

Trends in IT Consulting in Austria

Michael Torggler

Abstract—IT consultants often take over an important role as an interface between technological, organizational and managerial structures. As a result, the services offered are in many cases assigned to different disciplines which can cause a lack of transparency on the market for consulting services. However, not all consulting products are suitable for every company because of different frameworks and business processes. In this context the questions arises as to what consulting products are currently offered and how they can be compared as well as how the market for IT consulting services is structured on the supply side. The presented study aims to shed light on the IT consulting market by giving an overview of the current structure of the supply-side for IT consulting services as well as proposing a categorization of the currently available consulting services (consulting fields) in order to provide a theoretical background for the empirical study. Apart from these theoretical considerations, the empirical results of field surveys on the Austrian IT consulting market are presented and analyzed.

Keywords—IT Consulting, Management Consulting, IS Consulting, Consulting Fields, Market study.

I. INTRODUCTION

MANAGEMENT consulting and IT consulting play an important role in economic regions [7], [28]. On the one hand the provided services contribute a significant advantage regarding the competitiveness of the companies on the international markets. On the other hand, the consulting industry has become an important factor on the employment market and is also an indicator for the economical health and highly developed national economies [7]. IT consulting can be seen as an intersection of the areas of IT services and business consulting [25]. According to most definitions, IT consulting mainly offers services which are based on information technology [15], [17], [19], [32], [38]. In the last few years the offered services are also often related to the discipline of management consultancy, including topics such as project management or business process management [11], [25], [35]. Accordingly it is hard to determine a clear border between these consulting areas [15].

As a result the Austrian IT consulting market is quite wide and heterogeneous. The consulting services offered reach from genuine IT topics, such as Hardware and IT infrastructure over organisational IT concepts, to business consulting services such as strategy consulting [11], [17], [25]. Regarding the size of the consulting companies, the Austrian market is dominated by small and medium sized companies [42]. However, there are also large enterprises which offer full solution services [15], [16], [35] including all peripheral tasks (e.g. trainings,

outsourcing services, etc.) but they operate mainly on international markets [6]. Due to this diversity and a lack of transparency, the selection of suitable consulting partners is becoming increasingly difficult for companies. In order to provide a categorization of the services offered by IT consultants and to monitor the Austrian IT consulting market, a study series was started in the year 2004. The aim of the surveys is to research all fields of IT consultancy, on the basis of a periodical collection and interpretation of market data with reference to the current situation, expected trends and market developments. This paper introduces a classification model for IT consulting services and outlines the results of a market study, conducted in 2008, on the market structure for IT consulting in Austria. These aspects will provide an overview of the current market structure and expected future trends for the consulting industry.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the last twenty years "IT consulting" was both from the perspective of the consulting industry as well as in relation to the services offered always subject to change. The Information- and Communication-Technology (ICT) industry, with its sustained momentum, continuously generates new issues and innovations in combination with new definitions and concepts [15], [36], [41]. Not only is the market becoming more dynamic but, in addition the technology life cycles are also becoming shorter [6], [20], [23], [41], [49]. These developments are reflected in the constantly changing and growing range of supporting IT services. The resulting complexity of the solutions offered [20] and the lack of transparency in the IT consulting industry makes a clear delineation of consulting services and consulting fields (especially with regards to business consultancy) difficult [15].

A closer examination of the consulting market shows that management consulting companies increasingly offer services in the area of ICT (e.g. implementation of information systems) [5], [19], [22], [25]. On the other hand, IT consulting companies successfully offer strategic and organizational consulting services (e.g. strategy- and process management) [22], [25], [35]. Another overlap is due to the fact that the traditional hardware and software vendors increasingly have various services in their portfolios [19], [23], [39]. In addition, former in-house consultancies now offer their know-how on the open market [15], [52]. These services can be combined under the term IT services, which includes consulting performances as well as hardware/software maintenance, outsourcing, systems integration, process management, trainings and so on [13], [21], [26], [32].

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In consulting literature (e.g. [9], [22], [29], [37], [40], [50]), IT consulting is assigned to management consultancy. According to Eschenbach/Nagy [9], IT consulting can be seen as part of technology consulting, which is part of management consulting. Kubr [23] declares IT consulting as the largest and fastest growing part of management consultancy. Walger/Scheller [50] consider in a study regarding the German consulting market IT consulting as a main focus of business consultancy. Freedman [12] states that technical competence is essential for IT consultants but not sufficient. Representatives for the consulting industry in the European region also include IT consulting in the fields of management consulting [1], [3], [48].

Taking this market structure into account, IT consulting can be seen as an intersection of the areas IT services and management consultancy. This paper regards IT consulting as an individual, external, independent and paid consulting service, which is offered by business consultancies as well as specialists from the IT services market in order to solve operational problems in the light of information and communication technologies [31], [45], [46].

Based on this definition and referring to the developments described in the IT consulting market, the IT consultants increasingly act as interdisciplinary support with technological, organizational and business-related advice abilities [49]. Therefore the role of IT consultants is not limited to purely information technology topics but also in fields such as eBusiness, project management, change management, business analysis, process management or outsourcing strategies [25], [45], [46].

III. RESEARCH PROCESS

In order to determine the trends on the IT consulting market with regard to consulting fields, market developments and reasons for IT consulting projects, the study follows a three tiered research design. First of all, a literature survey was conducted on the topic of IT consulting at the beginning of the study series. On this basis, the objectives and operative areas of IT consulting were identified and classified. A classification model for the categorisation of IT consulting services was then introduced. In order to verify the findings and consider current developments in the consulting market, interviews with experts from all IT consulting areas were carried out. The developed classification model provides the theoretical background for the periodical collection and interpretation of market data with reference to the current situation, market developments and trends.

A. General Literature Analysis

To provide a general definition and description of IT consulting, a comprehensive literature survey was carried out at the beginning of the study. This survey involved all relevant literature including online sources, papers and field studies. On this basis, the objectives of IT consulting were identified, classified and summarized.

B. Classification of IT Consulting Services

The second step of the research design includes the identification of the IT consulting fields in order to develop a classification model for IT consulting services. The basis for the model is a classical business planning process (strategic planning, operative planning and implementation) [24] which is used in most consulting projects and can be easily adjusted to developments on the IT consulting market. In order to identify the classes/IT consulting fields a comprehensive Internet survey was carried out to get an overview of the offered services. The results were compared with general descriptions of consulting fields in the literature and brought together in six IT consulting fields.

C. Market Study

A survey row of Austrian IT consulting enterprises aims to reveal the development of the IT consulting industry in the Austrian market. In order to analyze trends the survey is carried out periodically. In this paper we use the results of the year 2004 [46] and 2008 [45] to shed light on the developments in the consulting fields, the reasons for consulting projects and global driving forces in Austria.

- **Subjects of the survey:** For the market survey in 2008 a population of 21,878 Austrian IT consulting companies was selected. This selection represents all enterprises which are registered at the Austrian professional representation "UBIT" (Unternehmensberatung und Informationstechnologie) of the Austrian chamber of commerce. In the year 2004 a population of 2,200 companies were selected. Since the ranking did not contain email contacts of all listed enterprises, telephone research was necessary to obtain all email addresses for the online survey.
- **Market study:** The data were collected via a standardized online survey based on an electronic questionnaire. The resulting sample contained in 2008, 506 fully completed questionnaires (2004: 286). The data were analyzed using the statistics package SPSS. The analysis focused on the identification of significant differences and their correlation with factors such as the business sector involved and the size of the enterprise.

IV. CATEGORIZATION OF IT CONSULTING FIELDS

Due to the steady development of the consulting industry a great variety of services can be found on the market for IT consulting. As a result, there is no comprehensive overview of all offered services. In terms of IT consulting fields, most of the researched sources focus either on the representation of individual, selected fields of activity or full solution providing without a specific determination of single services. In the course of the first study [46], six consulting fields were identified (IT strategy consulting, IT organizational consulting, IT infrastructure consulting, non-technological IT consulting, eSolutions consulting and IT training). In order to provide a comprehensive research framework the basic classification structure was based on classic business planning guidelines (strategic, operational and tactical planning) [24].

Following this structure the identified fields of IT consulting were merged into a classification model with three core consulting fields (strategy, organisation and infrastructure) and three supporting areas (non-technological, eSolutions and IT training):

- **IT strategy consulting:** IT strategy is often connected with the general business strategy of enterprises and the consulting services are similar to those of classic management consulting (e.g. development of IT strategies, implementation of IT strategies, IT controlling, strategic IT analyses, etc.).
- **IT organisational consulting:** Organisational IT consulting contains all activities regarding business processes and organisational structures (e.g. business process reengineering, outsourcing, IT service-management, workflow-management, business architectures, etc.).
- **IT infrastructure consulting:** Infrastructure consulting deals with the design, planning, integration and implementation of information- and communication infrastructure as well as security issues in companies (e.g. hardware and networks, IT security, IT integration, databases, information systems, etc.).
- **Non-technological IT consulting:** In most projects the IT consulting company also offers non-technological services to support the core consulting process (e.g. project management, change management, quality management, capital budgeting, market analysis, etc.).
- **eSolutions consulting:** Internet technologies have become more and more important for companies in the last few years – this trend can also be seen in the consulting industry where the range of internet-based services was constantly extended (e.g. eCommerce, eProcurement, eLearning, eGovernment, etc.).
- **IT training:** IT training is mostly offered as a part of a global solution in order to support the implementation process. Next to classical training this consulting field also contains the management of skills and knowledge within a company (e.g. hardware and software training, skills management, etc.).

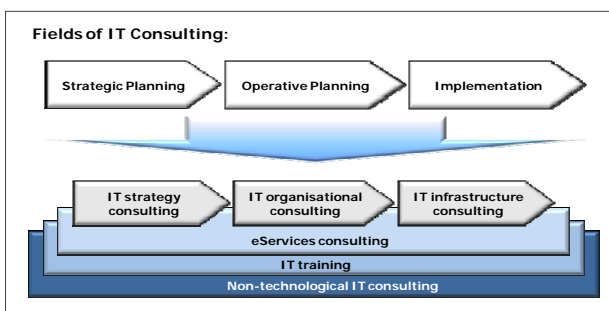


Fig. 1 Classification model for IT consulting fields

V. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A. General Conditions on the Austrian Market

The company size of the respondents mainly reflects the Austrian corporate structure, which is dominated by small and

medium-sized enterprises [42]. The analysis of survey data shows that more than two-thirds of the surveyed companies employ less than five employees. Of these, around 34% are individual enterprises. IT consulting businesses with more than 20 employees can rarely be found on the Austrian market (8%). These companies are usually enterprises which operate mainly internationally and have branches in Austria. According to the Austrian representative for business consulting and IT (UBIT) the number of licensed IT businesses rose by about 8% between the years 2004 and 2008 [47].

Regarding the market situation for IT consulting in Austria the findings show a clear positive picture for both the current and the expected future market situation. About 2% of the survey participants estimate the current market as regressive. This compares to more than two-thirds (68%) of the surveyed IT consultants who believe that the IT consulting industry is in a growth phase. Around 30% of the respondents estimate the current market for IT consulting as a stagnant one.

For the international management consulting market a positive trend can also be identified. While in the years 2002-2004, the European market volume for management consulting was constant at around 50 billion Euro, it has been continuously rising since 2004. For the year 2007 the FEACO (European Federation of Management Consultancies Associations) forecasts an overall volume of around 82 billion Euro [10]. A large share of this market is covered by IT-related consulting [10], [33], [48]. Based on the share of IT consultancy of the total volume, a significant break from the years 2004 to 2005 can be observed. According to the information provided by the FEACO, the proportion of IT consulting again has risen since 2005 [10].

For the next three years (until 2011) the surveyed enterprises forecast a positive trend for the Austrian consulting market. About 67% of the respondents believe that the market volume will increase. On the other hand around 6% assume the reverse scenario.

B. Reasons for IT Consulting Projects

From the point of view of IT consulting companies, the two most common reasons for the requisition of IT consulting services are lack of know-how (72%) and lack of internal resources (54%). Comparing the results from the surveys of 2004 and 2008 an increase in both of these can be identified. Also of growing importance seems to be the implementation of standard software (41%) which often goes along with the analysis and optimization of business processes. More than one-third of the surveyed companies state that business analysis (34%), and measures to improve performance (39%) are reasons for IT consulting projects. Compared with the results from the year 2004, it can be seen that especially the areas of instruction and training (39%) and the analysis of existing information systems (35%) are no longer so frequently mentioned. Market analyses are rarely (10%) a reason for hiring an external IT consultant. In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, the study participants mentioned the development of prototypes, the placement of external

perceptions, the solution of conflicts or the legitimacy of changes as further reasons for the assignment of IT consultants.

A comparison of the reasons by company size reveals significant differences. Reasons such as the analysis/implementation of information systems and the improvement of corporate performance are mainly denoted by large consulting enterprises. Medium-sized consultancies often conduct projects in order to support an initiation of changes within the customer's company or to consider external perceptions of a problem. Next to the customers' lack of know-how and resources, the training of staff is often a reason to instruct small and individual consulting companies.

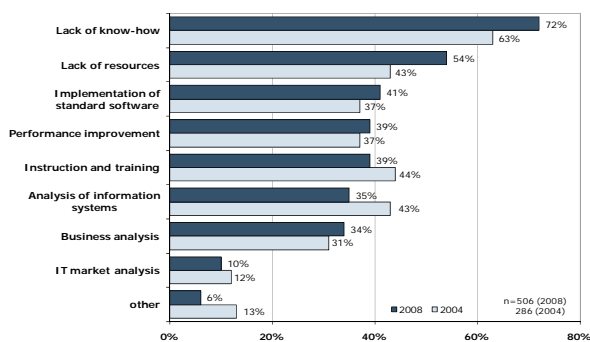


Fig. 2 Reasons for IT consulting projects

C. Fields of IT Consulting

More than half of the surveyed IT consultancies are active in the consulting field IT infrastructure consulting (59%), which has slightly decreased in comparison to 2004. On the other hand, non-technological services (e.g. project management and change management) were offered by nearly half of the surveyed enterprises in the year 2008. The proportion in the year 2004 was around 37% of the companies, which means that this consulting field registered a growth of 10 percent points within the last four years. However, the most intense change can be recorded in the field of eSolutions consulting where the percentage of the enterprises which are offering services increased from 17% (2004) to 35% (2008). IT organizational consulting is offered by about 44% of the study participants - this area seems to be declining. The same situation can be seen in the fields of IT training (38%) and IT strategy consulting (29%), where in the year 2008, less companies offered services than in the year 2004. Other mentioned fields of IT consulting are for example, innovation consulting, information management, medical consulting and communication consulting.

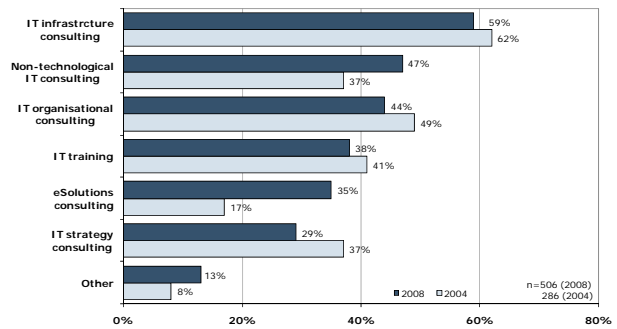


Fig. 3 Fields of IT consulting

When comparing the findings according to company size it can be stated that individual consultants and small consulting firms mainly offer services in the fields of IT infrastructure consulting and non-technological IT consulting. This compares to medium-sized and large consulting firms, which more often focus on IT organization consulting.

The survey results show a clear trend for the future activities of IT consultancy. Between 56% and 62% of survey participants want to keep their portfolio at the same level and offer services in the currently supported consulting fields. On average about 30% of surveyed IT consulting enterprises plan to increase their activities in all areas of consulting. According to the survey results, the greatest potential for the future lies in IT strategy consulting, where 38% of the consultants would like to offer more than at present. A similar picture can be recorded in the area of IT organizational consulting, where around one-third of the surveyed companies are planning an expansion and about 5% a reduction of currently offered services. The two strongest fields of IT consulting, namely IT infrastructure consulting and non-technological IT consulting, are evident in relation to an extension or reduction of supply in midfield with average figures – more than 60% of the respondents do not want any change of the range in these areas. In comparison, about one-fifth plan to modify the current offer in the field of IT training.

D. Daily Rates of IT Consultants

Based on the terms of settlement of projects, most IT consultants (61%), prefer a time-dependent billing of consultancy services in form of daily or hourly rates. Nearly half of the interviewed companies (48%) also offer flat rates. Performance-based allocation models can be found in less than 10% of surveyed consulting firms. Ignoring the terms of settlement, the consultants were asked to provide the daily rates which are charged for IT consulting projects, as they were in 2004. A comparison of the results reveals that the average rates for partners in 2008 (€858,-) are slightly higher than in the year 2004 (+ €35,-). The average daily rates of junior consultants (€ 667,-) and analysts (€ 670,-) are virtually unchanged. Only the average rates of the senior consultants (€800,-) declined in the sample (by around €20,-). The average daily rate across all four sectors in 2008 was around €765,- and in 2004 with €755,- only slightly lower

i.e. it increased by about € 10,-- (approx. 1.3%) in the last three years.

In relation to the size of the consulting company, a clear differentiation between large and small consulting companies can be identified. Thus, the average daily rate of the partners in the large consultancies is about €1,330,-- - small consulting firms charge around € 825,--. A differentiation can also be recognized at the senior consultants level where the average rate of large IT consultancy lies at about € 1,070,-- - small consultants charge about € 760,-- per day. The surveyed average rate for junior consultants of medium and large IT consulting enterprises is almost on a par with €840,--. Again, the average daily rate of small companies is lower (€610,--). A similar picture is reflected for analysts, where the average daily rates fluctuates between € 840,-- (large) and € 650,-- (small).

TABLE I
DAILY RATES OF IT CONSULTANTS

		Partner	Senior Consultant	Junior Consultant	Analyst
2008	n	204	241	170	122
	arithmetic mean	€ 858	€ 800	€ 667	€ 670
	25% percentile	€ 560	€ 552	€ 473	€ 492
	50% percentile	€ 800	€ 800	€ 665	€ 700
	75% percentile	€ 1,200	€ 1,100	€ 885	€ 900
2004	n	107	103	85	72
	arithmetic mean	€ 823	€ 820	€ 666	€ 669
	25% percentile	€ 500	€ 500	€ 400	€ 400
	50% percentile	€ 800	€ 850	€ 640	€ 620
	75% percentile	€ 1,090	€ 1,200	€ 925	€ 1,000

E. Key Factors for the Development of IT Consulting

Referring to statements of the surveyed enterprises, three major driving forces can be identified for the future development of the IT consulting industry in Austria. On the one hand the continuous and rapid change in technology (36%) and macro-economic developments (35%) strongly influence both the consulting industry as well as their customers. On the other hand, the market is getting tighter and the professionalization of consulting (31%) seems to be a crucial factor for the future development for the consulting industry. The findings also show that the increasing globalization (25%) and the related formation of consulting networks (23%) as well as the complexity of business decisions (22%), are considered as driving forces. Less than one-fifth of the respondents estimate that the availability of qualified consultants (19%), the competitive situation in the consulting market (17%) or various technological and consulting-related certifications (15%) are key factors for the future Austrian IT consulting industry. Surrounding conditions such as the standardization of hardware and software (10%), the standardization of consulting services (5%) and the entry requirements for the consulting industry (4%) are also not often mentioned.

Analyzing the results by the size of the surveyed enterprises it can be seen that especially large consulting companies classify globalization as an important driver for the development of the IT consulting industry. Midsize companies also see globalization as a vital point, but also frequently

mention technological developments and the availability of qualified staff as key factors. Small companies and individual consultants who participated in the study have especially regarded technological changes and the professionalization of consulting as important aspects for the future of the Austrian IT consulting industry.

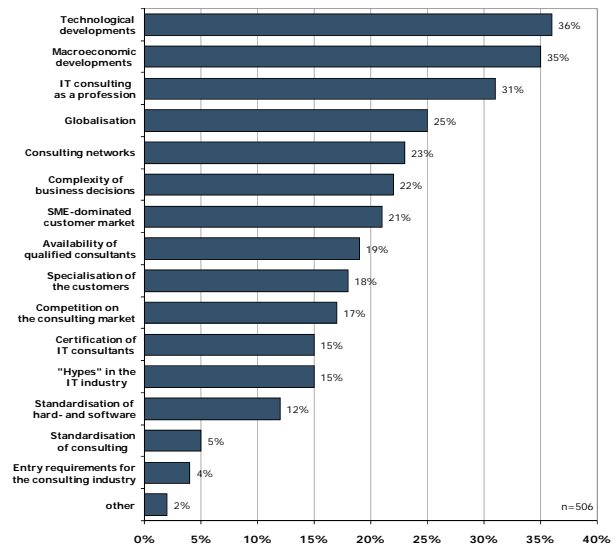


Fig. 4 Key factors for the development of IT consulting

VI. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The consulting industry is currently changing - away from traditional areas such as strategy consulting, organizational consulting, IT consulting, etc. to comprehensive consulting services (Full Solution Provider) [25], [27], [35], [40]. The fast growth and continuous changes in the ICT industry [6], [15] has led to a significant diversification of the environment for service oriented companies. Due to the breadth of offerings and internationalization/globalization tendencies, IT consulting services are becoming more and more intransparent. This makes it increasingly difficult to describe the market situation for IT consulting and the offered services for Austria in a structured way.

A fundamental problem can be found in the vague definition of the term "IT consulting" itself. Particularly the increasing linkage with the business consulting industry [25] leads to a strong blurring of borders [9], [23], [40]. This is one reason why IT consulting is often seen as part of management consulting in literature, in studies and also by professional representations. In addition, IT consulting is strongly influenced by the developments in the ICT sector. The diffuse definition has the consequence that studies available on the market deliver only conditionally comparable statements. This is reinforced by a widespread absence of technical literature on IT consulting i.e. the literature is often strongly practically orientated without theoretical background information [45]. On the market for consulting services, the situation is similar. According to the study findings it seems that increasingly integrated IT consulting services are offered [10], [15], [16],

[35]. In this context, the term "IT-focused advice" is used [18]. Especially large international enterprises offer holistic services along all business processes in order to provide integrated solutions from business analysis on the implementation of technological components to the training of staff [25], [35].

Regarding the Austrian IT consulting market, the findings of the study show that consulting companies, especially with fewer than ten employees, dominate the market [42]. In reference to the distribution of consulting projects it can generally be said that large consulting projects with a focus on the implementation of standard software or performance problems are more often conducted by large and medium-sized consultancies. Small IT consulting companies rather take over small business projects in order to fill in the gap due to their clients' lack of resources. The general trend towards globalization affects all company sizes, although foremost medium and large consultancies offer their services on the international market [45].

With regards to market volume and market growth more than two-thirds of the surveyed consultants forecast further growth for the IT consulting industry for the next years. The Austrian chamber of commerce recorded a sales growth of almost 14% in the Austrian business and IT consulting from 2006 to 2007 and expects further growth for the year 2008 [51]. Due to rising globalization and market pressure more and more IT consultants are offering their services on the international market, which is expected to expand in the future. This is also reflected by the market growth on the international markets for management consultancy and information technology, where the professional associations also estimate a positive trend for the next years [8], [10].

The reasons for the demand of IT consulting services are as diverse as the fields of IT consulting services themselves, ranging from analysis of business processes to the training and education of customers. Both the studies of the years 2004 and 2008 revealed that (from the consultants' perspective), in most cases, lack of internal expertise and client know-how is the main reason for IT consulting projects. This could be explained by the current basic conditions on the markets which must be faced by enterprises, such as the rapid development in information and communication technologies [15], [36], globalization trends or new business segments based on Internet technologies [49]. The efficient use of information and communication technologies has become a significant growth and competition factor in all industries. Also the integration of new business processes and business concepts cause new challenges in modern businesses. Generally, it seems to be that the pressure on companies is rising because of the complexity of technology [49] and therefore enterprises often depend on the support of external consultants in order to compensate the lack of internal resources. Regarding the rapid changes in the ICT sector [15], the question arises whether the development of specialized know-how and the related commitment of internal resources or the commission of an external provider is the better choice. Outsourcing concepts i.e. the instruction of external consultants provide the advantage that the focus remains on

the core business and flexibility is increased.

The reasons for consulting projects seem to be related to the size of the consulting enterprise. The findings show that large consulting firms are engaged particularly for projects to analyze and optimize business processes as well as to improve business performance through the implementation of information and communication technologies. Single consultancies and small consulting companies seem more likely to be assigned to compensate for the technological and human resources constraints, and for training arrangements.

In respect to services offered the study shows that IT infrastructure services are most widespread in the Austrian IT consulting industry. The overall share of IT strategy consulting is decreasing, which seems to be in conflict with the identified trends in the areas of IT governance and strategic IT management. However, on a closer examination of the findings it is revealed that this effect again is related to the size of the enterprise i.e. only small companies and individual consultancies reduced the services offered in the area of IT strategy consulting. This reflects the findings regarding the reasons for consulting projects, where strategic issues are primarily stated by members of large consultancies. The strongest growth can currently be observed in consulting services that are not directly associated with technology (e.g. project management, process analysis, change management, etc.). These services were formerly only support services which were offered as an addition to the core IT consulting services. In the meantime these support services such as project management have become a main consulting field [34] which is more and more widespread in the IT consulting industry. Next to the continuous blending of the consulting sectors, the standardization of technologies could be one reason for this development. Due to the standardization, most of the technological problems within consulting projects can be frequently shifted to the background in order to focus more on organizational issues. In addition, the development of internet technology has opened new fast growing fields for IT consulting in recent years (e.g. in eBusiness, internet portals, eGovernment, etc.).

The comparison of the average daily rates recorded in the studies of 2004 and 2008, indicates a slightly positive change (about +1.3%). Comparing the average daily rates with the average Austrian inflation rate in the last four years (approximately 1.8%), it can be assumed that the actual fees of the Austrian IT consultants are stable or have partially decreased in the last few years. This compares to a positive market growth and higher turnover figures in the consulting industry, which could indicate that the consulting enterprises try to compensate for the decline in the real daily rate by increased sales volume [6].

For the future, the findings forecast a clearly positive trend for the IT consulting industry in Austria. Especially small and medium sized IT consulting enterprises are becoming more and more involved in international projects and plan to expand their offered services. However, on the other hand it seems that the Austrian consulting market currently has no standards in terms of services offered and consulting ethics. This is,

according to the enterprises surveyed, one of the key factors for the future development in the IT consulting industry, as it is also one of the frequent points of customers' criticism, next to insufficient communication or the duration of projects. In general, the Austrian consulting market is driven by two major forces which have not changed since the year 2004. On the one hand there are technological developments in the ICT sector and on the other hand macro-economic issues which affect all industries.

VII. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The study on IT consulting in Austria sheds new light onto the market for IT consulting services and the future of the consulting industry in Austria. The study proposes a classification model for the consulting services which is based on both literature and empirical results and can be used for further studies on the IT consulting industry. Due to this, the classification was the starting point for the present field survey on the IT consulting industry in Austria.

In this paper we present and analyze the results of the survey of the year 2008 and compare them to the findings of the year 2004, in order to show the developments and driving forces in the consulting industry. In general, the study findings show a positive picture of the current and future market of IT consulting both in Austria and the rest of Europe. The surveyed consultancies estimate an increase of consulting projects for the future.

The key factors for the future of the Austrian IT consulting market can be summarized in two dimensions – economical and technological factors. However, only a few of the IT consultancies stated that key factors related to the infrastructure of the consulting industry, such as entry requirements or standardization guidelines for consulting, are important for the future of the industry. On the other hand, nearly half of the surveyed enterprises estimate that the strongest point of criticism on the current IT consulting industry is the lack of professionalization, which is partly caused by the fact that nearly everyone is allowed to offer consulting services - this could lead to further interesting studies on general frameworks and key criteria of the professionalization of the consulting profession.

Therefore, this paper can serve as a basis for further research as well as valuable feedback for both consultants and clients. However, the current study also has some limitations. First of all the surveys can only provide a snapshot of the market situation/structure. Due to the fast-changing industry it is hard to estimate the developments in the industry i.e. the forecasts are vague and always subject to change. So far, two studies were carried out in the years 2004 and 2008. In order to provide a more precise forecast for future developments, more surveys are needed. Moreover, the study only gives information about the structure of the surveyed industry – for more detailed findings, which allow estimation on the relations between key aspects, qualitative interviews are needed to complement the results of the current survey.

In the future we intend to set up a panel study to observe the developments on the market more deeply – especially topics

such as the professionalization or standardization within the IT consulting industry, as well as key factors for success in the international market. In addition, it is planned to expand the research area to a bigger population including the customers of IT consultancies, in order to cover the whole Austrian market and to be able to compare both sides – the provider and the customer for IT consulting services.

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