

Trusted advisors

In the sophisticated built environment industry that now exists, to grow and operate a profitable consultancy, the business model must be focused on providing added value through knowledge, Insight, **partnerships and trust**. Differentiating your business is vital to long term viability and growth. It is also critical to understand the changing dynamic of those institutions – both public and private. Whether it's a health, education, aviation or defence institution, senior management need trusted advisors so that they are armed with all the information they need to make the best possible decisions and, therefore, to achieve the best possible client outcomes.

Since the early days of Donald Cant Watts Corke, the company has actively strived to be a trusted advisor to its clients; this goal has been at the core of its organisational values. Decades before the phrase became commonly used, Don embedded an honest, partnership approach with clients through every level of the firm. He told his team:

“Don’t hide anything from them and just be open and honest. Tell them what the situation is, tell them what the problems are, tell them that you haven’t had enough information on this so you don’t know what should be put in. Be totally fair and honest, and lay it all out.”

In 2000, David Maister, Charles Green, and Robert Galford published *The Trusted Advisor*, which held that trusted advisors:

- Help the client understand the options
- Help the client evaluate the options
- Provide a recommendation
- Let the client choose

A trusted advisor sits with the client, listening to the problem the client is facing to really understand what it is, so that they can support and advise the client as they work through possible solutions.

There are three basic skills needed to evolve beyond being a mere supplier and into a trusted advisor:

- Earning trust,
- Giving advice effectively, and
- Building relationships.

The Donald Cant Watts Corke leadership team has given significant consideration to services which allow them to work with their clients from very early in a project’s conception, where they can truly deliver the most possible value. From the very outset of Glenn’s commencement with the firm in 1981, he has championed this approach; ‘I think that was a great learning tool for me—seeing how important it was to sit at the table at the beginning of a job and being able to influence the outcomes down the track.’

This initial work at ideas phase is, of course, also critical in developing the depth of relationships required to become a trusted advisor. This approach has become adopted so deeply within Donald Cant Watts Corke that it has also come to inform hiring decisions. As the firm developed a deeper understanding of the problems facing its clients, it also developed greater clarity about the breadth of expertise and experience that it needed to deliver holistic advice and solutions. As a result, it has completely changed its approach to attracting and retaining the best people. Where once the firm employed mostly Quantity Surveyors and Project Managers, it now employs a diverse range of professionals from nurses to economists, civil engineers to MBAs, environmental scientists to CPAs.

The breadth and depth of knowledge the firm now brings together to deliver true value to its clients is steeped in the example set by its founder from the very outset. This ingrained approach has led to a diversified service offering that enables clients to **achieve the goals** they have set for themselves.