled certain tasks to be brought in-house that were previously outsourced, the need to rigorously assess the quality of work remains unchanged*”. Manager C (Appendix 3.3.6) explains that critically assessing the underlying data is essential because AI lacks critical sense. Therefore, critical thinking is what makes the human consultant indispensable. External A (Appendix 3.3.8) further emphasizes the universal importance of critical thinking, noting its relevance beyond AI integration. However, he expressed concerns about the adequacy of

critical thinking skills among individuals in general, suggesting a potential gap in this essential competency.

Adaptability (70%): Consultants must be prepared to embrace change, adjust their methods of working, and swiftly integrate new technologies into their workflows to remain effective in their roles. The HR manager (Appendix 3.3.7) explains that she wants to recruit individuals who demonstrate a willingness and capacity to adapt because the nature of their job today may not be the same tomorrow.

Communication (70%): Communication skills have undergone a transformation in the era of AI, extending beyond interpersonal interactions to include interactions with AI systems. As consultants engage with AI tools, the ability to pose precise questions, contextualize inquiries, and interpret responses becomes paramount. Moreover, effective communication is necessary to enhance collaboration with technical teams.

To conclude, this hypothesis is adjusted to “soft skills become even more important, with the most important being critical thinking, adaptability, and communication”.

H4: Awareness of ethical concerns:

This hypothesis was developed by recognizing the significant hurdles associated with integrating AI into professional contexts and acknowledging the pivotal role of educational programs in preparing students for this evolving landscape. The primary objective of the study is to initiate an assessment of the efficacy of the educational curriculum, particularly the LSM Compass, in adequately equipping students for AI-driven professional environments. Given LSM's mission to foster responsible leadership, ensuring that students, including potential future consultants, possess the necessary competencies to navigate the complexities of AI integration aligns seamlessly with this goal.

Among the young consultants, only one individual (Appendix 3.3.2) approached the importance of taking into consideration the ethical implications of AI integration. In particular, he emphasized the importance of security, clarifying that "*what is traditionally confidential remains confidential, even when using tools such as ChatGPT.*" This perspective, while crucial for maintaining data integrity, is not directly tied to ethical considerations...

Similarly, among the managers, only one of them expressed ethical concerns, Manager D (Appendix 3.3.7). She explained that *"AI is a mirror of society, reflecting all cognitive biases. For instance, if in the past, individuals predominantly recruited were white, from a certain school, AI would replicate this pattern as it statistically identifies it as a successful criterion. While numerous initiatives can address cognitive biases, the initial step is awareness"*.

On the contrary, among the participants in the final group, ethical awareness of AI integration was a unanimous concern. The AI ethicist (Appendix 3.3.8) elaborated on the myriad ethical dilemmas spanning domains like geopolitics, ecology, politics, and economics. However, he emphasized that these ethical challenges are not confined to AI alone but extend to technology in broader terms. Another participant in this cohort (Appendix 3.3.9) highlighted the significance for business schools to remain attuned to global developments, including advancements in AI, to nurture responsible leadership.

In conclusion, these findings validate the last hypothesis. However, despite its significance, AI ethical concerns awareness within the consulting community seems to remain a work in progress.

H5: Preference for generalists:

For this hypothesis, divergences emerged among the different groups of interviewees, notably between managers and young consultants.

The group comprising younger consultants did not emphasize the need for deep industry knowledge. Instead, they explained that they use tools such as ChatGPT to gather information about clients' industries before starting new projects, allowing them to deepen their project scope and fill knowledge gaps.

Conversely, the second group, consisting of managers, argued that specialization is needed in the age of AI. Manager B (Appendix 3.3.5) articulated that "expertise" is a valuable asset that distinguishes consultancy firms like Accenture from new competitors, despite the democratization of knowledge. Moreover, Manager D (Appendix 3.3.7) highlighted the necessity of deeply understanding industry-specific processes to identify opportunities for AI

optimization. Similarly, External B (Appendix 3.3.9), from the last group, underscored the importance of industry knowledge, noting AI's limitations in universal application.

Given these diverging perspectives, further research is needed to explore the long-term effectiveness of generalist versus specialist approaches in AI-driven consultancy before validating our hypothesis.

Overall, these findings confirm that while the consulting community recognizes the importance of evolving skills and ethical awareness, there is still work to be done in terms of preparedness.

Conclusion

The integration of AI within consultancy firms presents both significant opportunities and challenges. Our research, based on interviews with industry professionals, confirms that traditional consultancy skills remain vital in this evolving landscape. Skills such as change management, project management, stakeholder management, and data analysis continue to be fundamental for consultants, even as AI technologies become more prevalent.

Additionally, our findings underscore the increasing importance of a blend of technical and soft skills in the age of AI. A comprehensive grasp of AI technologies is fundamental for various aspects including tool selection, task enhancement, collaboration with technical teams, identification of project opportunities, and client service optimization. Soft skills, particularly critical thinking, adaptability, and communication have assumed greater significance in light of AI's proliferation. Ethical awareness is also vital to ensure the responsible use of AI technologies.

Our study also examined the debate between the need for “generalists” versus “specialists” in an AI-driven environment. However, given the differing perspectives between the interviewees’ categories, further research is needed to confirm or reject this hypothesis.

In conclusion, our findings confirm H1: Traditional consultancy skills, H2: Technical competencies, H3: Increasing importance of soft skills, and H4: Awareness of ethical concerns, while also providing more information about the underlying reasons and context. However, H5: Preference for generalists, requires further research before this hypothesis can be confirmed or rejected.

Additional hypothesis: Continuous learning

An additional hypothesis emerging from our analysis is the critical importance of continuous learning. This aspect was not sufficiently covered in the literature but perceived as vital by our interviewees given the rapid evolution of AI tools and the inevitability of future technological disruptions. Several participants explicitly mentioned the need for continuous learning to stay current with technological advancements. For instance, Manager D (Appendix 3.3.7), HR Manager, noted that they “*prioritize retaining individuals who are adaptable, eager and capable of continuous learning, as the tools we use today will likely change tomorrow*”. Therefore, fostering a culture of lifelong learning is essential for consultants to remain effective and competitive in their field.

This new hypothesis is:

H6: Continuous learning: In the rapidly evolving landscape of AI and technology, consultants must engage in continuous learning to keep pace with advancements.

Discussion

Alongside the verification of our primary hypotheses, several thought-provoking insights emerged. Initially, it became evident that the competencies under discussion are deeply interconnected. For example, understanding the technical workings of AI tools helps to recognize their limitations, thereby facilitating critical thinking. Additionally, effective communication skills, which now evolve to include interactions between people and tools, are essential for utilizing AI tools efficiently, blurring the distinction between technical and soft skills. Hence, these competencies hold value only when possessed collectively.

In addition, while the nature of consultancy tasks may evolve, with certain traditional tasks now automated or optimized by AI, the foundational competencies of an effective consultant remain unchanged. This was evident in our literature review, where we found that clients primarily seek consulting services for management expertise and an external perspective on their challenges. However, we observed that consultants today often utilize AI tools for tasks such as communication drafting, desk research, or other routine activities. These tasks, while facilitated by AI, do not inherently embody the value that clients seek from consultants. Therefore, this does not equate to less work for consultants. Instead, it allows them to focus on more strategic tasks. By acknowledging this shift, consultants can adapt their approach to leverage AI as a tool for enhancing their value proposition. The so-called "AI revolution" is

not the first technological disruption; similar concerns arose with the introduction of computers (Liu & al., 1998), a period during which consultants already played a significant role. In this context, ethical concerns awareness, soft skills, and proficient tool utilization have likely always been crucial.

Nevertheless, while the competencies outlined in the hypothesis may appear consistent, the contexts in which they are applied may evolve with each technological advancement. For instance, the emergence of AI tools brings forth new ethical considerations and operates with distinct technical mechanisms. Thus, consultants must continually refine their skill sets to navigate these evolving landscapes effectively.

4.2 Second part:

With the hypothesis refined and the essential competencies for leveraging AI in consultancy identified, we proceed to the next phase of our analysis: comparing these findings with the competencies outlined in the LSM Competency Framework.

Detailed examination of each hypothesis

Our initial idea included mapping the competencies discussed during interviews onto the framework. This visual comparison would have offered a visual insight into the extent to which the identified skills align with the framework. However, upon reviewing the literature, we encountered a disparity in the terminologies and interpretations of competencies, skills, and knowledge across different disciplines, encompassing both business and academic spheres. This variance underscores the necessity for a thorough examination of each hypothesis in isolation. By conducting a detailed analysis of each hypothesis individually, we can elucidate the nuanced connotations associated with the respective terms, thus fostering a clearer understanding.

H1: Traditional consultancy skills

The Competency Framework ([Appendix 2](#)) demonstrates a strong alignment with Hypothesis 1, as evidenced by the correlation between each competence included in the hypothesis and the framework.

Change management:

- Innovation and entrepreneurship (C4): This LSM competency forms one of the axes of the Compass. It explicitly underscores the ability to lead change, thereby covering essential skills for guiding organizations through transformations, a crucial aspect of change management.
- Corporate citizenship (C1): This places emphasis on ethical considerations and social responsibility, important for managing change with regard to all stakeholders and the broader impact of AI.

Project management:

- Project management (C7): Also an axe of the framework, and explicitly includes analysing projects, organizing resources, and managing risks; all key aspects of effective project management.
- Scientific and systematic approach (C3): Covering several competencies that are vital for effective project management.

Stakeholder management:

- Communication and Interpersonal Skills (C8): these competencies are critical for managing relationships with various stakeholders.
- Work Effectively in an International and Multicultural Environment (C5): Understanding diverse perspectives plays a critical role in stakeholder management, especially in global AI projects.

Data analysis:

- A scientific and systematic approach (C3): it covers collecting, selecting and analysing relevant information using rigorous, advanced and appropriate methods (C3.2).
- Knowledge and reasoning (C2): it includes the ability to use advanced and current research results and methods (C2.2).

H2: Technical competencies

With regard to the need for technical skills, which are referred to in this paper as the basic foundation for AI integration in consultancy, encompassing understanding AI principles, tools, and limitations, it is not feasible to definitively ascertain complete alignment between the competencies acquired at the LSM by relying solely on the Competency Framework. While Competency 9.4, "Knowledge and Reasoning," touches upon the importance of foundational

knowledge to operate in various management domains, it does not explicitly address the technical skills specific to AI. Similarly, competencies such as "Scientific and Systematic Approach" and "Innovation and Entrepreneurship", also suggest coverage of skills that may indirectly support AI integration. However, it would be advantageous to delve into the course content in order to ensure that AI technical aspects are adequately integrated into the curriculum to bridge this potential gap.

H3: Increasing importance of soft skills

The Competency Framework encompasses the skills highlighted in hypothesis 3. While this Compass may not explicitly label these skills as "soft skills", its framework inherently encompasses the competencies referred by this term in our study, considering the diverse definitions and terminology across disciplines. After the literature and interviews, it can be inferred that the most critical are critical thinking, adaptability and communication, which are explicitly included in the framework. Furthermore, "critical thinking", which emerged as the most frequently mentioned skill, occupies a central position within the framework.

H4: Awareness of ethical concerns

We are here in a similar situation to hypothesis 2. Ethical considerations are embedded within various competencies. For example, in competency 1.2 "incorporating ethical values, integrity, and respect for laws into decisions and actions". However, further exploration into course content is necessary to determine whether teachers cover these aspects in regards with AI integration in dedicated classes.

H5: Preference for generalist

We did not pursue this hypothesis as we could not reach a consensus during the first phase of the analysis, and subsequently, did not confirm or refute the hypothesis.

H6: Continuous learning

This hypothesis is explicitly mentioned in the LSM Competency Framework more than once. For example, competency 9.4 highlights the necessity of quickly and independently acquiring new knowledge and skills to advance professionally and learning from successes and errors with a spirit of continuous growth. This directly aligns with the hypothesis that continuous learning is essential. Another example is competency 9.3, which encourages proactive self-assessment and seeking growth opportunities, reinforcing the idea that continuous learning is a perpetual process.

In conclusion, hypothesis H6: Continuous learning is supported by the LSM Competency Framework.

Conclusion

Based on our analysis, the LSM Competency Framework demonstrates a strong alignment with the fundamental competencies necessary for consultancy in an AI-driven context. This includes both traditional consultancy skills and the "soft skills" highlighted in this study, as well as fostering a culture of continuous learning. It also appears to address technical proficiency and ethical considerations adequately. However, further examination of the course content is warranted to confirm its direct connection to AI-related topics.

In relation to our hypotheses, Hypotheses 1 (Traditional consultancy skills), 3 (Increasing importance of soft skills), and 6 (Continuous learning) are explicitly supported by the framework. Hypotheses 2 and 4 also find reflection, but their integration needs further validation through detailed course content analysis to confirm the integration of AI-specific aspects. Hypothesis 5 was not further pursued due to inconclusive findings in the initial phase.

Discussion

In addition to the objective analysis of the findings, some thoughts emerged. First, by emphasizing broad and transferable competencies not explicitly linked to AI, the LSM Compass remains highly relevant despite advancements in AI. This framework equips students with enduring competencies essential for an AI-enhanced consultancy environment, covering competencies that AI cannot replace. Indeed, the absence of explicit AI knowledge within the framework could be advantageous. Incorporating precise AI-related content would require

frequent updates due to AI's rapid evolution. By prioritizing broader competencies, students develop versatile abilities that remain relevant despite AI's ongoing advancements. AI is not the first, nor will it be the last technological disruption; similar transitions were seen with the advent of computers and the internet (Liu & al., 1998).

The LSM Competency Framework not only aligns with the evolving demands of consultancy but also embodies the essence of responsible leadership in a rapidly changing world. The correspondence between the competencies identified in the hypotheses and those delineated in the LSM Competency Framework underscores the curriculum's efficacy in equipping students for real-world challenges, including but not limited to the integration of AI in consultancy.

Additionally, positive feedback from alumni further reaffirms the LSM's commitment to providing comprehensive education and support to its students, ensuring their readiness to excel in post-graduate environments. Alumni also suggested ideas, such as incorporating more practical cases, offering valuable insights for continuous improvement.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

In this thesis, we aimed to identify the key competencies required to effectively integrate AI into consultancy and to evaluate how well the LSM curriculum aligns with these requirements using the LSM Compass as a benchmark.

To achieve this, we first conducted a literature review to establish relevant hypotheses. Subsequently, we gathered qualitative data through interviews with consultants, AI specialists, and LSM alumni to verify these hypotheses. The findings were then compared with the LSM Competency Framework to assess the alignment of LSM's curriculum with the essential competencies identified for AI-enhanced consultancy.

The findings provided valuable insights into the critical skills and knowledge needed to leverage artificial intelligence in consultancy, from a consultancy-centric perspective, and their alignment with the LSM Compass.

Competencies requirements in AI-enhanced consultancy

The incorporation of AI into consulting firms brings about notable opportunities and complexities. Insights drawn from interviews with industry experts validate the enduring importance of conventional consulting abilities amidst this evolving scenario. Skills like change management, project management, stakeholder management, and data analysis persist as indispensable. Furthermore, the emergence of AI highlights the need for consultants to possess a balanced blend of technical and soft skills. A comprehensive grasp of AI technologies is fundamental for various aspects including tool selection, task enhancement, collaboration with technical teams, identification of project opportunities, and client services optimization. Soft skills, such as critical thinking, adaptability, and communication, have assumed greater significance in light of AI's proliferation. Additionally, consultants must demonstrate awareness of ethical implications to ensure the responsible utilization of AI technologies. Finally, considering the continuous evolution of AI technologies and other advancements, it is essential to embrace lifelong learning. This commitment to ongoing education ensures that consultants remain adept at leveraging AI effectively and ethically, thereby maintaining their relevance and value in the consultancy field.

By embracing a holistic approach to skill development, integrating technical proficiency, soft skills, ethical considerations, and continuous learning, consultants can continue to thrive and provide invaluable guidance to their clients, regardless of the technological advancements that come their way.

Alignment with the LSM Competency Framework

Our research findings suggest that the LSM Competency Framework is compatible with the fundamental skills necessary for consultancy in an AI-driven landscape. This alignment is especially notable concerning traditional key consultancy competencies and the identified “soft skills” discussed in our study. Additionally, the framework's emphasis on continuous learning aligns well with the need for lifelong learning, essential for keeping pace with the rapid advancements in AI technology. Moreover, there appears to be concordance regarding AI technical proficiency and considerations of ethical implications within the framework. However, further examination of precise course content is warranted to establish a more direct correlation with AI-related topics.

5.2 Recommendations

While we acknowledge that academic members are in the best position to develop relevant and optimal course content, we provide some suggestions regarding the potential integration of AI. Our analysis indicates that the “AI revolution” does not necessitate a complete overhaul of the LSM Competency Framework. This framework, which emphasizes transferable skills not explicitly linked to AI, remains highly relevant and equips students with enduring competencies essential for an AI-enhanced consultancy environment, covering competencies that AI cannot replace. However, to address the growing significance of AI in various industries, including consultancy, we suggest the following recommendations.

First, it may be prudent to integrate AI-related themes into the course content. Faculty members should incorporate pertinent AI topics into their respective courses. For instance, finance courses could integrate sections on AI-enhanced financial models, while corporate social responsibility (CSR) courses might delve into AI's ethical implications and strategies for addressing them. They are the best positioned to determine optimal teaching methods and content, providing that they have the necessary AI understanding. Ongoing training in AI technologies for faculty members is essential to maintain updated and relevant course content. This could include organizing workshops and seminars with AI experts, collaborating with other business schools to share best practices, and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty members.

In light of the importance of soft skills, particularly critical thinking, adaptability, and communication, it is imperative that educational institutions focus on integrating these skills into their curriculum. More practical activities such as workshops, group projects, and networking events could be implemented and updated to reflect the evolving nature of soft skills. For instance, modules on adaptability could encourage students to embrace change and cultivate resilience in dynamic consultancy settings where AI technologies are continually evolving. Communication training could be enhanced to include strategies for effectively conveying technical concepts to non-technical stakeholders, a crucial skill in AI consultancy where bridging the gap between technical experts and clients is paramount.

Nevertheless, theory remains crucial, especially for developing critical thinking and learning abilities, necessitating a balanced approach. To illustrate this, it could consist of engaging students in creating simple databases to understand theoretical aspects, class sessions where

students critically evaluate AI outputs, such as those from ChatGPT but also maintaining classic examination methods to develop diverse learning abilities.

The full value of AI-related competencies is realized only when they are combined. Therefore, it is essential to ensure comprehensive coverage of all competencies identified across the program. Nevertheless, it may be advantageous to consider and leverage that they may also be optimally taught together. This could consist of projects involving AI tools, multidisciplinary teams, and real-world problems with client interactions,

Establishing more or deepening partnerships with consulting firms to facilitate real-world projects, internship opportunities, and networking events, all of which are suggested and appreciated by interviewed alumni, could be advantageous. These collaborations ensure the relevance of the skills taught. Some consultants suggested that higher education institutions play a vital role in preparing future joiners to integrate AI and face related challenges. However, we also found that certain industry- or company-specific skills can only be fully developed through practical experience or after joining the company. These collaborations could be done with consulting firms but also with AI professionals, or ideally, companies covering both aspects.

In conclusion, we do not recommend explicitly integrating AI into the framework. Instead, we suggest that each teacher consider integrating AI topics into their current classes in the most relevant manner. Nevertheless, it is crucial to regularly the framework's relevance and effectiveness. Perhaps, someday, a similar approach to what was done considering other major trends, such as CSR, might be necessary. This could involve adding a course to the common track, offering a seminar, or a specialization track covering the different aspects identified in the study.

5.3 Limits of the paper

The limitations of this study encompass various aspects that influence the breadth and depth of the findings. One significant limitation concerns the consistency of terminology used throughout the research. There was noticeable variability in the definitions of key terms such as “competency”, “skill”, and “artificial intelligence”, within academic literature and among industry professionals. Standardizing these terms across academic

and professional contexts would enhance clarity and facilitate effective communication. Similarly, the terms “artificial intelligence” and “generative artificial intelligence” were often used interchangeably. Although we aimed to explore AI broadly, interviewees exclusively referenced generative AI tools like ChatGPT. As a result, our findings are primarily reflective of generative AI, which should be considered when interpreting the results.

Another limitation stems from the narrow focus of the study, which primarily involved consulting professionals from specific companies. This restricted scope may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and experiences prevalent across the broader consultancy industry or within academia. Broadening the research to include a wider array of roles within consultancy and other career sectors pursued by LSM graduates could provide a more comprehensive understanding of AI’s impact and the competencies required.

Furthermore, the research relied predominantly on qualitative methods, which, while valuable for capturing individual experiences and insights, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Integrating quantitative methods and conducting comparative analyses across different business schools would enhance the depth of the insights and offer a broader perspective on how various institutions prepare their students for AI-driven environments.

Finally, although the study compares the interview results with the LSM Competency Framework, it does not delve deeply into the teaching methods or course content of the master’s program. This narrow focus on end competencies may overlook the nuances of effective skill acquisition and precise course content that occur throughout the program.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

In terms of suggestions for future research, several avenues warrant exploration to deepen our understanding of the skills required by consultants to effectively leverage AI and assess the preparedness of LSM students in this domain.

Firstly, broadening data sources by incorporating quantitative data, such as online surveys, and perspectives from other stakeholders, including consultants’ clients, educational experts, and professionals from various industries, would offer a more nuanced view and verify whether our findings can be generalized to other sectors.

Secondly, it would be beneficial to validate the effective acquisition of skills within the LSM Framework to ensure no gaps between intended and actual learning outcomes.

In a broader context, exploring the dual role of AI as both a subject of study and a tool in education could yield valuable insights into optimizing learning experiences and fostering student skill development.

Furthermore, while universities in the literature mostly bear the responsibility of preparing students for the AI-driven era, our findings suggest that companies also have their own processes, and graduates from business schools pursue diverse career paths. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to investigate the respective roles of educational institutions and companies in imparting relevant skills.

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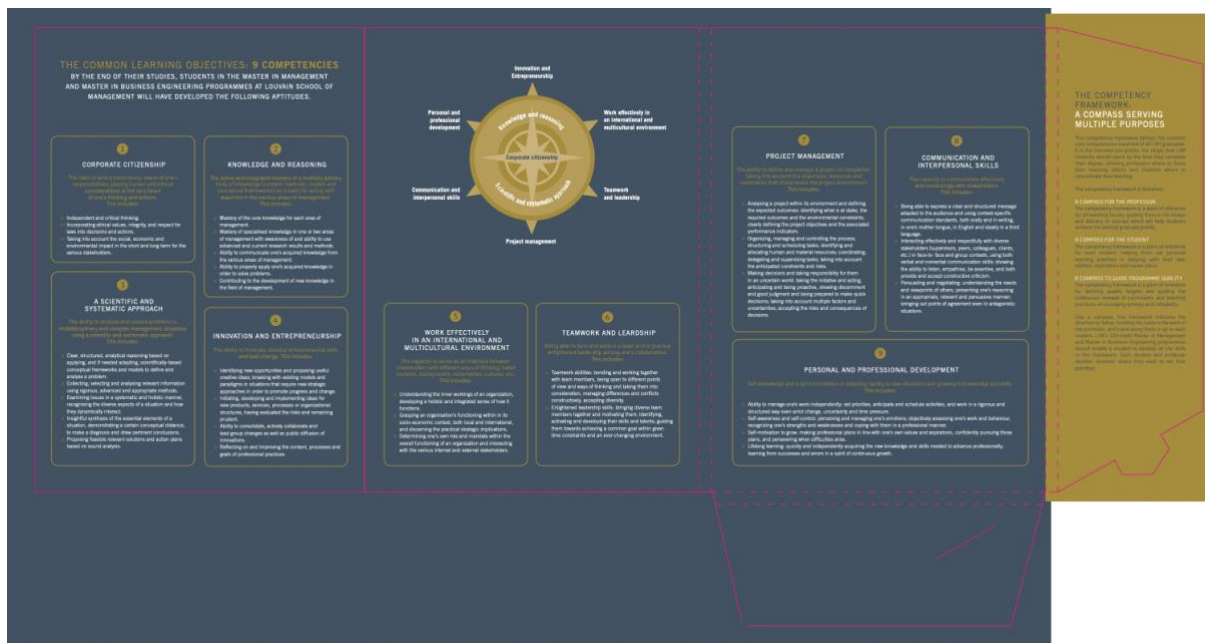
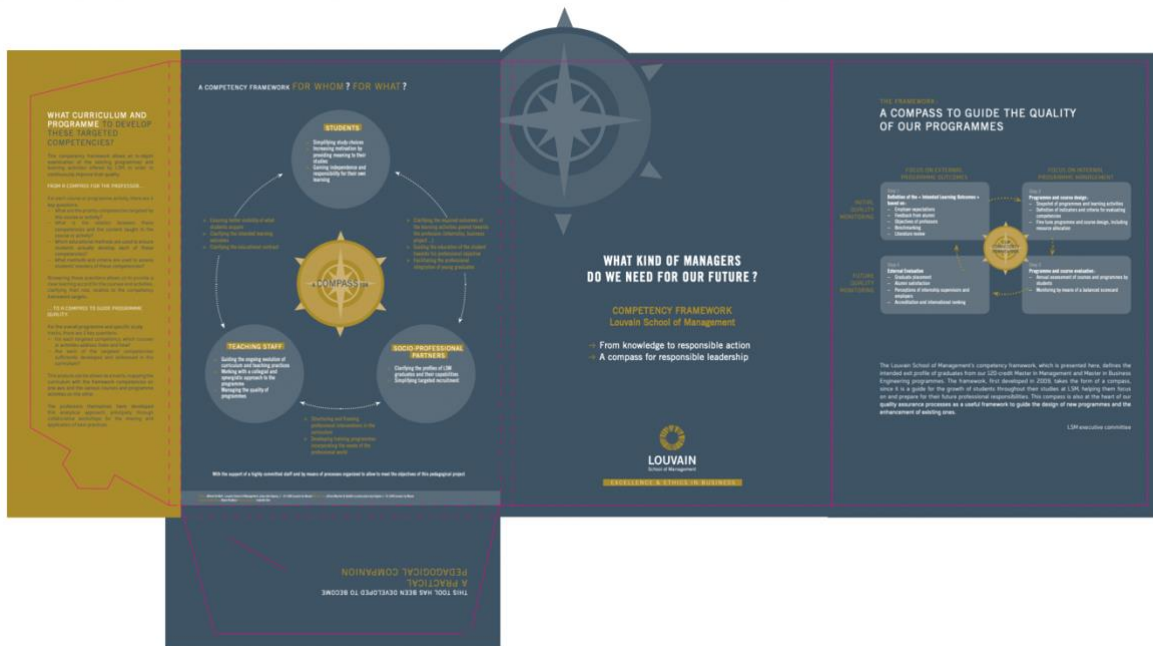
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Appendix

Appendix 1: Definitions

Artificial intelligence	"The simulation of human intelligence in machines, enabling them to perform tasks and make decisions that typically require human intelligence" (Kok & al., 2009)
Generative artificial intelligence	"A subset of artificial intelligence that focuses on creating new content, such as text, audio, or video, using machine learning models trained on existing data" (Lund & Wang, 2023)
Consultancy	"A company that gives advice on a particular subject" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.)
Competency	"A competency is a cluster of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes that affects a major part of one's job (a role or responsibility), that correlates with performance on the job, that can be measured against well-accepted standards, and that can be improved via training and development" (Parry, 1996 p.50)
Knowledge	"Knowledge is employed as a term that encompasses cognitive attributes as well as an attribute that refers to a person's familiarity with and capability of doing something that does not require demonstration or application in a tangible or observable sense" (Hlavac, 2023) or "simply put, 'knowledge' is information, facts or understanding about something" (OpenLearn, n.d.)
Skill	"A skill is either a demonstration of procedural knowledge or the capability to demonstrate procedural knowledge. Such procedural knowledge usually results from training, i.e. a process of learning and acquisition of proficiencies, including training that may be self-directed" (Hlavac, 2021) or "a 'skill' means that you are able to do something" (OpenLearn, n.d.)
Soft Skill	"Intra- and interpersonal (socio-emotional) skills, essential for personal development, social participation and workplace success. They include skills such as communication, ability to work on multidisciplinary teams, adaptability, etc." (Kechagias, 2011)
Hard skill	"Also called technical skills, encompass technology-based or discipline-based knowledge, such as computer use, programming languages, database management, optimization, and key areas in managerial accounting, finance, and operations management" (Zeidan & Bishnoi, 2020) or "technical skills include knowledge of proficiency in a certain specialized field, such as engineering, computers, finance or manufacturing" (Čiarniene & al. 2010)

Appendix 2: LSM Competency Framework



THE COMMON LEARNING OBJECTIVES: 9 COMPETENCIES

BY THE END OF THEIR STUDIES, STUDENTS IN THE MASTER IN MANAGEMENT AND MASTER IN BUSINESS ENGINEERING PROGRAMMES AT LOUVAIN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT WILL HAVE DEVELOPED THE FOLLOWING APTITUDES.

1

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP

The habit of acting consciously, aware of one's responsibilities, placing human and ethical considerations at the very heart of one's thinking and actions.

This includes:

- > Independent and critical thinking.
- > Incorporating ethical values, integrity, and respect for laws into decisions and actions.
- > Taking into account the social, economic and environmental impact in the short and long term for the various stakeholders.

2

KNOWLEDGE AND REASONING

The active and integrated mastery of a multidisciplinary body of knowledge [content, methods, models and conceptual frameworks] as a basis for acting with expertise in the various areas of management.

This includes:

- > Mastery of the core knowledge for each area of management.
- > Mastery of specialised knowledge in one or two areas of management with awareness of and ability to use advanced and current research results and methods.
- > Ability to communicate one's acquired knowledge from the various areas of management.
- > Ability to properly apply one's acquired knowledge in order to solve problems.
- > Contributing to the development of new knowledge in the field of management.

3

A SCIENTIFIC AND SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

The ability to analyse and resolve problems in multidisciplinary and complex management situations using a scientific and systematic approach.

This includes:

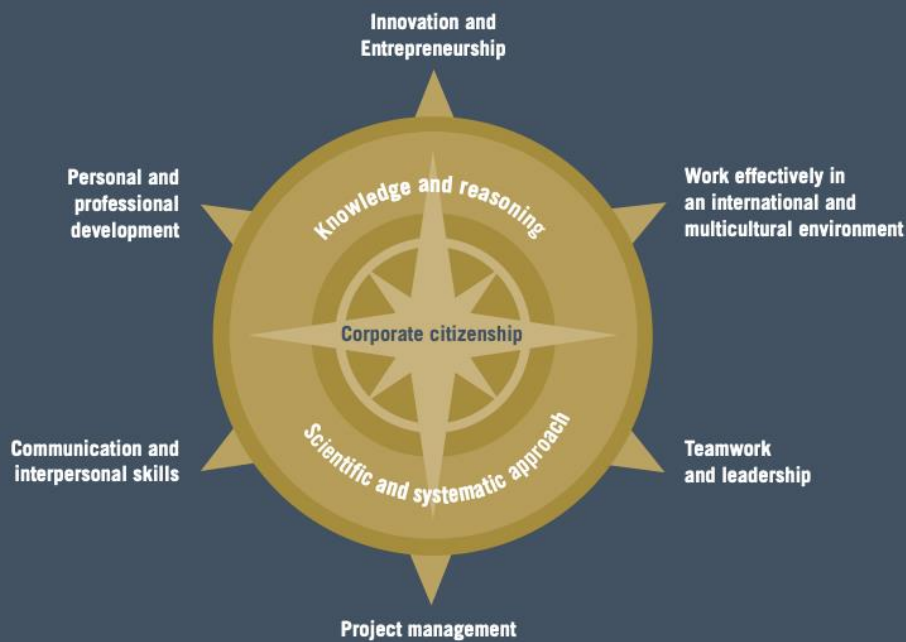
- > Clear, structured, analytical reasoning based on applying, and if needed adapting, scientifically-based conceptual frameworks and models to define and analyse a problem.
- > Collecting, selecting and analysing relevant information using rigorous, advanced and appropriate methods.
- > Examining issues in a systematic and holistic manner, recognising the diverse aspects of a situation and how they dynamically interact.
- > Insightful synthesis of the essential elements of a situation, demonstrating a certain conceptual distance, to make a diagnosis and draw pertinent conclusions.
- > Proposing feasible relevant solutions and action plans based on sound analysis.

4

INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The ability to innovate, develop entrepreneurial skills and lead change. This includes:

- > Identifying new opportunities and proposing useful creative ideas; breaking with existing models and paradigms in situations that require new strategic approaches in order to promote progress and change.
- > Initiating, developing and implementing ideas for new products, services, processes or organizational structures, having evaluated the risks and remaining prudent.
- > Ability to consolidate, actively collaborate and lead group changes as well as public diffusion of innovations.
- > Reflecting on and improving the content, processes and goals of professional practices.



5

WORK EFFECTIVELY IN AN INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The capacity to serve as an interface between stakeholders with different ways of thinking, belief systems, backgrounds, nationalities, cultures, etc.

This includes:

- > Understanding the inner workings of an organization, developing a holistic and integrated sense of how it functions.
- > Grasping an organisation's functioning within in its socio-economic context, both local and international, and discerning the practical strategic implications.
- > Determining one's own role and mandate within the overall functioning of an organization and interacting with the various internal and external stakeholders.

6

TEAMWORK AND LEADSHIP

Being able to form and work in a team and to practice enlightened leadership among one's collaborators.

This includes:

- > Teamwork abilities: bonding and working together with team members, being open to different points of view and ways of thinking and taking them into consideration, managing differences and conflicts constructively, accepting diversity.
- > Enlightened leadership skills: bringing diverse team members together and motivating them; identifying, activating and developing their skills and talents; guiding them towards achieving a common goal within given time constraints and an ever-changing environment.

7

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The ability to define and manage a project to completion, taking into account the objectives, resources and constraints that characterize the project environment.

This includes:

- > Analysing a project within its environment and defining the expected outcomes: identifying what is at stake, the required outcomes and the environmental constraints; clearly defining the project objectives and the associated performance indicators.
- > Organizing, managing and controlling the process: structuring and scheduling tasks; identifying and allocating human and material resources; coordinating, delegating and supervising tasks; taking into account the anticipated constraints and risks.
- > Making decisions and taking responsibility for them in an uncertain world: taking the initiative and acting, anticipating and being proactive, showing discernment and good judgment and being prepared to make quick decisions; taking into account multiple factors and uncertainties; accepting the risks and consequences of decisions.

8

COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

The capacity to communicate effectively and convincingly with stakeholders.

This includes:

- > Being able to express a clear and structured message adapted to the audience and using context-specific communication standards, both orally and in writing, in one's mother tongue, in English and ideally in a third language.
- > Interacting effectively and respectfully with diverse stakeholders (supervisors, peers, colleagues, clients, etc.) in face-to-face and group contexts, using both verbal and nonverbal communication skills: showing the ability to listen, empathise, be assertive, and both provide and accept constructive criticism.
- > Persuading and negotiating: understanding the needs and viewpoints of others; presenting one's reasoning in an appropriate, relevant and persuasive manner; bringing out points of agreement even in antagonistic situations.

9

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Self-knowledge and a spirit of initiative in adapting rapidly to new situations and growing in knowledge and skills.

This includes:

- > Ability to manage one's work independently: set priorities, anticipate and schedule activities, and work in a rigorous and structured way even amid change, uncertainty and time pressure.
- > Self-awareness and self-control: perceiving and managing one's emotions; objectively assessing one's work and behaviour, recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses and coping with them in a professional manner.
- > Self-motivation to grow: making professional plans in line with one's own values and aspirations, confidently pursuing those plans, and persevering when difficulties arise.
- > Lifelong learning: quickly and independently acquiring the new knowledge and skills needed to advance professionally; learning from successes and errors in a spirit of continuous growth.

Appendix 3: Interviews

3.1 Participants

Group n°	Pseudonym	Company	Role	In consultancy since...
1	Consultant A	Accenture	Consultant	Feb. 2023
1	Consultant B	Accenture	Consultant	Oct. 2022
1	Consultant C	Accenture	Intern	Feb. 2024
2	Manager A	Accenture	Business & Integration Architecture Manager	Jun. 2018 (Accenture since Mar. 2022)
2	Manager B	Accenture	Data & AI Managing Director	2007 to 2013 and back in 2018
2	Manager C	Accenture	Tech Architecture Delivery Manager	Oct. 2018
2	Manager D	Accenture	Human Resources Manager GAI responsible	2007
3	External A	Boston Consulting Group (BCG)	Consultant and Technology Ethicist	Sep. 2016
3	External B	BrightWolves	Consultant and AI Advisor	Jan. 2024
3	External C	Intys	Manager and Visiting Professor	Sep. 2016

3.2 Interview guide

Interview guide

Presentation

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, and share your professional background and role at Accenture?

AI opportunities and challenges

What opportunities does Artificial Intelligence offer to consultants, and how do consultants integrate AI into their daily professional lives? What are the associated opportunities and challenges?

(For experienced): How has your job changed since the emergence of AI?

Competencies needed

What are, according to you, the competencies required to successfully use AI in consultancy? Why?

Soft skills growing importance

In the literature, there is an emphasis on the enhanced importance of soft skills in maximizing the benefits offered by AI in consulting. Do you agree? If so, what are according to you the three most crucial?

Employees' readiness

Are young graduates joining Accenture adequately prepared to use AI in their work? How could higher education institutions prepare students for AI integration in consulting?

Closing

Thank you, do you have anything else to add that could be relevant to the subject matter?

3.3 Transcriptions

3.3.1 Consultant A

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your role at Accenture?

Certainly. I completed my bachelor's degree in business administration at ICHEC and pursued a master's degree in Sustainable Management at LSM. I joined Accenture in September 2023 as a Business Operation Analyst after an internship from February to May 2023.

What were the most significant challenges you faced when starting at Accenture and how has your master's degree at LSM benefited your work at Accenture?

Transitioning to professional life and mastering the requisite tools presented considerable challenges. Adapting to Accenture's environment and client expectations demanded professionalism and the acquisition of essential skills to initiate projects. Despite my education, I found certain hard skills, such as Excel and data analysis, crucial yet challenging to acquire on the job. Proficiency in tools like PowerPoint and Excel is particularly vital in consultancy.

The teamwork skills honed through group projects at LSM were invaluable, covering communication, idea development, listening, and organization. My Master's in Sustainable Management, along with the associated internship, provided a solid understanding of key concepts in this domain. Nonetheless, I believe a stronger emphasis on data analytics and proficiency in tools like PowerPoint and Excel would have been beneficial. A more robust focus on IT skills would have enhanced my readiness for consultancy roles.

How do you integrate AI into your daily tasks? Are there untapped opportunities? What challenges do you encounter?

Initially, I didn't utilize AI extensively. However, after subscribing to ChatGPT, I found it invaluable for filling skills gaps, including Excel formulas, and assistance in tasks like newsletter creation and communication. Additionally, I employ the chatbot developed at Accenture for HR-related queries. AI saves time, particularly in urgent situations, but also fosters creativity in communication and problem resolution.

Regarding the challenges, to get good outcomes, formulating queries properly is crucial, as AI necessitates well-structured questions. It's imperative to verify AI outcomes with other sources for reliability, particularly without a ChatGPT subscription.

In your opinion, what are the essential skills for integrating AI into consulting, and why?

Communication and teamwork are paramount. While AI simplifies tasks like newsletter creation, maintaining proficiency in essential skills without over-reliance on these tools is imperative. Continuous development of hard skills is vital to be aware of the tools' limitations and the effective evaluation of AI outputs. Foundational knowledge is essential for evaluating AI results accurately, verifying Excel formulas, and ensuring well-posed questions.

Do you agree with the growing emphasis on soft skills in maximizing AI benefits in consultancy? If so, which soft skills do you consider most important?

Absolutely. I would say that you need to be curious to verify generated answers and need to adapt to new tools. However, you still need basic technical knowledge.

How can higher education institutions prepare future graduates for entering the AI-enhanced consultancy field?

I believe that there could be more practical case studies and problem-solving exercises at the university. Courses should focus on practical applications and offer a wider range of practical workshops across the curriculum to develop soft skills even more.

For instance, I believe that LSM could incorporate more practical case studies and guest lectures, emphasizing workshops and alumni testimonials to offer practical courses. Combining theory with real-world applications, such as group work and problem-solving exercises, would be beneficial for soft skills development. Practical workshops enhance student engagement and readiness for the professional realm. Practical training, especially in the first year, could enhance students' readiness for the professional world. Implementing projects and practical courses, along with guest speakers and teamwork-focused sessions, would enrich students' learning experiences.

3.3.2 Consultant B

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your role at Accenture?

I graduated with a business engineering master's degree at LSM, specializing in Innovation Management and International Finance. I joined Accenture 1.5 years ago, working in S&C Resources and Utilities.

What were the most significant challenges you faced when starting at Accenture and how has your master's degree at LSM benefited your work at Accenture?

The primary challenge was adapting to the vast corporate environment with extensive administrative procedures, such as managing clients and handling time and expenses. This bureaucratic structure felt time-consuming and rigid, making the assimilation of various tools challenging.

My master's program instilled a structured approach to work, facilitating an organizational mindset while maintaining a unified direction. It also emphasized understanding problem causes before solutions, essential for effective problem-solving.

How do you utilize AI in your daily tasks? What competencies do you consider essential for leveraging AI in consulting?

AI accelerates processes by providing access to vast databases, replacing time-consuming tasks like desk research. You need to be able to write the right questions, verify AI-generated outputs, and technical understanding of AI tools are crucial for leveraging AI effectively.

Do you agree on the growing importance of soft skills in maximizing AI benefits in consultancy? If so, which ones are most important?

Yes, definitely! Critical thinking is crucial. Reviewing AI outputs is akin to scrutinizing external company outputs, and taking AI's output without critically assessing it poses risks. A blend of soft and hard skills is essential. While AI technology is crucial, critical thinking and security awareness are even more important.

How could LSM prepare students for AI integration in consulting?

LSM should teach the technical aspects of artificial intelligence, its applications, and limitations, emphasizing critical thinking and security. A seminar on AI awareness would be beneficial for students to gain a competitive edge. I wish there was a course on the practical use of AI tools like ChatGPT, considering its widespread usage now. Understanding its usage and risks would have been beneficial. In addition, universities should place more emphasis on soft skills development. As AI becomes integral, educational institutions need to adapt, possibly by developing a dedicated track for AI-related skills rather than a single course.

3.3.3 Consultant C

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your role at Accenture?

I am a second-year master's student at the LSM, currently interning in the Strategy & Consulting talent and organization team.

What were the most significant challenges you faced when starting at Accenture and how has your master's degree at LSM benefited your work at Accenture?

The most challenging aspect was the social interaction in a new environment, including meeting new people, and colleagues, and adapting to a new system. Additionally,

understanding the project I am involved in, especially since it's my first time working directly with clients, was difficult. Everything was new, from abbreviations to effectively using the tools in real-world scenarios. It was also challenging to understand the client's processes and how to implement solutions effectively.

My master's has been very helpful, particularly in courses related to consulting projects, green transition, and digital transformation. Group work at university was beneficial since teamwork is essential at Accenture (team meetings, collaboration, etc.). I could apply the concepts I learned and my willingness to delve deeper into these topics has also been advantageous.

However, I would have liked more practical cases with real scenarios. We have a lot of theoretical frameworks and formulas at university, but we missed out on practical applications. For instance, we had a course on European options that was entirely based on real cases, which was very useful. Such practical, case-based courses are lacking at LSM.

How do you use AI in your everyday job? Do you see other opportunities, even if you don't use them? Why don't you use them? (Opportunities, challenges)

My colleagues advised me to use ChatGPT for everything. It provides an external perspective, particularly useful for creating tailored communications for different personas (e.g., employees, managers). It allows customization and saves time. I am familiar with ChatGPT and similar tools like Microsoft Copilot.

Regarding the challenges, ChatGPT is only effective when you can clearly describe the context or situation. Initially, I struggled with this but now I know how to write detailed paragraphs to provide context. Sometimes I'm too lazy to do this, which results in poor responses. It's essential to take the time to think about what you want to achieve and provide a comprehensive context for better answers.

What are, according to you, the key skills to leverage AI in consulting and why?

Key skills include storytelling and problem-solving. You need to structure your requests to AI tools effectively. Storytelling helps in clearly defining the journey from point A to point B, making your objectives clear.

During my research, I saw a growing emphasis on the importance of soft skills to maximize the benefits offered by AI in the consulting field. Do you share this perspective regarding the growing importance of soft skills? If so, which ones would you say are the most important?

Absolutely. Soft skills are essential to leverage AI fully. You can't just ask a question and expect a useful answer; you need to provide context and think critically about the responses. Solution-oriented skills are crucial. Knowing what you want at the outset helps you refine and verify AI-generated answers, ensuring they meet your needs.

How could LSM prepare students for AI integration in consulting?

It would be beneficial to incorporate courses and materials on effectively using AI. AI will increasingly dominate the workplace, so understanding how to use it is crucial. LSM could introduce modules or courses on AI usage, such as providing scripts with desired answers and teaching students to ask the right questions. For example, the digital transformation course could focus more on practical applications rather than just formulas and concepts.

I believe that LSM should integrate AI into its curriculum because it is becoming increasingly important. Courses could include AI applications and preventive measures to ensure students use it effectively without becoming overly reliant on it. Early exposure to AI, even during bachelor's studies, could prepare students better.

Courses like European Business, which involved real business cases, were valuable in terms of soft skills development. They presented real challenges and showed how to overcome them. Adding an AI perspective to these courses could further enhance their value.

AI is rapidly developing and being increasingly adopted. Educational institutions like LSM must adapt and prepare students for the future workplace where AI skills will be essential.

3.3.4 Manager A

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your role at Accenture?

I am part of the technology division at Accenture, working as a data architect.

What opportunities does Artificial Intelligence offer to consultants, and how do consultants integrate AI into their daily professional lives? What are the associated opportunities and challenges?

AI allows consultants to perform initial reviews faster before engaging other teams, streamlining processes significantly. However, it also reduces the number of consultants needed, which has both positive and negative implications. Several challenges have emerged: responsible AI (ensuring AI behaves predictably and ethically is crucial), indeterminism (AI doesn't always provide consistent responses) data quality and security (maintaining high standards of data integrity is essential), cost management (while AI can be cost-effective, proper management is vital, especially for smaller companies that benefit from the scalability of cloud technologies). AI brings new competitors, but Accenture aims to lead rather than follow, leveraging our client development experiences and accumulated expertise.

What competencies are necessary to successfully use AI in consultancy?

The core skills remain interpersonal; flexibility, adaptability to new trends, and continuous learning are key. Interpersonal skills, such as communication, empathy, and flexibility, are even more crucial with AI integration. Consultants must understand not only how to use AI but also when and how it can benefit the business.

In the literature, there's a growing emphasis on the importance of soft skills in maximizing the benefits offered by AI in consulting. Do you agree?

Absolutely. As AI automates more tasks, the value consultants bring is increasingly in areas like strategy, necessitating strong soft skills. Effective communication and empathy are paramount, as is flexibility due to the rapid pace of technological advancement.

Before we conclude, is there anything else you'd like to add? What do you think about the focus of my thesis?

Your thesis is highly pertinent. The curriculum in this field should be dynamic and adapt to new developments quickly. Internships are crucial; integrating practical experiences earlier in the education process could be very beneficial. Understanding the dynamic between business and technology across various industries is essential for preparing students to leverage technology effectively.

3.3.5 Manager B

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your role at Accenture?

I joined Accenture in 2007 in a Sales role and since 2018 I am a Data & AI Managing Director.

What opportunities does Artificial Intelligence offer to consultants, and how do consultants integrate AI into their daily professional lives? What are the associated opportunities and challenges?

The main opportunity AI provides is the ability to offer clients more tailored solutions and accelerate their workflows.

Several challenges are associated with AI integration: Both client and their customer expectations have increased, making it difficult to differentiate our services in a competitive market. It's easier for new competitors to enter markets they previously avoided, which

challenges established firms like ours. There's a misconception that AI involves no costs, whereas it often involves significant underlying consumption.

What competencies are necessary to successfully use AI in consultancy?

Understanding AI applications like OpenAI is crucial for contextualizing responses. The industry also demands more specialization now, unlike in the past where one could operate as a general consultant.

In the literature, there's a growing emphasis on the importance of soft skills in maximizing the benefits offered by AI in consulting. Do you agree?

Absolutely, soft skills like storytelling are essential, even more so with AI integration, because it's about competing on who can better engage the client and team. The top three soft skills are storytelling, relating (building strong relationships, more profound than basic empathy), and industry expertise, which, while not being a soft skill, is crucial.

The focus on soft skills has significantly changed recruitment processes. Candidates must demonstrate their ability to form relationships and contextualize their knowledge effectively. It's becoming harder for interviewers to differentiate candidates based solely on technical skills.

Are young graduates joining Accenture adequately prepared to use AI in their work? How could higher education institutions prepare students for AI integration in consulting?

Schools need to delve deeper into data understanding rather than just focusing on value use cases. The emphasis should be on data management, governance, and architecture, especially for business students, to understand the importance of data quality and how it influences outcomes.

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your role at Accenture?

Hello. I joined Accenture in 2018 and Tech Architecture Delivery Manager, Team Lead AI for Benelux and Gallia.

What opportunities does Artificial Intelligence offer to consultants, and how do consultants integrate AI into their daily professional lives? What are the associated opportunities and challenges?

People are often hesitant about AI—they don't think about it or aren't sure if they are allowed to use it, so coaching is necessary. AI is complex and not magic. Using ChatGPT doesn't solve everything; it simplifies work by providing structure, but it's up to us to supply the content. For example, ChatGPT simplifies my life by giving me a structure, but I provide the details, allowing me to focus on precision and expertise. We delegate basic tasks to internal teams to speed up work, letting us concentrate on our management skills. Another advantage is a quick access to relevant data and task simplification. For some teams, AI fills skills gaps. Many new hires at Accenture are analysts unfamiliar with technology. Tools like ChatGPT and Copilot help them simplify code, do reverse engineering, etc., while being mindful of intellectual property issues. With Copilot, they can query databases without waiting for an overseas team. This fosters curiosity and learning. We also have ongoing company' projects like resource turnover for a technology and transferring team knowledge into an AI.

Regarding the challenges, AI doesn't mean anyone can become an architect or developer. It's possible to become proficient but with a risk of errors due to a lack of critical thinking. AI lacks critical judgment; it relies on ingested knowledge (from those who trained it).

Choosing the right AI for each need requires technical knowledge.

Being pragmatic is essential. It's complex and ideological, requiring a balance between business decisions and IT considerations. The goal is to guide clients to invest wisely and sustainably, necessitating a reinvention of how we sell, support, and advise.

AI puts everyone on equal footing as anyone can use it. The main advantage of AI in consultancy is task simplification (e.g., creating PowerPoint presentations, drafting emails). It reduces effort. The impact on payroll is uncertain. Historically, significant innovations didn't reduce payrolls but increased revenue. We'll see if generative AI maintains this trend.

What competencies are necessary to use AI in consultancy successfully?

The required skills are broad because consultants have various roles. Critical thinking is crucial for developers, functional analysts, architects, and salespeople. They need a clear understanding of how AI models work to sell them to clients.

Understanding how things work (e.g., computers, programs) remains crucial. Some colleagues believe AI can handle everything, but that's a misconception. Technical knowledge is still needed, similar to how France currently lacks nuclear engineers because they assumed they wouldn't need them. Emerging technologies require continuous learning.

In the literature, there's a growing emphasis on the importance of soft skills in maximizing the benefits offered by AI in consulting. Do you agree?

I completely agree with the importance of soft skills, we need people who want to understand AI: interpreting data and modeling ideas to communicate effectively with AI for the best results. Critical thinking is essential for analysing AI responses and enhancing capabilities. Developing critical thinking and analytical skills is vital. A desire to learn is also essential.

Are young graduates joining Accenture adequately prepared to use AI in their work? How could higher education institutions prepare students for AI integration in consulting?

Not at all. They need substantial, non-trivial training. Even those who studied AI academically are often too theoretical. Teaching AI requires balancing technical understanding with practical application. For instance, understanding a PC's central unit is crucial. AI should be a co-pilot, supporting, but not replacing, human expertise. AI should support learning, not replace it.

Education should include understanding AI's potential and limitations, creating a knowledge base, and distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate uses of AI.

AI is not magic but an evolution. Training should be practical, like a driving license for AI usage, covering basics, standards, pitfalls, and essential soft skills. AI is a tool that enhances work but requires proper usage to maximize benefits. AI education should be integrated into business school curricula to ensure future leaders are equipped with the necessary skills to leverage AI effectively. This includes understanding AI's practical applications, ethical considerations, and developing both hard and soft skills. AI should support learning and professional development, fostering an environment of continuous improvement and critical thinking.

3.3.7 Manager D

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, and share your professional background and your role at Accenture?

I joined Accenture in 2007, initially in consulting, and have been in HR for the past 6-7 years with a focus on generative AI for HR in Gallia. My role involves educating and engaging our employees about AI technologies and identifying use cases to optimize our internal operations. I coordinate between different teams to adapt AI solutions to our needs. My role aims to transition AI from a concept of science fiction to everyday utility. Accenture has invested heavily in developing AI capabilities not just for client services but also for enhancing our internal functions. I am not a technical expert, but I serve as a focal point to motivate and inform staff about AI, encouraging its use across various projects and initiatives.

How do you train your teams in integrating AI in their work?

Accenture runs a program called Technology Quotient (TQ), which offers simplified, engaging modules on key technologies, including AI and generative AI. These modules are not mandatory but highly recommended. We also hold conferences and integrate AI topics into

community meetings and other events to educate and inform our staff about how AI can be leveraged in their specific roles.

What opportunities does Artificial Intelligence offer to consultants, and how do consultants integrate AI into their daily professional lives? What are the associated opportunities and challenges?

Our internal transformation project has led to a reduction in support functions, thanks to various technologies, including AI. This sensitivity is because while AI has made certain jobs obsolete, enabling us to perform tasks much faster, it also requires those who remain to view AI not as a threat but as a tool to aid their work. The novelty of AI can be intimidating, and there are valid concerns about job displacement. AI, like any tool, has limitations and can produce nonsensical outputs that need to be checked. There's also the challenge of overcoming cognitive biases that AI might replicate from historical data. Managing these challenges requires careful planning and support for affected employees.

What competencies are necessary to use AI in consultancy successfully?

We look for candidates who are not only technically proficient but also adaptable and continuously seeking to improve how they work. Analytical thinking, continuous improvement, and the flexibility to handle uncertainties are highly valued. We prioritize retaining individuals who are adaptable, eager, and capable of continuous learning, as the tools we use today will likely change tomorrow.

In the literature, there's a growing emphasis on the importance of soft skills in maximizing the benefits offered by AI in consulting. Do you agree?

Absolutely, soft skills are crucial. AI may predict and automate, but interpersonal skills like relationship-building and adaptability are essential. We hire engineers with specific technical skills, which AI cannot yet replicate, but these professionals also need to integrate AI tools into their work to focus on higher-level tasks.

Are young graduates joining Accenture adequately prepared to use AI in their work? How could higher education institutions prepare students for AI integration in consulting?

Younger employees are generally more prepared because they use AI in their daily lives through platforms like TikTok and Instagram. For them, using AI isn't an additional learning curve. For more experienced employees who may not be as familiar with newer technologies, we provide additional training to help them adopt these technologies.

Business schools should integrate AI tools into their curricula, encouraging students to use AI for assignments to understand its capabilities. They should also invite experts to discuss current and future AI applications and provide practical use cases to illustrate how AI can optimize industry functions.

3.3.8 External A

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your current position?

Sure! I graduated from Solvay in 2016, started working as a business manager at Cream Consulting, and I work now as a consultant at BCG for 1.5 years. I also have a master's in ethics and philosophy. Joined BCG due to its focus on climate & sustainability and artificial intelligence. Although not always working on AI projects, I am very interested in the subject.

In your role as a consultant, what are the opportunities, challenges, and skills required to use AI?

Opportunities include improving efficiency and automating tedious tasks. Challenges involve ensuring that AI is used correctly and critically. The skills required include technical knowledge, critical thinking, and the ability to discern when AI is useful. AI also helps with

tasks such as reporting and tracking human follow-ups, automating processes, and improving overall efficiency.

BCG has partnered with OpenAI, encouraging the use of ChatGPT. AI can positively and negatively impact value creation, depending on how it is used. BCG trains its employees on AI tools, emphasizing the importance of generating original ideas and not just relying on AI. They have also developed internal tools like KM, slides, and chatbots.

Understanding what AI can and cannot improve, critical thinking, and questioning AI outputs. These skills are essential to use AI effectively. Users must understand AI's technical aspects, encompassing being familiar with the tools available, where they can optimize processes and their limitations, and use these tools effectively. Critical thinking and the ability to question AI outputs are essential.

In your company, are young graduates with business backgrounds ready to use generative AI? Do you think it's necessary to integrate AI courses in business schools? Why? What aspects? How?

There are varying levels of readiness. Some businesses are enthusiastic but may not fully understand AI's limitations. It's crucial to educate them to avoid investing in hype without understanding practical applications.

Universities, especially business schools, should aim to create well-rounded citizens ready to act in a world increasingly influenced by AI. The role of universities is to prepare students to be adaptable and critical thinkers. This includes understanding AI's practical applications and ethical considerations. AI should be integrated across courses rather than as a standalone subject. Ethical considerations and practical applications should be emphasized, and there should be a balance of theory and practice. Critical thinking should be emphasized in all courses, not just AI-specific ones. Students should understand AI's technical aspects and its impact on various fields. Bias and its implications should be discussed across all curricula. For business students, the goal isn't to make them data scientists but to give them a solid understanding. I would suggest three main parts: technology, philosophy, and society.

Students need to know how to discuss and sell AI projects, understand the technology behind them, and grasp the broader ethical and political implications.

There will be future leaders and need to understand AI's potential and limitations. They don't need to know the technical details but must surround themselves with knowledgeable people and understand AI's implications. Courses should cover AI history, limitations, opportunities, and practical applications. Emphasizing ethics and critical thinking is also crucial.

AI education should be integrated into business school curricula to ensure future leaders are equipped with the necessary skills to leverage AI effectively. This includes understanding AI's practical applications, ethical considerations, and developing both hard and soft skills.

3.3.9 External B

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your current position?

Hello. I joined BrightWolves in January 2024, focusing on strategy, digital, and sustainability consultancy. I am involved in a digital transformation project with an AI focus. I also help individuals and teams integrate AI in their companies.

In your role as a consultant, what are the opportunities, challenges, and skills required to use AI?

AI, particularly tools like ChatGPT, has changed the consultancy landscape. Before AI became widely accessible, only large companies invested in it due to the high cost and complexity. Now, with AI becoming more accessible, companies are adopting it at different rates. Some immediately saw its potential, while others took longer. Adoption often depends on leadership awareness and willingness to invest in training and tools. AI helps with tasks that are typically disliked, such as reporting and human follow-ups. It automates many processes, increasing efficiency.

There are three types of users: those who use AI for everything, sometimes excessively without considering its limits; those who use it critically; and those who don't use it at all. The challenge

is ensuring users understand AI's limitations and use it effectively, so fall into the second category.

What competencies are necessary to use AI in consultancy successfully?

Understanding the basics of how AI works (hard skills), being curious, having a critical and analytical mindset, and some affinity with IT. AI tools require both soft and hard skills for effective use. Critical thinking, analytical skills, and an understanding of AI's capabilities and limitations are essential. Developing critical thinking and analytical skills early is essential. Philosophy and ethics help in understanding manipulation and developing a thoughtful approach to information.

You have already trained management teams on AI. How did you do it?

Training is crucial to make management aware of AI's potential and limitations. Training sessions can range from short modules to extensive courses, depending on the sector. The goal is to move towards ideation rather than just technical training, showing examples from similar industries and discussing costs and challenges.

In your company, are young graduates with business backgrounds ready to use generative AI? Do you think it's necessary to integrate AI courses in business schools? Why? What aspects? How?

There are varying levels of readiness. Some businesses are enthusiastic but may not fully understand AI's limitations. It's important to educate them to avoid investing in hype without understanding practical applications.

And yes, I believe that business schools could integrate AI into their curriculum. AI is increasingly integral to business, and educational institutions must adapt to prepare students adequately. A holistic approach is needed, potentially developing dedicated tracks for AI-related skills. AI should be integrated across courses rather than as a standalone subject. Ethical

considerations and practical applications should be emphasized, and there should be a balance of theory and practice. It's essential to educate future leaders on AI tools to understand their potential and limitations. They don't need to know the technical details but must be able to surround themselves with knowledgeable people and understand the implications of AI. It's advisable to have Chief AI Officers and include AI education in business school curricula, covering AI's history, limitations, opportunities, and practical applications. Business schools should integrate AI education into all courses, showing its applications and limitations. A specific course on AI ethics is crucial. The role of the university is to ensure students understand both the potential and risks of AI, emphasizing critical thinking and practical skills. Courses should cover AI history, practical applications, ethical considerations, and data handling. AI education should be integrated into business school curricula to ensure future leaders are equipped with the necessary skills to leverage AI effectively. This includes understanding AI's practical applications, ethical considerations, and developing both hard and soft skills. Traditional learning methods are crucial because they help develop critical thinking and analytical skills, which are essential when using AI. Machines have near-limitless memory and information, but humans need to decide what information they need and how to use it.

3.3.10 External C

Hello, could you please introduce yourself, share your professional background and your current position?

Hello. I have been in consultancy since 2016. I started as a manager at KPMG for 3.5 years and I am now working at Intys for 5 years, while also teaching some courses at the university since 2016.

How has the role of consultants changed with AI, what are the associated opportunities, challenges, and skills required to use AI?

The consultancy role has significantly evolved with the advent of AI. For example, I use ChatGPT almost daily. Traditional AI is still in its early stages for us, and we are taking steps to integrate it. The main challenge with traditional AI is the need for massive amounts of data to predict outcomes. In contrast, generative AI suggests various possible scenarios. We've launched a large data collection project to capture consultants' daily activities to predict future mission success. This initiative spans several years and aims to determine the key moments and factors that contribute to successful consultancy missions.

AI has not eliminated any tasks but has made them faster. For instance, preparing a commercial proposal that used to take a week can now be done in 36-48 hours, increasing productivity. However, new tasks have emerged, such as strategic reflection on new business models and innovations enabled by AI.

Consultancy offers a dynamic and challenging environment where one can continuously learn and grow. The integration of AI adds another layer of complexity and opportunity, making the field even more exciting.

What competencies are necessary to use AI in consultancy successfully?

A mix of soft skills (curiosity, critical thinking, analytical skills) and hard skills. Soft skills are crucial for future managers. AI can improve productivity, but human interaction and relationship-building remain essential. Key soft skills include creativity, critical thinking, and the ability to challenge AI-generated outputs. AI serves as a business partner, helping to refine and improve solutions. Strategic perspective and self-reflection have become more critical, as using tools like ChatGPT prompts more questions and deeper analysis of our daily work.

Associates need to focus on technical and analytical skills, while managers require strategic thinking and the ability to guide teams using AI tools effectively. Both roles need a strong understanding of AI's capabilities and limitations.

***Are young graduates joining your company adequately prepared to use AI in their work?
How could higher education institutions prepare students for AI integration in consulting?***

New graduates are more likely to use AI extensively because they are trained and equipped to leverage these tools to enhance their productivity. Financially, companies benefit from the efficiency of well-trained young graduates. Senior profiles will still be needed for mentoring and leadership, but young graduates who master AI will be highly valuable.

Ideally, both universities and companies should play a role. Universities should help students master AI tools and understand their functions. However, the practical application and sector-specific usage should be taught by companies. Universities can provide the foundational understanding, while businesses can tailor the tools to their specific needs.

Business schools should integrate AI education into its curriculum. It's essential to develop both hard and soft skills. Students should engage with current events, learn critical thinking, and develop curiosity. Courses should emphasize reading the daily press and presenting findings, enhancing their understanding of societal issues and their impact on business.

AI is transforming consultancy by enhancing productivity and creating new strategic tasks. Business schools like LSM must adapt their curricula to prepare students for this shift, emphasizing a blend of hard and soft skills. Future consultants need to be equipped not only with technical knowledge but also with the critical and strategic thinking skills necessary to leverage AI effectively.