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Alexey Pastukhov: “Businessmen Choose ICS Consulting”

ICS Consulting, a Russian company founded in 2011, headquartered in Moscow, operates in the key industries of the domestic economy. It specializes in management and strategic consulting, operational efficiency, corporate governance, digital transformation and AI implementation, support to international projects. The corporate motto is “With you all the way to the outcome!”. Alexey Pastukhov, founder and CEO of ICS Consulting answered BM Moscow Foresight’s questions.

— What is the definition of “consulting” in Russia?

— Consulting is a professional service at the intersection of strategy and operational management. It is not an “expert opinion”, a set of proven solutions and management practices that help owners and management teams achieve specific goals: from stabilization and growth to entering new markets and restructuring supply chains. It's essentially architecture (“data → models → procedures → control”), bringing the concept to P&L metrics (Profit and Losses, profit and loss statement - **ed. note**.).

We follow the outcome-/ROI-approach: we set the goal in measurable quantities (for example, “−7–10% OPEX in procurement”, “+3–5% service margin”, “−15% unfinished projects”) and support the project till we see a quantified outcome.

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— Your company provides an integrated approach to business problem-solving. What exactly does the offer package consist of?

— Our “solution tool kit” comprises three layers: strategy, processes, management.
The strategic layer features realistic goals and scenarios, compatible with industry capabilities and constraints.
The process layer provides for data and workflow management: specification normalization, TCO metrics, scenario modeling, cycle and loss reduction.

The management layer deals with roles and responsibilities, decision-making regulations, SLA (Service Level Agreement - **ed. note**), management reporting and the improvement cycle.
There is a separate block for AI and digital solutions: we start with the operational architecture - drift monitoring, “sandboxes” for updates, internal certification of solutions, clear responsibility mechanisms. We practically work in short 10-12 week waves with strictly defined artifacts at the finish (data map, regulations, dashboards, retroactive effect) and “fast gateways” for integration— minimal required standards for formats and metrics to get suppliers and customers connected in weeks, not months. The legal analytical framework covers risks and provides support for implementation. The industry focus is on manufacturing, oil and gas, chemistry, machine engineering and transport.

— Why would business people choose ICS Consulting? What are your corporate competitive advantages?

— I am a mathematician by education, and this is evident in my approach to work: “hard” analytics are combined with human factor insights — culture, motivation, communications. We translate strategy into operational decisions and bring them to metrics — from hype to manageable numbers.

The second reason is responsibility for the outcome. Our guiding principle “ICS Consulting — with you all the way to the outcome!” means implementation support until a measurable effect is achieved.

The third reason is our integration role: we do not compete with vendors, but rather integrate data architecture, models and work organization. The work formula is 10×10: one priority metric, a small cross-functional team with the metric owner, 10 weeks for pilot implementation and 10 required artifacts as the outcome. This discipline allows us to win tenders from major players where speed, flexibility and responsibility for implementation matter the most.

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— Could you please explain, why would major industrial corporations, running successful businesses, need to engage consultants?

— There are two typical situations: “things are complicated” and “things are OK”. In the first case, consultants enhance controllability: they eliminate chaos in data and procedures, align cycles, and reduce losses.

In the second case, consultants help you reach the next level of efficiency and agility without disrupting what works. Industry typically has three types of requests. The first one usually involves “external optics”: compare yourself with best practices and remove the "blurring". The second type calls for accelerated change: an external team sets up the pace and methodology, ensuring neutrality in complex HR and structural decisions. The third type is about technologies and new markets: AI, data analytics, supply chains, independent from imports, localization.

We engage small businesses through educational tracks: a businessman is learning and growing, and when his company would require strategy and scaling, we get involved on project basis.

— Could you reveal a secret: how much does a full package of consulting services you’re your clients?

— The cost varies depending on the scale and horizon. Let’s look at this example: a machine-building plant with □6–7 billion in revenue, with the market share of 20%, hits growth limits. We run preliminary analytics, hold a strategy session with the key team and generate a roadmap: where exactly does the effect in money lie and what artifacts reflect changes in the routine. The cost for such products ranges from □2,5 to □9 million. This is an investment in managed growth: 12 weeks for the first ROI-section, then scaling up to adjacent processes; the budget includes “fast gateways” for integration, operating regulations and a controlled safety framework (data provenance, decision logs, escalation procedure).

For a plant with □6–7 billion in revenue, our consulting package is very inexpensive.

— Where does the work of consultants begin? Do you first study the company and gather as much information as possible, and then begin to develop solutions?

— We work only within the legal framework and on the basis of data agreed upon with the customer — no "industrial espionage" or imposition of services. We start with a benefit hypothesis, a metric, a metric owner, and a deadline; then comes a data and source map, quality assurance, minimal required architecture. Ethics and security are in place by default: data

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provenance, logging of model decisions, fail-safe mechanism and manual escalation, retroactive cost leakage. This "cultural operating system" sounds boring, but it is precisely this that makes scaling predictable and reduces risks. Confidentiality and responsibility are our key intangible assets.

— Your press-release states, that ICS Consulting was founded by specialists with extensive experience. Who are these people?

— I founded the company in 2011 as a private business and built the team by myself from the very beginning. Today we have people from consulting, research, government agencies and business. What they all have in common is critical thinking, in-depth subject matter knowledge and the ability to speak about the state of affairs directly and respectfully. A modern consultant has a multidisciplinary background in production management, marketing, and economics, combined with strong “soft skills”: negotiations, public speaking, conflict management. The formula for the profession is straightforward: understanding, speaking, listening — and performing with dignity and respect.

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— Could you please name your largest customers in Russia?

— Our key customers include LUKOIL and Rosneft. Both corporations have their in-house consulting services, but our tasks do not overlap. We occupy our niche and complement internal competencies. What is more important than a list of big corporate logos is that we bring projects to measurable results—and for this, we are invited back for further collaboration.

— Is it true that outside of Russia you only work with Russian companies?

— It is true. We do not work with the so-called unfriendly countries. We live and work in Russia and act in its interests. At the same time, we are well aware of the practices of the Middle East and Southeast Asia: we help Russian companies put together local teams, adapt their processes to ethical and religious norms, build “fast gateways” for integration (unified data and metric formats, solution certification procedures), and also create logistics and insurance corridors.

The geography of ICS Consulting includes Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Iran, Belarus, and Latin America is looming on the horizon. Our clients are people of action; In foreign countries, they require a high level of culture and professional training — and this need is supported by universities, business schools and our applied programs.

— How are Russia's relations with countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America viewed today, in your opinion??

— The legacy of Soviet specialists still works today: many countries keep good memories of joint projects. Plus, thousands of graduates from Soviet and Russian universities today hold high positions in business and government. These connections help us build pragmatic and respectful relationships and quickly agree on standards of interaction.

— This June Saint-Petersburg hosted the Public Anti-Extremist Forum "Business, Government, and Religion", co-organized by ICS Consulting. Why is there so much interest in this event?

— The forum brought together representatives from business, public organizations, government structures, and religious denominations, becoming a platform for open dialogue and a joint search for solutions on security and stability issues. This shows how religious organizations, the business sector, and civil society can collaborate to achieve shared objectives like peace, sustainability, and development. Dialogue and cooperation become the foundation for responsible decisions and a safe environment, where everyone's security is a practical task.

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— For what merits before the Russian Orthodox Church did the St. Petersburg Metropolitan award you with a consecrated battle standard?

— The official statement says: “For implementing a corporate culture that aligns with traditional Russian values and Orthodox principles”.

The standard is a personal award, but for me it means recognition of the fact that ICS Consulting is not only building an efficient business, but also an environment, based on fundamental values: integrity, responsibility, respect and striving for the common good. Russian values not only help to survive in the multipolar world, but also to grow in our turbulent times. We are human-centered; we focus on developing new markets, but human dignity and professional culture remain our constant guidelines.

— Is there a connection between the company's management and the Departments of Moscow Government?

— There is no systemic dialogue with the city authorities for now. We are open to substantive discussion and would like to outline a joint action plan. Moscow is the most important communications, logistics and financial center of the country; we, as Muscovites, care very much for what’s happening in the city. As the head of ICS Consulting, I would like to be useful to Moscow and its residents through deeds, not words.

Sergey Kron.

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