

Specialist startups challenge IT consulting giants

Written by Johan Nylander

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Klas Lindfors, Chairman, Martin Östling, CEO Biolit

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IT consulting firms in Sweden may have made a comeback after the financial crisis, but with more and more niche consulting startups now challenging the long-established giants, the landscape is changing.

As the larger consulting firms invest heavily in marketing to big corporate clients, smaller consultancies appeal to clients with a combination of specialist expertise and quickness.

"There's only one way for us to keep clients happy and land new deals," said Martin Östling, CEO of Stockholm-based [Biolit AB](#), a consulting startup specialising in the most advanced areas of information and communication technologies. "It's by always being close to our client and being able to quickly respond to their needs. We must have a personal approach."

Using experienced consultants allows the firm to work more quickly, which is an attraction for clients who are under pressure for fast results.

"Clients want specialist skills these days, so the more specialised you are, the more successful you are likely to be," Fiona Czerniawska, the co-founder of [sourceforconsulting.com](#), which provides information about the market for management consulting, recently told the Financial Times.

According to the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, demand for engineers – especially those with experience – is booming in the consulting industry. But the increased demand for specialist skills has made it more difficult to find the right people to employ.

Östling said his company has been forced to look outside of Sweden to fill some roles.

"It's very difficult to find and recruit the consultants we're looking for," he said. "If they are not top of the class and not already established in the market, they are just not right for us."

But Östling emphasised that Stockholm, with its major ICT sector, is a good place to run a consulting company.

"The range of industries and the number of businesses in Stockholm is amazing. This mix of

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business and expertise is the great strength of Stockholm," he said.

"Many of the successful companies that are located in Stockholm are spin-offs from other large companies, such as Ericsson, Sony Ericsson, H&M and Scania."

Founded less than a year ago, Biolit already employs nine people and engages a total of 27 people via other consulting firms. It expects to have 30 employees by the end of next year. Clients range from truck maker Scania to game developers, defense companies and banks.