



# LayerOne '09: Diplomatic Security Consulting

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# The Talk:

- A “lessons learned” from >10 years engineering, consulting, operations, and architecture.
- Supporting data based on a 360 review of my performance over a 5yr period as an infrastructure architect.
- Targeted at people who excel with technology and problem solving.
- Evolved from my own failures.
- Really intended to facilitate smart security people to be successful in consulting.



## Why would anyone want to be a security consultant?

- Great opportunity to see what works and what doesn't work across a large number of environments.
- Very goal oriented and project focused.
- You don't have to deal with the \*same\* bullshit for long periods.
- Great for people who have skills across multiple disciplines.

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# Why not be a security consultant?

- Establishing influence in an organization can be difficult or extremely difficult.
- People are usually guarded or defensive of the status quo.
- Requires a lot social and political awareness.
- You can't wear jeans nearly enough.

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# Me (from '08 360 review):

2 Bosses

5 Reports

3 Peers

2 Customers

“Kevin is very technical, and sometimes that will get in the way of his answering a question and getting action from higher-ups.”

| Skill                            | Rank |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Intellectual Horesepower         | 1    |
| Functional / Technical Skills    | 2    |
| Problem Solving                  | 3    |
| Strategic Agility                | 4    |
| Creativity                       | 5    |
| Timely Decision Making           | 6    |
| Standing Alone                   | 7    |
| Command Skills                   | 8    |
| Process Management               | 9    |
| Self-Development                 | 10   |
| Presentation Skills              | 11   |
| Managing and Measuring Work      | 12   |
| Priority Setting                 | 13   |
| Integrity and Trust              | 14   |
| Drive for Results                | 15   |
| Perseverance                     | 16   |
| Comfort Around Higher Management | 17   |
| Organizing                       | 18   |
| Dealing with Ambiguity           | 19   |
| Perspective                      | 20   |
| Conflict Management              | 21   |
| Listening                        | 22   |
| Time Management                  | 23   |
| Action Oriented                  | 24   |
| Motivating Others                | 25   |
| Customer Focus                   | 26   |

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# Where did I go wrong?

“Extremely talented and knowledgeable.”

“Technical skills alone would be a Towering Strength.”

“Kevin’s technical skills are in no way narrow; he has significant breadth and depth in many technical topics.”

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## Oh.. Here it is:

- “lets his nuts and bolts skill get in the way of his personal and business persona.”
- “As a leader, I would rate him as being narrow, because he focuses so much of his time on the technical...”
- “.. Sometimes he makes people feel inferior to his mental skills.”
- “He needs to be careful not to intimidate others who are not at the same level.”
- “While Kevin is often right, he is not going to get buy-in from others without approaching them a different way.”

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# Influence doesn't come from being right.

- Consulting is all about establishing influence quickly within an organization.
- Being accurate and technically adept doesn't get you very far alone.
- Business leaders won't trust you until they believe you understand that business is the driver for all decisions.

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# How can we establish influence?

- State problems with respect to the fundamental business and economic impacts as part of project definition.
- Demonstrate that you understand that problems evolve from more than just bad decisions and stupidity.
- Always approach issues with an ability to execute on the solution, use the observed problems as supporting evidence for the solution.
- Understand how you were engaged, and leverage that.
- Look out for organizational gaps that you can help bridge as an outsider.
- Look for easy tactical wins too!



# Showstoppers on influence.

- Perceived arrogance.
- Actual arrogance 😊
- Not listening, not seeking out input (vacuum consulting).
- Saying things like “you don’t understand,” or “you’re wrong.”
- Getting frustrated.
- Saying something is “policy” (especially when it isn’t!)
- Getting too focused on the problems vs. the solutions.



## Other Notes

- The same skills that got me to one level in a career, turned into show stoppers for me later.
- Your influence is based on how other people perceive you. So getting that feedback is critical to improving your ability to influence.
- It's easier for us to develop the soft skills, then it is for others to become technical experts.
- You don't need to be perfect, you do need to be reflective.
- If you can't make progress, you won't be happy.



# Is it working for me?

- Unfortunately I wasn't able to repeat the same '360 after reflecting/adopting the principles of this doc.
- But yes, 6months after the review I had already received extremely positive feedback from many of the same people who reviewed me.
- I've had much greater success actually influencing decisions and organizations.

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