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▶ THE EXPERTS

Consulting with the best: TMG International Inc.'s managing director, **John Bardawill** Interview by Mark Pechenik

By redefining the role of professional consultants in the 21st century, TMG International has developed a winning strategy that has propelled it into the top ranks of the consulting industry.

Since opening its doors in 1998, the Toronto-based firm has reflected founder John Bardawill's conviction that consulting should be more than offering advice. Instead, Bardawill and his partners, Pat Tremaine and Bill French, have championed a more active role for their consultants as business leaders. *Advantage* caught up with Bardawill to ask about his vision and how TMG is putting his strategies into action.

Talking Points

▶ Seeing a strategy through to execution

▶ Recruiting the top talent

▶ Solving problems across industries

Advantage: You have been quoted as saying, "At TMG International, we don't hire consultants; we hire business leaders." Can you elaborate?

John Bardawill: We believe that when it comes to consultancies there are those who develop strategy and those who execute strategy. It is rare to have someone with both of these capabilities. So we hire seasoned executives who encompass both of these skill sets. They cannot only develop strategies but also understand what is required to effectively execute those strategies to get results.

What enables TMG consultants to carry out this full-service strategy?

We bring in seasoned business leaders, those who have held positions at the president, vice president, and director level, and have a track record of success. These individuals have consistently proven that they can put themselves into our clients' shoes. They utilize their real-life understanding to not only formulate strategy but also to help our clients effectively implement planning and development. In short, they know what works.

How does this difference enable TMG to be competitive within the consulting industry?

We've been competitive because our people have the ability to effectively leverage their knowledge and experience on behalf of our clients. And we've been successful because we help our clients succeed. Just as important, we love what we do—we realize an important sense of accomplishment whenever we help clients maximize revenues and profitability. In essence, our experience and passion are what make our firm so successful and effective, and are what keep our clients coming back.

Can you provide some examples of this approach?

At a national franchisee retailer, we helped strengthen the quality of business planning at the store level and ensured that the brand experience was more consistent across the country. We did this by first conducting a thorough review and analysis. Then, using a rapid and proprietary retail-planning model, we were able to create actionable business



The partners at the helm of TMG International (from left): Pat Tremaine, John Bardawill, and Bill French.

plans through a three-day facilitated session. The result was an increase in sales and customer satisfaction.

We've also done several assessments of call-centre operations for our clients. We first examine what is trying to be accomplished and the level of effectiveness. We then help our clients understand and prioritize the operational changes required in the areas of revenue, efficiency, and customer experience, to effectively drive change.

Because we have done these and other types of engagements with clients in many industries, we have demonstrated the value of our consulting approach.

Do your solutions differ according to industry or operations?

Yes. Our solution for each client and our recommendations for implementation are based on the specifics of their industry, their organization, and their customer requirements. However, our approach doesn't change. We always take a customer-first view.

What does TMG's future look like?

We've experienced strong growth to date, and we're likely to continue our growth by continuing to help our clients achieve their objectives. Given our successful portfolio, I'm confident that we'll continue to see significant increases in customer growth and satisfaction.

John Bardawill's Career Milestones

- **1983**
Earns an MBA in marketing and finance from the University of Western Ontario
- **1989-92**
Vice president of marketing for Thomas Cook's North American division
- **1993-95**
As general manager of Thomson Newspapers, leads the marketing, circulation, and advertising departments
- **1995-96**
As vice president of marketing for Southam Newspapers, Bardawill is responsible for marketing the two Vancouver dailies, the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Province*
- **1998**
Founds TMG International Inc. to provide outside perspective and consulting on marketing, sales, general management, and strategic planning
- **2007**
Pat Tremaine and Bill French join TMG as partners
- **2012**
TMG consists of 20-plus people, including consultants, analysts, and support staff