



From Technologist to Trusted Advisor: Building Consulting Acumen as a Young Professional

BSides Calgary 2025

Logan Fetterly | May 2, 2025

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Background:

Bachelor of Science Computer Science from MacEwan University



Master of Science Cybersecurity from St. Bonaventure University, Albany NY



Experience:

CGI Consultant (Jan 2022 to July 2024)

Full-stack Developer and Cybersecurity Advisor for Enterprises

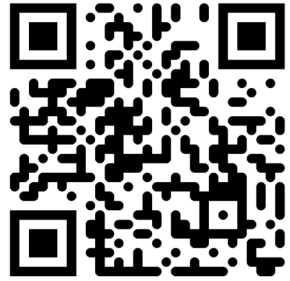


Government of Alberta, CyberAlberta

External Stakeholder Engagement, Full-stack Development, Cybersecurity

What is CyberAlberta?

 CYBER ALBERTA



CyberAlberta is a collaboration between the Government of Alberta and external private and public organizations – aiming to engage locally, drive impactful initiatives, and enhance Alberta’s resilience against cyber threats.



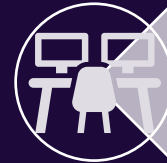
Strengthen Alberta’s cybersecurity posture and stand up for Alberta against cyber threats



Increase confidence in Alberta’s critical Infrastructure and ensure the well-being of Albertans and Alberta’s economic prosperity



Create improved cybersecurity culture for Albertans



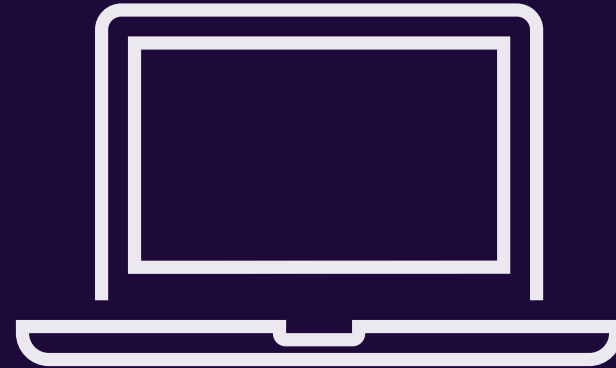
Support job diversification and create new employment opportunities



CYBER ALBERTA

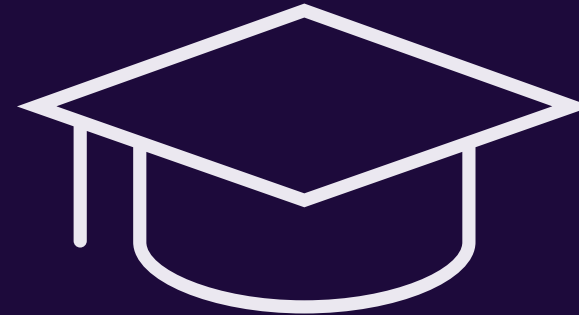
| Who are you?

How many of you are from
Cybersecurity?



| Who are you?

How many of you are students, new graduates, or seeking a transition?



| Who are you?

How many of you are interested in a career as a cybersecurity consultant?



Who is this talk for?

1. You're working in, or plan to work in cybersecurity.
2. You are seeking to grow from an entry level role into a more senior role.
3. You are interested in becoming an "expert" in your organization.



Where does my information come from?

1. Previously working as an IT consultant, providing cybersecurity consultation to external clients.
2. Working collaboratively with and personally performing cybersecurity consultation here in the Government of Alberta.
3. Meeting and talking with amazing cybersecurity consultants here, at BSides and other conferences!



What do I mean by consultant?

We may tend to think of consultants as people in consulting firms, think KPMG, EY, MNP, PwC, Deloitte, etc.

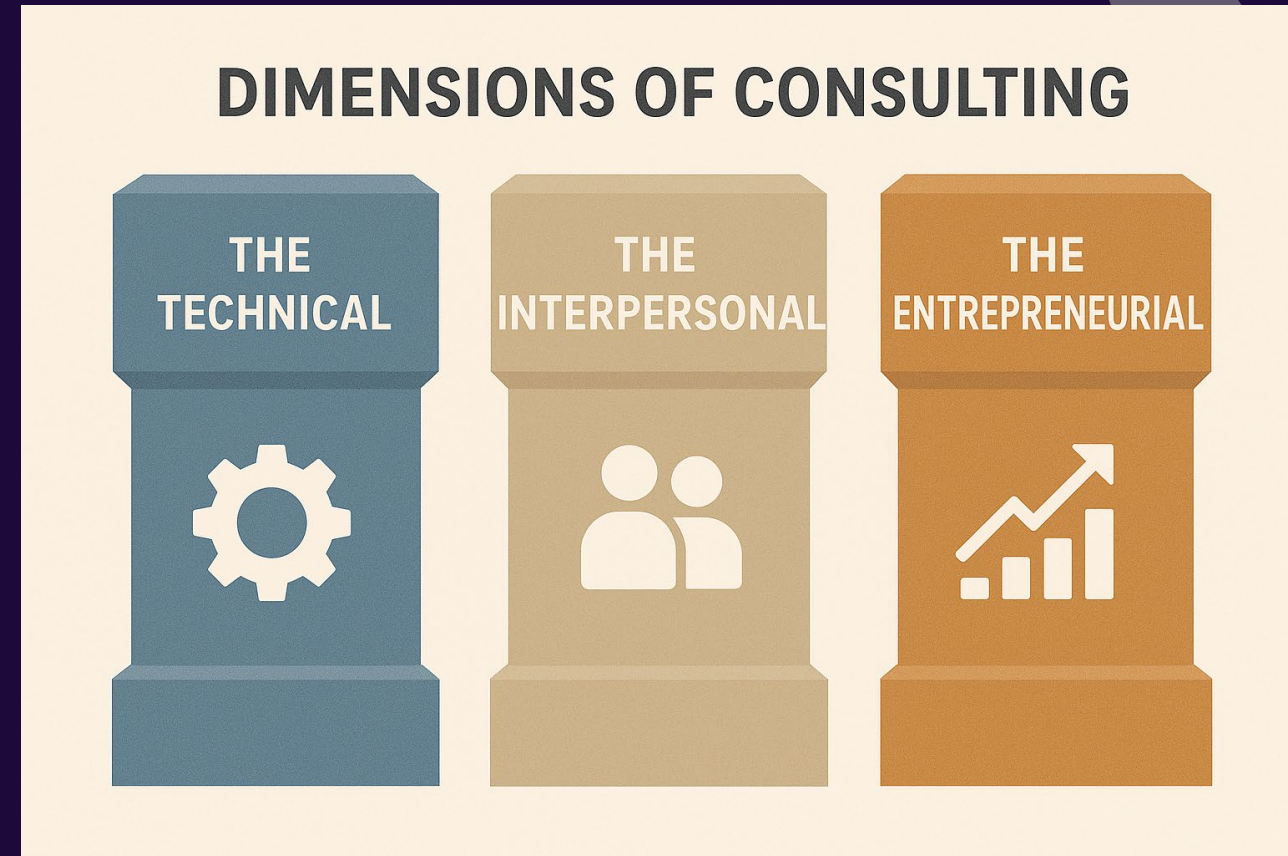
We will all be consultants in varying roles, scopes and business contexts, “consulting” is a practice of offering value from expertise in your respective area.

Consulting ability will assist in differentiating your perceived level of experience.



How can we simplify the idea of consulting?

- We can imagine three primary pillars.. You will have biases towards one or another based on your personalities:
 - The Technical
 - The Interpersonal
 - The Entrepreneurial
- ** (or Intrapreneurial)



What differentiates the technician from the trusted advisor?

The complement of our three pillars combining into **trust**.

A technician.. may be trusted to maintain an application, perform a vulnerability scan, or action data fix. These are your supportive team members.

A trusted advisor.. is focused on the how, the why, and the what, providing value such as:

- Advising organizations through Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) road mapping.
- Cybersecurity program assessments
- Subject matter expertise to advise organizations how to best implement vendor leveraged platforms / integrations.

Your trusted advisors are, Team Leads, Executives, Partners, Security Architects, Senior Staff, etc.

What differentiates the technician from the trusted advisor?

The technician informs and usually works for the business but generally is not consulted.

The trusted advisor has the privilege of **indirect or direct influence** over how the business achieves desired business outcomes.

INFORMING VS. CONSULTING

INFORMING



Providing
information

CONSULTING



Being solicited
for input and
providing advisory



How does this all relate to me?

We all come to consulting practice from various biases.

Some of us are the “A student”, some of us are the social butterfly, and others the founders.

To be an effective consultant we need to mature all the dimensions of consulting. To be weak in one dimension cannot be easily compensated.



Before we look at how to improve these pillars..

“You can fast track opportunities, but you cannot fast track time.”

In other words, there is no substitute for experience.

Developing The Technical (1.)

1. Take responsibility for seeking out your best opportunities:

- You will hunt them yourself, of course. **Pursue life-long learning, because “people have confidence in those who stay fresh, relevant, and capable”.**
- **“Would you rather 10 years of experience once or 1 year of experience 10 times.”**
- But more important, **find a leader in your organization to champion you**

2. Find others who are also focused on self-improvement.

Who you surround yourself with usually influences who we will become. “Iron sharpens iron” or “sharpen the saw”. Community groups are perfect.

3. Prevent future problems from happening.

Temporary remedies are limited. Think in terms of **proactive accountability**. Profit trust by committing to solutions which “permanently” solve issues.



Developing The Technical (2.)

4. Broaden your knowledge beyond only one domain

Bring multiple subject matter areas to your job, and the problem-solving table. Experts are often not “one-tricks”. Find adjacent domains which appeal to you.

5. In a crisis, you will not rise to your level of competence, you will fall to your level of preparedness

Adversity, crisis, is inevitable. Your preparation will distinguish you.

Developing The Technical (3.)

6. Seek to communicate outcomes too, not only outputs

An output does not necessarily imply an outcome, and as such, generally business objectives are change-seeking. When reporting success, communicate outcomes so you are communicating a narrative as opposed to a statistic. This will make you appear as a change-maker.

Example of Output (result of a task(2)):

“This year 96% of staff completed their mandatory cybersecurity awareness training.”

Example of Outcome (consequence of a task(s)):

“The last three years, lockouts due to account compromises from phishing have decreased 15% as we’ve increased pressure to attend mandatory cybersecurity training.”



Developing The Technical (4.)

7. Prioritize creating useful, shareable solutions

An onerous solution may be useful temporarily but also may be perceived as technical debt. Creating solutions which can be shared with other team members, especially those with different backgrounds, is almost necessarily improving operational capacity, and your value to the organization.

People come and go, and everyone takes a vacation. Create a solution which can be delegated easily to another person, so the work doesn't stop.

i.e document your processes and offer configurable systems



Developing The Interpersonal (1.)

1. Developing Relationships

When trying to develop a relationship with another party, especially in another organization, we need to exercise a classic lesson from Covey, “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

Make value judgements which consider the objectives of your client.

In cybersecurity we’re frequently engaging across teams whether it’s infrastructure, software development, networking, information management, privacy, business areas, etc. Sometimes this all hands! & often, we’re misaligned.

Think about the contrast between traditional business objectives and the CIA triad: confidentiality, integrity, availability. Think about how to speak in a common language, like risk management.



Developing The Interpersonal (2.)

2. First impressions are imperative

“Encourage other people to talk about themselves” (Carnegie). You’ll find people are easier to talk to when prompted upon what they already know, or what they are already opinionated about.

First impressions create assumptions. Consider how you can mold those assumptions positively.



Developing The Interpersonal (3.)

3. Reinforce shared mission and purpose with disagreeing parties

Disputes are common. When in disagreement find the common purpose and continually realign the conversation towards shared ground.

All of us are responsible for cybersecurity, and similarly, all of us are responsible for pursuing an excellent customer experience for the business. Success may be compromise.

Again, consider the business.. how might we achieve cybersecurity outcomes while being aligned with enhancing customer experience and service quality.

Developing The Entrepreneurial (1.)

1. Character, Clarity, Commitment – Creating Trust

a) Character means do what is right over what is easy. Visibly exercise your morals to achieve good-standing, and ultimately trust.

b) Clarity means be crystal clear about your goals and expectations. Consider how your communication may be perceived. Try to alleviate any concerns you may have alternative, hidden, motives.

c) Commitment means you stand strong in the face of hard times. Long term projects will always have their obstacles, and the doubters. Be the one to get the team over the line. Become dependable.



Developing The Entrepreneurial (2.)

2. Suggestions are louder than demands

It is well-established human beings cannot be forced to truly believe in something. For that reason, it's profitable to make others feel as though they have found the conclusions themselves through suggestion.

In cybersecurity, we often may know a control, an architecture, or a policy is in the best interest of the organization but lack authority to decide so. Success may hinge on persuading those with authority to think like us.

Developing The Entrepreneurial (3.)

Consider an example:

“John, our current authentication system uses single-factor password authentication with a lax password policy. We need to implement MFA. Without MFA, in our current state, we are greatly exposed to brute-force attacks. Our customers will suffer account compromises if we continue this way.”

vs.

“John, suppose I have automation which can quickly enter combinations of usernames and passwords against our users database. In our current state, we rely on single-factor authentication with a lax password policy of 8 characters, which given this threat and limited controls, keeps us at a concerning level of risk. I believe if we implement mandatory MFA, although it will sophisticate the login process, we can greatly reduce our risk of account compromises while maintaining the same password policy for our customer experience, mitigating impact to existing users. What are your thoughts? Would it be valuable for you if I draft an estimate on the costs for your consideration?”



Where does this talk hopefully land us?

- You have a model for simplifying consulting.
- You understand how your biases coming out of school would fit into this model.
- You appreciate the mutual constraints of each pillar, and recognize a successful consultant complements them together to form trust.
- You have advice for evolving each pillar of consulting.
- You're confident improving your own consulting practice.

Q&A

Some noteworthy authors

- How to Win Friends and Influence People, by Dale Carnegie
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen Covey
- The 8 Pillars of Trust, by David Horsager

And some awesome colleagues & friends, thank you for your input!

Sean M., Michael S., Dwayne B., Alyssa H.