One test you can apply to judge the professionalism of a prospective consultant is to ask her to identify the limits of her professional competence. A professional consultant will clearly identify the limits of her knowledge. Faced with requests for help in areas beyond his competence, the consultant will point out that alternative sources of information would be more cost effective. Keep track of consultants who refer you to a better resource for a specific project – their professionalism makes them good candidates for future assignments for their professional profiles.

The Consulting Alliance <http://www.consultingalliance.org> has a useful consultants’ Code of Ethics<http://www.consultingalliance.org/Default.aspx?pageId=106159> that includes these “Responsibilities to the Client:”

- A member shall always act in the best interest of the client, providing professional services with integrity, objectivity, and independence.
- A member shall accept only those assignments for which the member has the qualifications, knowledge and skill to serve the client effectively.
- A member shall, before accepting an assignment, reach a mutual understanding with the client as to the objectives, scope, work plan, and costs. A member shall establish fee arrangements with a client in advance of any substantive work.
- A member shall avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of such. Members shall not accept simultaneous assignments from two or more clients who have potentially conflicting interests without informing all parties in advance and securing all parties’ prior agreement.
- The member shall treat clients’ information as confidential and take all reasonable steps to prevent it from access by unauthorized people. A member shall not take advantage of such privileged information for use by the member, the member’s firm or another client, without appropriate permission.
- A member shall not engage in any malfeasance, dangerous behavior, or illegal activities in any matter related to an assignment and shall report to appropriate authorities within or external to a client organization any such activities discovered within the scope of an assignment.

The International Association of Professional Security Consultants (IAPSC) provides the CSC certification and associated Code of Ethics <http://www.iapsc.org/certification.asp?ss8id=3> which includes similar terms.

- CERTIFIED SECURITY CONSULTANTS\textsuperscript{SM} will view and handle as confidential all information concerning the affairs of the client.
- CERTIFIED SECURITY CONSULTANTS\textsuperscript{SM} will not take personal, financial, or any other advantage of inside information gained by virtue of the consulting relationship.
- CERTIFIED SECURITY CONSULTANTS\textsuperscript{SM} will inform clients and prospective clients of any special relationship or circumstances that could be considered a conflict of interest.
• CERTIFIED SECURITY CONSULTANTS℠ will never charge more than a reasonable fee; and, whenever possible, the consultant will agree with the client in advance on the fee or basis for the fee.

• CERTIFIED SECURITY CONSULTANTS℠ will neither accept nor pay fees or commissions, for client referrals.

• CERTIFIED SECURITY CONSULTANTS℠ will not accept fees, commissions or other valuable considerations from any individual or organization whose equipment, supplies or services they might or do recommend in the course of his or her services to a client.

• CERTIFIED SECURITY CONSULTANTS℠ will only accept assignments for and render expert opinions on matters they are eminently qualified in and for.

Clients can usefully discuss these terms with candidates for consulting contracts. Clearing the air before hiring a consultant can avoid conflicts, disappointment, anger, and litigation.

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