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How Consulting Firms Are Building New Revenue Streams with AI

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Opportunity:

For the first time, consulting firms can supplement traditional billable hours with recurring software-enabled services revenue. This represents a new revenue stream that didn't exist before. The technology has finally caught up to make this possible at scale.

Yet few are actualizing this opportunity. There's a massive adoption gap in AI right now. The winners are seeing transformational value. But most organizations are drowning in noise and seeing no ROI.

The hard truth:

In 2025, studies reported that 95% of AI pilots were failing, and that enterprise AI adoption fell from 13% to 12%. Your clients are skeptical. They've been promised transformation and gotten expensive chatbots. They've encountered AI that doesn't work like it was supposed to.

BCG frames the AI revolution as 70% people and processes, 20% technology applications, 10% algorithms. This framing is widely accepted, but there's massive variation between success and failure depending on the approaches and platforms firms choose.

The Consulting Services Opportunity

There's a huge opportunity for AI services and solutions revenue that goes beyond traditional consulting engagements.

The business model advantage is compelling:

- You can supplement billable hours with recurring software revenue.
- You get higher margins when you provide software solutions alongside advisory services.
- You build ongoing relationships that extend beyond project timelines.
- You're adding a revenue stream that compounds over time while keeping your core consulting model intact.

Low-code and no-code AI platforms make it easier than ever for consultants to excel at what they know best: industry-specific and company-specific knowledge of problems and solutions.

- You provide the last-mile customization and domain knowledge that AI platforms can't solve at scale.
- While respecting confidentiality and compliance needs, you templatize your last-mile solutions and bring them from client to client—verticalized software to a degree of precision impossible previously.
- You get recurring revenue from software access and from human enablement of your clients.

This represents a shift from organizational capability to competitive advantage.

Building AI Services: What You Need and How to Get It

What You Need to Make AI Services Actually Work

Speed is non-negotiable. Consulting engagements are short. You can't wait months to onboard AI for a 3-month project. You need to deploy in weeks and see results in days. Solutions need to be live in days, not quarters. Build once, reuse across engagements without starting from scratch.

Client confidentiality is the foundation. You need strict data isolation between client engagements. One data leak destroys your reputation and violates contracts. Full audit trails and source traceability for every AI interaction are mandatory. You need protection for both your firm's IP and your clients' sensitive information.

> The risk is real: "rogue AI use" is rampant. Employees are using consumer AI tools and leaking client data. You need to bring AI adoption into a governed environment.

Reusability without compromise. Build consulting workflow templates, research agents, and analysis tools once. Customize and deploy them across multiple client engagements. Maintain confidentiality while enabling knowledge sharing across your firm. Your business logic stays consistent even as clients and projects change.

Team-oriented enablement at scale. Most AI tools are built for individuals. You need something built for teams. You'll be managing dozens or hundreds of clients simultaneously, each with their own workspace, data, and access requirements. Easily adding and managing users to workflows, data, templates, and guides is a requirement.

Why Building Your Own Platform is a Mistake

Building your own AI platform from scratch is a complete mistake in this day and age. Let’s be honest: do you want to build the UX functionality that allows AI to create a spreadsheet, or do you want to be the one telling the AI what to put in the spreadsheet?

AI technology evolves too quickly. By the time you build it, it's outdated. You can't compete with dedicated AI platform companies on features, security, or model access. Your competitive advantage is domain expertise, not platform engineering. The cost and time investment will never pay off when platforms already exist.

The Build-On-Top Approach

Instead, find a platform (like elvex) that allows you to build on top of it. You can apply the platform to nearly any business problem your clients face, and resell platform access.

- They provide the AI capabilities, UX features, and open-ended platform that "just works." They handle model access, security certifications, devops, UX development, and platform updates.
- You provide the domain-specific knowledge: the problem, the solution, the available data, the users.

The platform becomes your competitive advantage. Build proprietary workflows that differentiate your services. Use APIs and integration capabilities to extend solutions to your clients' software. Charge clients for access to your custom-built solutions. Turn platform capabilities into consulting services revenue.

What the Platform Needs to Do

Enterprise security is non-negotiable. SOC 2 Type 2 and HIPAA certification. Your data is never used for model training. Automatic PII and financial information redaction. Encryption in transit and at rest. Full audit trails with source traceability. This needs to be enterprise from day one, not features bolted on later.

Deployment speed matters. Visual, no-code builder that empowers consultants, not just IT. From junior analysts to senior partners, everyone should be able to build and deploy solutions. Natural language building: from chat to custom workflows without a learning curve. Ready-to-go templates that get teams productive within days of deployment.

Team orientation is the differentiator. Role-based access control with granular permissions. SSO/SAML provisioning when needed. Most AI tools are built for individuals. You need a platform built for teams.

Simple 'group' creation to bring assistants, flows, datasources, templates, and guides to large teams at once. Without this, managing dozens or hundreds of clients simultaneously becomes impossible. Easily bring your bespoke templated solutions from one client to the next while maintaining client confidentiality. Service dozens of workspaces at a time while enabling clients to self-service value to the degree you want to gatekeep it (or not).

Future-proofing protects your investment. AI technology changes faster than you can keep up. New models release weekly. Every client engagement has different requirements: different data sources, different compliance needs, different deliverable formats.

You need model flexibility: switch between OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, Mistral, AWS Bedrock, and Azure without rebuilding. Choose the right model for each client's needs based on cost,

performance, or compliance. When the next breakthrough model drops, your workflows should adapt instantly.

Extensibility for client delivery. Integration capabilities to connect to client systems. APIs to extend solutions wherever your clients need them. The ability to white-label or package solutions for your own clients. Workspace management that lets you service multiple clients simultaneously.

The Path Forward

The AI services opportunity is real, but only for firms that move quickly and choose the right foundation.

Success requires speed to deployment, client confidentiality, reusable solutions, and a platform that evolves with technology. The firms that win will supplement traditional consulting revenue with recurring software services. They'll transform from project-based advisory to ongoing strategic partners with software-enabled solutions.

The technology is finally here. The question is whether you'll build on it before your competitors do.