

Marketing and Analytic Consultants for Fortune 500 Companies



Peggy McHale
Principal

Consultants 2 Go® (C2G) is now recognized as an award-winning consulting firm and has provided services to some of the world's best-known and most respected organizations. While C2G has worked primarily with clients that are Fortune 500 and mid-sized companies, we also extend services to smaller businesses and non-profits.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Ms. McHale, what is the concept at Consultants 2 Go®?

Ms. McHale: We provide marketing and analytic consultants to Fortune 500 companies. We specialize in a couple of areas; the financial services industry, the telecommunications industry, consumer packaged goods, and insurance. We have had other industries as well, like style and nutrition. However, those are our main industries where we provide our marketing knowhow. We help the client that is really under the gun and has a pressing marketing problem and they need an expert to come in there, look at the situation, size it up and then get to work and fix it immediately. That is what we do.

CEOCFO: What is the key to sizing up in a way that is effective? What do you understand about the process that others might not understand as well?

Ms. Webster: We understand the need, because all of our people have done projects like this before at the same or similar company. Therefore, we have very tenured professionals. Very few have less than ten years of experience. They have come up through the ranks in corporate America and they know the jobs inside out. Many are ex employees of the companies in which we place them and they have insider knowledge, I would say. They understand the companies' systems, because they were there. They know the people that they need to deal with. They understand the company culture. Therefore, it is extremely effective to use someone who left the company as a Vice President or a director to put them back into that job. You do not have to train them. We hit the ground running and we are able to deliver outstanding results because our people are very well trained and tenured.



Sandi Webster
Principal

Ms. McHale: To add to that; our people have the credentials. Most of our consultants have advanced degrees from some of the top schools; many are Ivy League educated. These are very savvy marketing professionals. A great combination of experience and industry expertise plus marketing knowhow really differentiates us in the marketplace.

CEOCFO: I am guessing that most companies welcome the fact that these might be former employees, but why do they want them back?

Ms. McHale: Today, the world has changed. The workforce is fluid. Most companies do not staff to one hundred percent. Many are at seventy percent and they look to consultants to address their needs, so that they can provide more timely resources with lower overhead. I think we will see the trend accelerate; this is the future. We see increasing demand and companies utilizing these types of services even more frequently since the market downturn in 2008.

Ms. Webster: From the consultant perspective, you might have been displaced from the company; it is not that you left on a bad note. Some of our consultants have young children. They have reached a certain level in corporate America and they want to just take time or have the flexibility with their children to do what they want. They have amassed a certain amount of experience that now, they can share that experience in a less rigid environment. When you are a consultant

you literally avoid much of the politics; not that there is not politics, it is just different when you are on the consulting side. It is a win-win situation.

Ms. McHale: About seventy plus percent of our workforce is working moms who want to work hard, but they just do not want to do the sixty, seventy hour work week that is expected. When you are a VP at a major corporation, it is pretty much standard and expected. Therefore, they like the flexibility that consulting offers them, because they can choose when, where and how they work.

CEOCFO: *Would you walk me through an engagement? When might a company call you in?*

Ms. McHale: One of the most critical areas for us is when a company is looking to launch a new marketing program, product or service. That is when we are called in. We often provide a team of people because there are various elements to launching a new product or service. Why would they do that? Why would they not do it internally? First, they might not understand the nuances of the market that they are thinking about entering and they want a specific expert or outside talent to assess that for them and say, "Yes, this is a viable opportunity," or they do not know how many resources they are really going to need long term. Therefore, they would rather use the consulting team that can get it started and then figure out the transition plan for their own internal team. Our people will come in and launch a new product and service; we are a partner working on the engagement, we are there to provide the expertise on what it is going to take and work with their internal and external teams to get it built and launched for a set budget and timeframe.

We can marshal resources quickly, that have the expertise. Then they can determine whether they want to bring in a permanent staff to manage this new product. If that is the case, we will put a transition plan in place and will work to make sure that the transition goes very smoothly for them and that they have everything they need for when they take over the management of the new product or service.

"A telecommunications executive, said, 'That is what we love about C2G. You really own the strategy and the recommendation because you are there side by side with my people to make it work.'" - Peggy McHale

Ms. Webster: There are other times that they need us as well. They need continuity with their staff, they may have had a budget reduction and head count limitations. Therefore, we can come in, in any of those situations. On the analytics side, sometimes their companies have merged and their systems are not integrated. They will call us in because either side of the new company might only understand their particular portion. They will bring us in to make sure that the information is integrated into the two systems.

CEOCFO: *Therefore, there is a ton of opportunity for you!*

Ms. Webster: Absolutely!

CEOCFO: *Consultants2Go was on the Inc List, so clearly business is going well. Do most of your clients implement your recommendations?*

Ms. McHale: That is actually a great question, because that is what differentiates us from some of the very large consulting firms, they tend to come up with the recommendations and the strategy, but they do not do the implementation. That is where we really excel. We will work with you to develop the new strategy, but the difference is that we will actually work with you to implement it. In fact, one of my clients, who is a telecommunications executive, said, "That is what we love about C2G. You really own the strategy and the recommendation because you are there side by side with my people to make it work." That is our special sauce.

CEOCFO: *Do you find many repeat clients?*

Ms. McHale: Yes, we get new clients. However, so much of our business is within one company. One group refers us to another group that refers us to another group. We often go deep within a company more so than across an industry.

CEOCFO: *What do each of you spend your time on day to day and what do you enjoy most? Are there particular areas of the business or types of projects?*

Ms. McHale: We divvy it up, because Sandi and I are very different. You can probably even tell that on the phone. We both agreed on what we both did well. Therefore, Sandi has her major functions and I have the other. I tend to be sales and finance.

Ms. Webster: I am more of operations, HR and marketing.

Ms. McHale: I do get involved with marketing and operations, sometimes.

Ms. Webster: I do a great deal of HR. I work with our consultants. I do a great deal of process stuff. I think we just play to our backgrounds, not to say that we do not mix the others responsibilities or review each other's responsibilities. I think we can do each job fairly well but we just pulled out the pieces at which we are good.

CEOCFO: *What is your geographic reach?*

Ms. McHale: We are nationwide and we have actually had some global projects, specifically in Central and Latin America. We have consultants in the fifty states. We have clients that are global companies, so we have been asked to do work for global initiatives. Then we have had some smaller companies from Latin America that wanted to either enter the US market or were looking to expand in Central or Latin America that came to us too. We are a 24/7 global company at this point.

CEOCFO: *Do you see that as a growing area for you or more opportunistic?*

Ms. McHale: I think there are natural extensions to what we do, which is looking at new markets for our clients. We can assess the situation and give you a recommendation before you spend oodles of money. Therefore, it is opportunistic, but there are many companies in the same boat. They want to enter a specific market overseas or conversely they may be in a Latin American country looking to expand into the US market. That is when they come to us for help.

CEOCFO: *What is next? What might be different a year from now for the company?*

Ms. McHale: We are really expanding our analytic practice. We do analytics today, but because of the demand and because of how digital marketing is driving the need for speed, we are actually investing in and looking at some business intelligence tools that we may have at our ready to deploy for our clients. We are looking to really expand our analytics expertise into a true practice, where we will have a practice head who is going to be looking at the latest things in that area. This is a key initiative for 2014 and beyond.

“We are in an area that is at the forefront of what is going on in American business right now and that is both the marketing and analytics. Marrying the two gives us tremendous staying power.” - Sandi Webster

CEOCFO: *What is the key to keeping up with all of the newer technologies and newer concepts? How do you keep track? How do you know what to keep on the radar screen and what is likely not to be important?*

Ms. Webster: We have many strategic partners and people who are top experts in those applications and industries. We leverage our partners and utilize their knowledge all of the time. They are more, I would say, into the details of all of these different applications. Therefore, we can call on them at anytime to utilize their expertise. For us, we have some people on staff that is also very knowledgeable in applications and it is their job to stay on top of what is going on in the industry. However, you are right! It moves very fast! Things are new all of the time, some people tend to have their favorites, and those favorites are always changing. They are always getting new releases and being upgraded.

Ms. McHale: One of the other things that has helped is our advisory board. Our informal board is comprised of former CEOs and Executive Vice Presidents from Fortune 50 corporations. Their expertise and knowledge has been invaluable. They provide deep insight into many key trends.

Ms. Webster: We also have an analytics recruiter whose job is to recruit the very best talent with the latest knowledge. That has been kind of a secret weapon for us, because she has the opportunity to see what is out there. Our client asks for a specific requirement and she can go out and recruit the people with the very latest skill sets as well.

Ms. McHale: The last thing is that Sandi is what I would call a “gadfly” and pushes us along. She does not sleep! This is really the secret, Lynne! Sandi is always reading and sending stuff and telling us about new trends and opportunities. I also just finished the 10,000 Small Business Program that is sponsored by Goldman Sachs, which was phenomenal. Sandi also does one course after the other. We are always trying to learn and expand our knowledge and I have to credit Sandi for pushing us forward. It is constantly in our face. There is no resting on your laurels and saying, “I know what is going on.” I think that is really at the heart of it! My only advice to people is to take a business partner that requires no sleep and you will be okay!

CEOCFO: *What surprised you, positive negative or both, as the business has grown and developed?*

Ms. Webster: Every day there is a surprise! There are good surprises and of course, there are not so good surprises. I think the good surprise is the generosity of people you meet. The most unsuspecting people will help you, people that you never thought would, in all different positions. Even your competitors sometimes become your colleagues in certain instances. The camaraderie of just being in business, being a small business owner, is wonderful. You have programs to support us as Peggy said, like the Goldman Sachs program. You just have to be willing go out and look for them. There are industry organizations just for small business. I participate in the Inc Magazine Business Council for the fastest

growing companies. You can sit and you can talk through challenges that you are facing and it is great to get that feedback from your fellow business owners.

Ms. McHale: I would say 2008 and 2009 were very difficult for us. One day in August 2008, the phone stopped ringing. It was just dead. The business had stopped. It started in August and it really escalated in September and the first quarter of 2009. These were very scary times for many businesses. We had to make some hard decisions about resources and people or we might not have survived. It made us tougher and because of this adversity, it actually made us wiser. We were able to survive and then in 2010 we had our best year up to that point. We really rallied and came back and because of the changes we made in our business structure, we are leaner and stronger and better positioned to scale and grow our business. However, I cannot say that it was without pain. It was definitely a painful and scary time.

Ms. McHale: I have to give a plug here for having a CFO. We have a CFO who is amazing and who sat down with us during these turbulent times and helped us, create a strategy to cut expenses to stay lean and mean but also how to invest when there are opportunities. He has continued to do that ever since. We will never go back to the way we were.

CEOCFO: *Why should people pay attention to Consultants 2 Go? Why does the company stand out?*

Ms. McHale: On a purely emotional level, we come from very different backgrounds. We reflect the diversity of this country. We represent what everyone wants. It is the American dream. You come here and want to start a business. Sandi is an immigrant and my family a little further back. We were able to start a company in 2002. I just think we are one of the many stories about how you can be successful in this country, in spite of adversity, that we were able to start our own business. Now we employ many people and we have been able to create economic value for the United States. Sometimes I think that gets lost because so many of the government policies and so much of the world focuses on the big corporations. However, we are a small company that is actually representing the American dream and making a difference.

However, when you look at us, I think companies seek us out because there is a strong commitment to the customer. We, unequivocally and absolutely, no matter what time of the day, day of week, we are there. We stand behind our consultants to deliver to make sure our clients get exactly what they need to be successful. Their ROI is our ROI. We are passionate about that and we will do everything in our power to make our clients happy. I think it is our commitment and passion for quality and delivery that is our secret ingredient.

Ms. Webster: When a large corporation uses another large corporation, at first there is a great deal of red tape, a ton of politics, and you do not get to the owners as quickly. However, with C2G, they know they can come directly to us. We will help solve their problems directly. As we said before, we own everything that we build. Our consultants have a stake in the success of their engagements and take time to make sure they are delivering the best service on our behalf. It shows up in the fact that many companies extend our people for additional projects. Our secret sauce is really our people. They love what we do. We are in a business that is growing. The consulting industry is also growing. We are in an area that is at the forefront of what is going on in American business right now and that is both the marketing and analytics. Marrying the two gives us tremendous staying power. There are many reasons that companies are looking at us today.

Executive Bios:

Peggy McHale

Peggy is the co-founder of Consultants 2 Go[®], LLC (C2G), a consulting firm that provides marketing and analytic solutions to Fortune 500 companies in the Financial Services, Telecom and Insurance industries. C2G's consultants are available on a project or interim basis. Founded in 2002, C2G has developed an impressive roster of Fortune 500 clients. In 2006, Consultants 2 Go, was one of twenty winners of the 2006 Make Mine a \$Million Business program and was one of seven to be named to the Million Dollar Club.

Peggy is also the co-author of *Black and White Strike Gold: Practical Nuggets to Grow Your Business from the Women Who Launched Consultants 2 Go, a Multi-Million Dollar Company*. She was a Vice President of Marketing at American Express, where she launched their Automatic Bill Payment Service that produced outstanding financial results and record-breaking customer activation. Prior to joining American Express, she was Director of Marketing at an Information Technology Services company, which was her first position after leaving AT&T. At AT&T, Peggy worked as a Marketing Director on both consumer and business international calling services. She launched a variety of new products and services and rolled out their Multi-Cultural Marketing Organization.

She holds an MBA in Finance from St. John's University and a BA from the College of Mount St. Vincent. Peggy currently serves on the board of the Women's Center for Entrepreneurship of New Jersey. She is the Co-Chair for their Spring 2013 Event, Women Making Their Mark in Business, their annual fundraising event. Peggy also serves on the Board of the New Jersey Institute of Technology's Interdisciplinary Design Studio. The purpose of this program is to teach college students in the Honors College on how to become innovative entrepreneurs. In addition, she has also served on the State Board of the New Jersey Association of Women Business Owners as their Vice President of Marketing and Nominations Chair. She is also a member of the Women Presidents' Organization.

Sandi Webster

Sandi Webster is a principal of Consultants 2 Go, LLC (C2G) – a certified, minority, women-owned, marketing and analytics consulting firm that provides hi-level consultants on an interim basis or as an outsourced project to Fortune 500 companies. C2G is also the virtual marketing department for mid-size companies.

Sandi provides her team with innovative marketing and analytic techniques. She has created and executed national direct mail campaigns, conferences, web site launches, and in-bound telemarketing programs for customers in the Financial Services, Telecom and Insurance industries. As a former Director of Marketing at American Express, Ms. Webster created winning segmentation strategies for several new products and developed targeted segmentation and complex analyses for existing products that allowed creative repositioning in untapped markets.

Other management positions included Saks Fifth Avenue where she worked in Customer Development that determined the areas for opening new stores. Sandi helped to pioneer several new programs for the Board of Education for the City of New York and pursued funding for these efforts through development work with the federal government.

Sandi Webster holds an MBA in Management and a BS in Marketing. She is a strong supporter of women's groups and community services. She is a member of NAWBO, NAFE and Women's President Organization. In her spare time, she volunteers with The Carter Burden Center for the Aged in Manhattan and manages a non-profit organization that provides scholarships and food programs for underprivileged children in Jamaica, West Indies.



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