

Role of consultants in R&D and innovation

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Consultants play a crucial role in industrial development, particularly in R&D and technology innovation, by contributing specialized knowledge. They help along the innovation process from conceptualization to innovation and further to marketing new products and processes. Consultants can help to compensate for the meagre technical, managerial and financial resources of SMEs in developing countries. This article discusses the diverse roles that consultants play in helping enterprises in technology innovation.

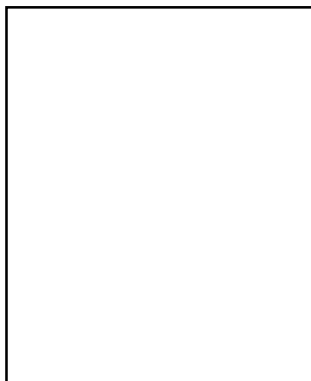
Introduction

onsultancy is essentially a knowledge-based profession and consultants are often termed as carriers of technology and related services. While a wag once defined a consultant as a person who borrows your watch and tells you the time, what this really signified was that a consultant adds value through knowledge. A consultant mostly uses existing knowledge acquired through his professional experience over a period of time. However, some large consultancies and individual professionals do have their own R&D facilities to develop new technologies, mostly in industrially advanced countries.

An independent consultant provides advisory services to his clients towards finding solutions to the problems related to his field of operations. Thus, a consultant is expected to be equipped with technical and managerial knowledge and expertise; market information including requirement of industry and project authorities; and sources of technologies and of technical services. Consultancy services include market surveys,

pre-feasibility reports, feasibility reports, project reports, design and engineering, upscaling to new technologies and pilot trials, sourcing and acquiring technologies, making technology transfer agreements, training personnel, laying out and operating plants, preparing drawings and technical specifications, sourcing and procuring equipment and machinery, costing products, arranging finance, directing marketing, and so on.

Successful research and development (R&D) and innovation involves conceptualization of an idea, to making and marketing a product or process through various stages of development and innovation. Experience has shown that very few ideas really get successfully converted to profitable businesses. The success rate of R&D in industry is higher than in laboratories, because industrial R&D is predominantly market-driven and is often incremental in nature, while lab-scale R&D is more generic and fundamental in nature. In an age of rapid technological development, higher quality requirements, competitive national and international environments, and the increasingly



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