

**Responding to challenge and change:
an analysis of building services
engineering sector consultants
in 2009**

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Executive summary

This report looks at the skills and training needs of building services engineering (BSE) consultants; consultants' engagement with and experiences of training, the likely impact of the current recession on BSE consultancy practices in the UK and how the sector will respond to issues created by the economic downturn.

Overview of the economy

The performance of the UK economy over 2008 was poor, with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) falling in the last two quarters of 2008, indicating that the UK economy is in recession.

2009 has also been a very difficult year financially, with GDP falling further as the UK remains gripped in a recession and with unemployment set to rise. The reduction in construction output has impacted adversely on the construction and BSE industries with significant numbers of redundancies, as predicted in SummitSkills' report on the impact of the recession. Recently there appears to have been some improvement in the performance of the housing market, which may indicate that the recession is starting to ease.

The survey sample

Fifty-six BSE consultancy firms participated in the research, all of whom were consultants listed with the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE). The sample contained small single site consultants, large multi-site companies and multi-discipline organisations. Although there was representation from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the companies were predominantly based in England. However, as the workload of the respondents was UK-wide; experiences of consultants working across the UK are represented.

For analysis purposes, SummitSkills has broken down the workload of the sector into five main 'work sector' headings: private commercial (office accommodation, shops); private industrial (warehouse and factory-type developments); private housing; social housing and major public works e.g. NHS and school new build/refurbishment.

The consultants interviewed worked across all these main work sectors (see table 2.2).

Up to and including 2008, the interviewed consultants enjoyed a significant boom period as demand grew for construction across all work sectors. This is reflected in the percentage of consultants whose company size increased over the last five years, although predominantly this rise has not exceeded 20% (see table 2.7).

Impact of the recession on BSE work and consultants

Table A shows the amount of work the respondents felt would be cancelled or postponed in 2009. Should these estimates be correct, they could have significant implications for the building services engineering sector in the UK.

Table A Percentage of BSE work due to start on site in 2009 likely to be postponed or cancelled, by work sector

Work sector	Best case scenario	Worst case scenario
Private commercial	11.62%	35.58%
Private industrial	30.96%	49.36%
Private housing	32%	55.75%
Social housing	10.4%	29.6%
Major public works	20.4%	44.2%

A significant percentage (61%) expected the recession to last for two years, with recovery beginning in late 2010 or early 2011 (see table 4.1).

The consultants generally felt the size of their workforce would remain stable in 2009. Those who expected a change tended to anticipate shrinkage rather than growth (see table 4.2) which is not surprising given their views on the length of time that the recession will last. Half the respondents felt that in 2010 their workforces would grow again, with growth to 2015 being sustained (see tables 4.3 and 4.4).

There was a belief from the participants that post-recession growth will be largest in the private commercial sector (see table 4.5).

Currently the building services engineering consultants interviewed are using a range of techniques to respond to the impact of the recession. Only 9% of the sample interviewed had made any staff redundant at the time of the survey (see table 4.6). Cost cutting was the most common response to the economic downturn, followed by allowing clients to pay later. Extending credit terms could be dangerous to the cash flow of the companies that are doing or considering this. Overall there does not appear to be any coherent strategy being adopted to get through the recession.

Education and training of BSE consultants

Nineteen percent of the sample had not heard of foundation degrees and 63%, although they had heard of them, were not clear about what they are (table 5.1). Eighteen percent of the sample had taken part in the development of foundation degrees (table 5.2).

Universities provide significant amounts of training for the consultants (70%) (table 5.6), including use of Masters courses and post-graduate research degrees such as MPhil and PhD. (tables 5.10/ 5.11).

There was some concern about the quality of university courses, with regards to both the curriculum content and delivery and organisation of courses (table 5.13). Private training providers and FE colleges performed better than universities in this survey in relation to quality, although consultants' engagement with private providers and FE was less than with universities (see tables 5.17 & 5.20), which means their opportunities for dissatisfaction would be proportionately reduced.

Eighteen percent of the interview sample had been involved in developing university curriculum content but, as with foundation degrees, engagement in this process was mainly undertaken by larger multi-disciplinary practices (table 5.22).

Over fifty per cent of the companies interviewed (52%) had used management training for their managers and supervisors (table 6.1). The courses were based on developing general management, management skills and people management (table 6.2).

Similar to previous research findings published by SummitSkills, a significant percentage of the consultants interviewed felt they had no skills deficiencies, or did not know if they had any skills deficiencies (see table 7.1).

The vast majority of the consultants (96%) encouraged their employees to become members of the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE). This is to be expected as the interview sample was generated from a database of companies listed as having CIBSE members.

Conclusions and recommendations

Although there were some attempts to respond to the potential impact of the recession, there did not seem to be a sense of a co-ordinated strategy emanating from the majority of consultants. Whether the approach to any future downturns could be addressed through business management training, of the kind suggested in SummitSkills' SNA, is something SummitSkills and its partners and stakeholders should consider.

The low understanding of foundation degrees among BSE consultants still appears to be remarkably low, with 82% of the consultants sampled having little or no awareness of them. SummitSkills would like to work with Foundation Degree Forward, CIBSE and other partners and stakeholders to considerably raise the knowledge and prestige of foundation degrees among BSE sector consultants.

There remains concern about curriculum delivery within universities; predominantly these concerns relate to courses not being structured properly or not being available. SummitSkills needs to continue to clearly represent these concerns to the university sector and would like to work with universities, partners and stakeholders to try and address these issues.

Over fifty percent of companies (52%) had used management training, which is considerably higher than craft companies. This is encouraging; however consultants should not rest on this fact and SummitSkills would like to work with partners and stakeholders to continue to promote management training as a way to improve quality and productivity. Management training could also be incorporated into training on business acumen and coping with potential economic downturns.

A large percentage of respondents either did not know what their training needs were, or felt they had no training needs. Given the technically demanding and ever-changing nature of building services engineering, the sector needs to foster a continuous learning culture. SummitSkills and its partners and stakeholders should challenge complacency and stress the importance of continuous training, making employers aware of available training opportunities. This could be done through more effective marketing of training provision and/or by working with providers to design appropriate training to meet the needs of both small and large consultants.

1 Overview of the economy

Table 1.1 displays recent Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) forecasts and shows that in quarter 3 and quarter 4 of 2008, the UK economy went into recession.

Table 1.1 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the UK

	Quarter 3 2007	Quarter 4 2007	Quarter 1 2008	Quarter 2 2008	Quarter 3 2008	Quarter 4 2008
UK	2.3	2.2	1.1	0.2	-0.3 +/- 1.2	-0.4 +/-1.2

Source: ETB (2008, p84)/ OECD Forecast (2008)

The recession in the UK has been exacerbated by the high financial market turmoil, the housing market downturns and high commodity prices that the OECD believes will continue to bear down on global growth (ETB, 2008, p84).

Unemployment, according to the OECD, was set to rise by 100,000 to reach 5.8% of the UK workforce by 2009, although this is predicted to be below the EU average of 7%.

Consumer spending was robust in the first quarter of 2008, but fell slightly in the second. Fixed investment contracted markedly in both quarters, but particularly within the second quarter, thereby substantially dampening growth.

The UK's greater exposure to weakness both in credit and equity markets has impacted negatively on economic performance and has contributed to a further depreciation of sterling. It is anticipated that this will continue to help exports and damage imports, but will make the cost of foreign holidays more expensive. Between February and September 2008, depreciation was around 7% on a nominal effective exchange rate basis, which brought sterling depreciation to 15% since July 2007.

UK policy rates (the Bank of England base rate) were cut by a cumulative 50 basis points in February and April 2008, but rates were not cut further until towards the end of 2008 and subsequently, in early 2009, rates were reduced again.

Weakening domestic demand also impacted on the economy in the second quarter of 2008, as the reduction in credit supply for consumers and business was exacerbated by weakening housing and labour markets and an inflation-induced stagnation in real disposable income (ETB, 2008, p84).

2009 is set to be a very difficult year financially, with GDP expected to fall further as the UK remains gripped in a recession and unemployment set to rise.

It is against these financial conditions that businesses in the BSE sector are expected to compete.

2 The survey sample

Methodology has not been placed within a definable section of this report, but instead has been explained throughout the document related to the various sections of the research. Within this section the sample size, geographical dispersion and size of company are described, so a clear idea of sample can be obtained.

The sample was generated from consultants listed with the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE). For ease of identification, in this instance SummitSkills has classified BSE consultants as being qualified or part-qualified members of CIBSE, graduates and technicians. There are individuals and companies offering BSE consultancy outside of CIBSE, however it is more difficult to identify them as currently there is no SOC (Standard Occupation Classification) code specifically for BSE consultants.

There were 56 respondents in total; certain questions throughout the report were posed to a smaller number of participants, based on their answer to a previous question¹. The narrative throughout the report describes where this applies.

Table 2.1 below indicates the respondents' company size, the nation in which they were based and whether they operated from a single site or multiple sites. Consultants are often difficult to categorise as their geographic work patterns are significantly more varied than contractors, which means that they can and do work across the UK, not necessarily local to their base.

Table 2.1 Consultant size, geographical location and single or multi-site

	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site	Total
England	88%	97%	100%	88%	52
Scotland	4%	3%	0%	6%	2
Wales	4%	0%	0%	3%	1
Northern Ireland	4%	0%	0%	3%	1

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

This table shows that a considerable percentage of the consultants were based in England, although this does not necessarily mean that their work was restricted to England alone. There was some representation from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, all of which appear to be companies that are multi-site.

For analysis purposes, the workload of the sector has been broken down into five main headings: private commercial (office accommodation, shops); private industrial (warehouse and factory-type developments); private housing; social housing and major public works e.g. NHS and school new build/refurbishment.

Table 2.2 below shows that the consultants making up the sample were engaged in a spread of work across all the identified work sectors:

Table 2.2 Type of work carried out by consultant sample across the UK

	Private Commercial	Private Industrial	Private Housing	Social Housing	Major Public Works
England	92%	94%	94%	94%	94%
Scotland	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Wales	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Northern Ireland	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

¹ For instance, all 56 respondents were asked if they were aware of work being cancelled or postponed in a particular sector. Only the percentage that answered yes were then asked the subsequent question on what proportion of work was likely to be affected.

Table 2.3 shows the size of the various consultants within the survey and whether these were single or multi-site companies:

Table 2.3 Company size and whether single or multi-site consultancy

	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
1-9	48%	0%	33%	14%
10-24	52%	0%	38%	14%
25-199	0%	90%	29%	63%
200+	0%	10%	0%	9%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The data in table 2.3 shows that the larger companies who employed the most people tended to be multi-site. The percentages also indicate a reasonable company size spread, given the overall number of survey participants.

Table 2.4 shows the consultancy size against the percentages of the type of work undertaken:

Table 2.4 Type of work carried out by consultant sample across the UK by size of consultant

	Private Commercial	Private Industrial	Private Housing	Social Housing	Major Public Works
1-9	22%	24%	23%	31%	23%
10-24	24%	26%	37%	28%	26%
25-199	49%	45%	37%	41%	46%
200+	5%	5%	3%	0%	5%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 2.4 suggests that the companies interviewed worked on a variety of projects across all the main areas of the construction field, which gives the data a relatively balanced picture.

Many BSE consultancies (particularly the larger ones) are part of multi-disciplinary practices offering a range of professional consultancy services, from architecture and quantity surveying to structural engineering. Table 2.5 shows this data by employee size, whether they were single or multi-site, and areas of work.

Table 2.5 Analysis of single site or multi-disciplinary practices and type of work undertaken

	1-25	25+	Private Commercial	Private Industrial	Private Housing	Social Housing	Major Public Works	Single Site	Multi-Site
Only establishment	60%	19%	38%	43%	53%	45%	33%	100%	0%
Part of larger multi-discipline organisation	40%	81%	62%	57%	47%	55%	67%	0%	100%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 2.6 shows whether the consultants interviewed had increased or decreased in size during the previous five years. Given the extended boom that the BSE sector has enjoyed up until the recent recession, it is not surprising that two-thirds of the consultants surveyed had extended the size of their practices.

Table 2.6 Analysis of workforce increase or decrease in last five years by company size, work type and single or multiple site

	Total	1-25	25+	Private Commercial	Private Industrial	Private Housing	Social Housing	Major Public Works	Single Site	Multi-Site
Increased	66%	56%	74%	65%	69%	63%	62%	72%	57%	71%
Decreased	23%	28%	19%	24%	24%	27%	24%	18%	24%	23%
Same	11%	16%	6%	11%	7%	10%	14%	10%	19%	6%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 2.7 shows that where there was an increase or decrease it tended to represent less than 20% of the total workforce, suggesting there were no major fluctuations either way.

Table 2.7 Analysis of workforce increase or decrease in last five years by company size, work type and single or multiple site

	Total	1-25	25+	Private Commercial	Private Industrial	Private Housing	Social Housing	Major Public Works	Single Site	Multi-Site
<10%	26%	29%	24%	27%	26%	26%	16%	14%	29%	24%
11-20%	30%	24%	34%	29%	26%	15%	20%	29%	29%	30%
21-30%	10%	19%	3%	10%	13%	19%	20%	18%	18%	6%
31-40%	2%	0%	3%	2%	3%	4%	0%	6%	6%	0%
41-50%	14%	5%	21%	14%	13%	19%	16%	6%	6%	18%
51-99%	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%
100%	8%	14%	3%	8%	8%	11%	16%	6%	6%	9%
>100%	6%	5%	7%	6%	8%	7%	12%	6%	6%	6%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 2.8 shows the geographical spread of contracts that the respondents had been involved in over the last two years:

Table 2.8 Geographical spread of work by interviewed consultants over the previous two years

	Total	1-25	25+	Private Commercial	Private Industrial	Private Housing	Social Housing	Major Public Works	Single Site	Multi-Site
N. Ireland	32%	20%	42%	31%	29%	30%	24%	26%	29%	34%
Scotland	66%	52%	77%	65%	64%	57%	48%	59%	48%	77%
Wales	55%	40%	68%	55%	55%	47%	52%	51%	48%	60%
North East	71%	56%	84%	71%	74%	67%	62%	67%	71%	71%
Yorkshire & Humberside	68%	64%	71%	67%	67%	63%	66%	69%	71%	66%
North West	71%	72%	71%	71%	74%	70%	66%	69%	81%	66%
East Mids	77%	80%	74%	76%	79%	73%	72%	74%	90%	69%
West Mids	79%	80%	77%	78%	79%	77%	83%	82%	90%	71%
East of England	86%	80%	90%	85%	83%	90%	86%	85%	90%	83%
South East	95%	88%	100%	95%	95%	97%	93%	95%	95%	94%
South West	82%	76%	87%	82%	81%	83%	79%	82%	86%	80%
London	93%	84%	100%	93%	93%	93%	90%	92%	95%	91%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Although the percentage of sampled companies working in Northern Ireland was lower than the other devolved nations and English regions, given the small size of the Northern Irish economy and the percentage of the BSE sector employed in the province, the figures are satisfactory for the purposes of this report.

The geographical location of consultants' work varied considerably, and although predominantly most consultants were based in England rather than Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, the fact they worked on projects in the devolved nations allows some analysis of the potential impact of the recession in these countries.

Table 2.9 details the spread of types of workload by consultant. It shows that the majority of companies (98%) were engaged in private commercial work, which is what would be expected given the boom in the service sector over the previous five years; although private industrial at 75% was also a high level of engagement. With 70% of companies interviewed involved in major public sector projects, this also shows the reliance of the BSE sector on Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Private Finance Initiative (PFI)-type projects². PPP and PFI struggled to find funding during 2009 as the banks became unwilling to lend the required finance as they sought to deal with the effects of the 'toxic' debt' cause by the sub-prime mortgage problems in the USA.

Table 2.9 Spread of sectors interviewed consultants were engaged in as a total

	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
Private commercial	98%	100%	97%	100%	97%
Private industrial	75%	84%	68%	86%	69%
Private housing sector	54%	72%	39%	76%	40%
Social housing sector	52%	68%	39%	62%	46%
Major public works	70%	76%	65%	62%	74%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

² PPP and PFI are concepts supported by the Government to use money raised privately within the City of London to finance major public sector projects.

3 Recession impacts on the BSE sector

This section examines the current and predicted activity within the various work sectors that have been defined within this report: private commercial; private industrial; private housing; social housing and major public works.

For each sector, SummitSkills has analysed consultants' current level of engagement; the amount of work due to start in 2009; whether consultants were aware of work already being postponed or cancelled and consultants' estimates of the percentage of work that would be affected by projects being put on hold or called off completely.

3.1 Private commercial sector

Table 3.1 shows the percentage of the consultants' business obtained from the private commercial sector:

Table 3.1 Percentage of private commercial work engaged in by interviewed consultants

Total percentage of work from private commercial sector	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
<25%	38%	52%	27%	38%	38%
26-50%	27%	20%	33%	24%	29%
51-75%	13%	12%	13%	19%	9%
76-99%	18%	12%	23%	14%	21%
Don't know	4%	4%	3%	5%	3%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Of this private commercial work, the next question was posed to establish how much of it was scheduled to start on site in 2009. Table 3.2 below shows the interviewees' responses:

Table 3.2 Total percentage of private commercial sector work due to start on site in 2009

	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
None	18%	24%	13%	19%	18%
<25%	36%	44%	30%	29%	41%
26-50%	24%	16%	30%	29%	21%
51-75%	5%	0%	10%	5%	6%
76-99%	7%	0%	13%	10%	6%
100%	4%	8%	0%	5%	3%
Don't know	5%	8%	3%	5%	6%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The next question sought to elicit from interviewed consultants whether any of the work due to start on site in 2009 would be postponed or cancelled due to the recession. Table 3.3 below shows the responses to this question:

Table 3.3 Percentage of consultants who are aware of private commercial sector work due for start on site in 2009 being cancelled or postponed

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	53%	32%	69%	29%	68%
No	47%	68%	31%	71%	32%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Of those who answered yes, respondents were then asked what percentage of work they expected to be affected. Table 3.4 suggests that the majority of consultants felt the amount would not exceed 50% of the total contracts currently on their books.

Table 3.4 Percentage of private commercial sector work consultants expect to be postponed or cancelled which was due to start on site in 2009.

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Up to 25%	63%	67%	61%	80%	58%
26-50%	33%	33%	33%	20%	37%
51-75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
76%-99%	4%	0%	6%	0%	5%
100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

3.2 Private industrial sector

Table 3.5 identifies the percentage of the consultants' business obtained from the private commercial sector:

Table 3.5 Percentage of private industrial work engaged in by interviewed consultants

Total percentage of work from private industrial sector	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
<25%	84%	76%	90%	72%	92%
26-50%	7%	14%	0%	17%	0%
51-75%	2%	5%	0%	6%	0%
76-99%	2%	0%	5%	0%	4%
Don't know	5%	5%	5%	6%	4%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.6 shows the amount of consultants' private industrial work due to start on site in 2009.

Table 3.6 Total percentage of private industrial sector work due to start on site in 2009

	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
None	34%	46%	22%	37%	32%
<25%	18%	18%	18%	16%	20%
26-50%	16%	14%	17%	10%	19%
51-75%	4%	0%	9%	5%	4%
76-99%	6%	2%	10%	7%	8%
100%	13%	10%	16%	20%	7%
Don't know	9%	10%	8%	5%	10%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.7 shows the percentage of consultants who were aware that private industrial work was being postponed or cancelled.

Table 3.7 Percentage of consultants who are aware of private industrial sector work due for start on site in 2009 being cancelled or postponed

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	48%	55%	44%	27%	62%
No	52%	45%	56%	73%	38%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.8 shows the views of the consultants in relation to how much private industrial work was likely to be postponed or cancelled.

Table 3.8 Percentage of private industrial sector work consultants expect to be postponed or cancelled which was due to start on site in 2009

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Up to 25%	31%	33%	29%	33%	30%
26-50%	38%	33%	43%	33%	40%
51-75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
76%-99%	8%	0%	14%	0%	10%
100%	15%	33%	0%	33%	10%
Don't know	8%	1%	14%	1%	10%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

As can be seen from table 3.8, there is likely to be some private industrial work being postponed or cancelled due to the recession which is likely to impact on BSE consultants.

3.3 Private housing

Table 3.9 shows the percentage of private housing work carried out by the sample. This type of work did not form a large part of the companies' portfolio, although the fact that private housing featured here means they could still be affected by a downturn in this sector.

Table 3.9 Percentage of private housing work engaged in by interviewed consultants

Total percentage of work from private housing sector	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
<25%	73%	78%	67%	81%	64%
26-50%	23%	17%	33%	19%	29%
51-75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
76-99%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	3%	6%	0%	0%	7%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.10 below shows the percentage of private housing work on the consultants' desks that was due to start on site in 2009.

Table 3.10 Total percentage of private housing sector work due to start on site in 2009

	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
None	37%	44%	25%	25%	50%
<25%	13%	22%	0%	25%	0%
26-50%	20%	17%	25%	19%	21%
51-75%	7%	0%	17%	0%	14%
76-99%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
100%	23%	17%	33%	31%	14%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.11 shows the percentage of consultants who were aware of private sector housing work due to start on site in 2009 being postponed or cancelled.

Table 3.11 Percentage of consultants who are aware of private housing sector work due for start on site in 2009 being cancelled or postponed

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	21%	10%	33%	8%	43%
No	79%	90%	67%	92%	57%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.12 below shows that of those consultants engaged in private housing work, a large percentage (25%) expected between 76% and 99% to be cancelled or postponed.

Table 3.12 Percentage of private housing sector work consultants expect to be postponed or cancelled which was due to start on site in 2009

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Up to 25%	25%	0%	33%	0%	33%
26-50%	50%	0%	67%	0%	67%
51.75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
76%-99%	25%	100%	0%	100%	0%
100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

3.4 Social housing

Table 3.13 shows the percentage of work that consultants identified as social housing:

Table 3.13 Percentage of social housing work engaged in by interviewed consultants

Total percentage of work from social housing sector	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
<25%	79%	70%	92%	62%	94%
26-50%	14%	18%	8%	23%	6%
51-75%	3%	6%	0%	8%	0%
76-99%	3%	6%	0%	8%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.14 below shows the amount of social housing work due to start on site in 2009:

Table 3.14 Total percentage of social housing sector work due to start on site in 2009

	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
None	41%	47%	33%	54%	31%
<25%	28%	24%	33%	15%	38%
26-50%	10%	12%	8%	15%	6%
51-75%	3%	0%	8%	0%	6%
76-99%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
100%	14%	12%	17%	8%	19%
Don't know	3%	6%	0%	8%	0%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.15 indicates the percentage of interviewed consultants who were aware that social housing work due to start on site in 2009 would be postponed or cancelled:

Table 3.15 Percentage of consultants who are aware of social housing sector work due for start on site in 2009 being cancelled or postponed

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	29%	0%	63%	17%	36%
No	71%	100%	37%	83%	64%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.16 indicates the percentage of social housing work due to start in 2009 that the consultants envisaged would be postponed or cancelled:

Table 3.16 Percentage of social housing work due to start in 2009 that consultants expect to be postponed or cancelled

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Up to 25%	40%	0%	40%	100%	25%
26-50%	40%	0%	40%	0%	75%
51-75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
76%-99%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	20%	0%	20%	0%	25%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Increasingly there is a requirement that private sector schemes include a social housing element. However, making a judgement on to what extent social housing in this area might be affected, compared to original quantities envisaged by agencies such as housing associations, is difficult.

3.5 Major public works

New major public works were identified as a distinct area of work in this research to take into account the increasing influence (particularly in times of recession) that this type of work will have on the economic performance of the sector.

Table 3.17 shows the level of engagement in major public works:

Table 3.17 Percentage of major public works business engaged in by interviewed consultants

Total percentage of work from major public works sector	Total	1-24	25+	Single-Site	Multi-Site
<25%	46%	53%	40%	54%	42%
26-50%	26%	26%	25%	23%	27%
51-75%	21%	21%	20%	23%	19%
76-99%	5%	0%	10%	0%	8%
Don't know	3%	0%	5%	0%	4%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.18 shows the percentages of the consultants' major public works business that was being funded through the PFI or PPP schemes.

Table 3.18 Percentage of major public work currently being funded through PFI and PPP schemes

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
None	59%	79%	40%	69%	54%
Up to 25%	15%	16%	15%	15%	15%
26-50%	8%	0%	15%	0%	12%
51-75%	3%	0%	5%	8%	0%
76%-99%	3%	0%	5%	0%	4%
100%	3%	0%	5%	0%	4%
Don't know	10%	5%	15%	8%	12%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.19 shows the percentages of major public works the sample was due to start on site in 2009.

Table 3.19 Percentage of major public work due to start on site in 2009

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
None	18%	16%	20%	23%	15%
Up to 25%	18%	16%	20%	8%	23%
26-50%	26%	32%	20%	31%	23%
51-75%	15%	11%	20%	23%	12%
76%-99%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
100%	18%	26%	10%	15%	19%
Don't know	5%	0%	10%	0%	8%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 3.20 shows that most consultants were not yet aware of plans to cancel or postpone major public works due to start on site in 2009. Whilst no respondents from smaller consultancies (1-24 employees) were, at the time of the survey, aware of any cancellation or postponement, 63% of those employed by larger practices were aware of such issues.

Table 3.20 Percentage of consultants who are aware of major public works due for start on site in 2009 being cancelled or postponed

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	29%	0%	63%	17%	36%
No	71%	100%	37%	83%	64%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Of the 29% who felt work would be postponed or cancelled; table 3.21 indicates the percentage of work that consultants anticipated to be affected. Most respondents expected it to be less than a quarter, however 20% did expect to see more than 75% of major public works due to start in 2009 to be delayed or called off.

Table 3.21 Percentage of major public works due to start on site in 2009 that consultants expect to be postponed or cancelled

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Up to 25%	60%	0%	60%	0%	60%
26-50%	20%	0%	20%	0%	20%
51-75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
76%-99%	20%	0%	20%	0%	20%
100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

4 The impact of the recession on BSE consultants

Consultants' expectations about and responses to the recession are considered in this section of the report.

4.1 Consultants' views on the recession and its impact on their work

The recruitment and investment behaviour of BSE consultants may be determined by the length of time they perceive the recession will last. Table 4.1 suggests most respondents believed it would be two years, to the end of 2010 or early 2011.

Table 4.1 The length of time BSE consultants expect the current recession to last

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
One year up to the end of 2009	20%	28%	13%	14%	23%
Two years to the end of 2010	61%	52%	68%	52%	66%
Up to 2012	11%	12%	10%	24%	3%
Beyond 2012	5%	0%	10%	5%	6%
Don't know	4%	8%	0%	5%	3%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

It appears that the larger consultancies were marginally more pessimistic than the smaller companies. Table 4.2 shows that whilst most consultants expected the size of their workforce to remain stable during 2009, more consultants anticipated workforce shrinkage than growth during the year.

Low expectations for workforce growth may impact on recruitment over the short term. In particular this would affect BSE graduates leaving universities across the UK and would possibly also impact on participation in part time higher education programmes. However, tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 suggest that whilst dropping through 2009, employers felt workloads would begin to rise in 2010/2011, recovering strongly through to 2015.

Table 4.2 BSE consultants' expectations on the size of their workforce over the immediate twelve months (2009)

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Increase	18%	16%	19%	19%	17%
Decrease	29%	20%	35%	14%	37%
No change	54%	64%	45%	67%	46%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 4.3 shows expectations for workforce change over a two-year (medium term) period. From 4.3 and 4.4 it appears that most consultancies, particularly those with 25 or more staff, are likely to recruit new staff in the years ahead. This is likely to improve employment prospects for new entrants and could particularly benefit graduates seeking to enter the BSE sector and gain employment in consultancies.

Table 4.3 BSE consultants' expectations on the size of their workforce over a two-year period (2010-2011)

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Increase	50%	48%	52%	48%	51%
Decrease	14%	4%	23%	0%	23%
No change	34%	44%	26%	52%	23%
Don't know	2%	4%	0%	0%	3%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 4.4 shows expectations for workforce change over a five-year (long term) period:

Table 4.4 BSE consultants' expectations on the size of their workforce over a five-year period (to 2015)

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Increase	64%	60%	68%	48%	74%
Decrease	9%	4%	13%	5%	11%
No change	20%	28%	13%	38%	9%
Don't know	7%	8%	6%	10%	6%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 4.5 shows the changes the consultants envisage will take place in their work sectors against their current engagement in each area. Given the positive nature of the responses in tables 4.3 and 4.4, these percentages should be seen within the context of growth and also may indicate how staff time and new entrants will be allocated across the various work sectors.

Table 4.5 Percentage of change in workforce by work sector that the consultants expect to change over the next five years

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Private commercial sector	68%	68%	68%	62%	71%
Private industrial sector	48%	48%	48%	52%	46%
Private housing sector	29%	32%	26%	24%	31%
Social housing sector	25%	20%	29%	19%	29%
Major public works	36%	36%	35%	24%	43%
Don't know	18%	16%	19%	24%	14%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

What the data in table 4.5 appears to show is that the consultants expected growth to be largest in the private commercial sector, replicating growth that has been experienced in services sector over the last decade and even since World War 2 as the UK has gradually moved towards becoming a service-dominated economy.

There was a feeling that the private industrial and major public works sectors will also experience relative growth, with both private and social housing expected to be more stable compared to the other sectors. If this analysis is correct, the domestic sector is likely to remain more sluggish overall than the industrial and commercial sectors.

4.2 How BSE consultants are responding to the recession

Overall there was no apparent strategy being used by BSE sector companies to respond to the issues raised by the recession.

Table 4.6 suggests that the larger multi-site consultants were more aware of the recession and seemed more prepared to respond to the issues it brings. This is perhaps not surprising, given their larger resources in human capital and skills (which is implied within this report) and their traditional involvement in larger capital projects.

Table 4.6 Measures being taken by consultants to respond to the recession

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
No effect at all on the business	29%	36%	23%	33%	26%
Introducing cost cutting exercises	20%	16%	23%	14%	23%
Recognising that clients will pay later	11%	16%	6%	19%	6%
Keeping expenses low	9%	8%	10%	10%	9%
Getting as much work as we can	9%	8%	10%	19%	3%
Making some redundancies	9%	0%	16%	0%	14%
Constantly reviewing the situation/ diversifying	11%	12%	10%	10%	11%
Using materials wisely/reducing waste	7%	4%	10%	0%	11%
No major effect on the business	7%	8%	6%	5%	9%
Monitoring our clients closely	7%	8%	6%	10%	6%
Provision of good customer service	5%	0%	10%	0%	9%
Looking more into overseas work	5%	0%	10%	10%	9%
More cautious/nervous	5%	12%	0%	10%	3%
Other	29%	20%	35%	24%	31%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 4.6 shows the techniques the consultants were using to respond to the recession. Nine percent of the sample had made staff redundant; this factor in future will be influenced by the number of new contracts secured during 2009 as existing work comes to completion. In the main, redundancies seem to be happening in the larger multi-site practices rather than the smaller firms.

At the time of this research (carried out in late 2008/2009), the recession had not made a significant impact on the majority of consultants. Where companies were aware of it, many of them were responding by introducing cost cutting techniques (20%). Single site companies (who are probably smaller than the larger multi-site firms, though in this instance still exceed 24 members of staff) were looking at overseas work, whereas presumably larger multi-site companies were already involved in this work. Only 11% of the sample was diversifying into other business areas, with this being equally divided between larger and smaller companies.

An interesting phenomenon is that 11% of the sample seems to be adopting the practice of extending credit terms to clients, perhaps to continue to turn over work. This strategy is potentially dangerous, as consultants could be left without large fee payments if clients who have been given extended credit go into receivership. This practice is also contrary to Government policy and the procurement behaviour of the public sector, which attempt to reduce payment times on contracts and aid cash flow.

5 Education and training of BSE consultants

Consultants' use and experiences of different types of qualification and education and training provider are examined in this section of the report.

5.1 Foundation degrees

In the Assessment of Current Provision (ACP) suite of reports produced as part of SummitSkills' Sector Skills Agreement, the percentage of companies (both contractors and consultants) aware of foundation degrees was very low, for example 13% of the sample in the East of England (SummitSkills, 2007b, p118). Employer consultation carried out whilst the SummitSkills foundation degree framework specification was being developed also confirmed that understanding of the qualifications was low. However, once foundation degrees were explained to delegates, feedback indicated that well-designed and delivered foundation degrees would be a welcome option to support staff development and upskilling.

There has been a significant increase in awareness of foundation degree amongst BSE consultants in the last eighteen months, but there still remains considerable confusion about what they are and how they can benefit an organisation. It can also be seen from table 5.1 that respondents from larger consultancies are more likely to be aware of foundation degrees than those from smaller firms. Given the likelihood that larger companies have more trainees (whether new entrants or experienced workers looking to upskill) and thus greater exposure to the training network, this is not surprising. Consultants from Scotland were not asked about foundation degrees as Scotland does not have this qualification.

Table 5.1 Awareness of foundation degrees amongst BSE consultants (excluding Scotland)

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Have never heard of them	19%	21%	17%	24%	15%
Aware of them, but have low understanding	63%	75%	53%	67%	61%
Have high level of understanding of foundation degrees	19%	4%	30%	10%	24%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The consultants were asked if their company had been involved in developing foundation degrees. Given the data from table 5.1 above, it is perhaps not surprising that 82% of the respondents had not. However, there has been an improvement in consultant involvement in foundation degrees since the SummitSkills Sector Skills Agreement ACP reports were published in 2007.

Table 5.2 suggests that smaller consultancies were more likely to have been involved with foundation degrees than larger practices. This is surprising, considering the data shown in tables 5.1, 5.3 and 5.4 where the 1-25 size firms had a lower level of engagement overall; however it may reflect the finding from table 5.5 that small consultancy practices were more likely than larger ones to see a need for qualifications at this level.

Table 5.2 Percentage of BSE consultants surveyed (excluding Scotland) who had been involved in the development of foundation degrees

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	18%	21%	16%	6%	25%
No	82%	79%	84%	94%	75%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.3 shows that larger multi-site consultancies were more likely than smaller companies to have staff with foundation degrees. This could be a consequence of an increased statistical likelihood of having staff with a particular qualification when the workforce is larger. However, research conducted when developing the SummitSkills foundation degree framework specification would support the hypothesis that larger companies are more likely to encourage and support their staff to complete foundation degrees (Sharpe, 2007).

Table 5.3 Percentage of the consultants with staff who hold a foundation degree

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	23%	5%	36%	6%	32%
No	68%	89%	52%	94%	54%
Don't know	9%	5%	12%	0%	14%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.4 shows the percentage of consultants who had staff studying for foundation degrees, based on the respondents who had heard of them (excluding Scotland). Again, the larger consultancies were more likely to be engaged with this qualification, although it can be argued that these firms may have more individual staff participating in education or training of some kind and therefore this finding is unsurprising. Another possible explanation is that a number of larger practices have worked with providers to develop foundation degrees, to ensure they meet their specific business needs. This trend was identified during research into existing foundation degree provision at the start of SummitSkills' foundation degree framework specification project (Sharpe, 2007).

Table 5.4 Percentage of consultants sample who have staff studying for a foundation degree

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	16%	5%	24%	0%	25%
No	80%	95%	68%	100%	68%
Don't know	5%	0%	8%	0%	7%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.5 shows the respondents' ongoing need for Higher National Diploma (HND) and foundation degree qualifications. There is an even spread among small and large consultancies, although surprisingly smaller companies seemed to have a marginally higher need than the bigger firms. It is suggested given the general low level of foundation degree engagement noted earlier in this report, the demand is still strong for HNC/HND level qualifications, which are more established than the foundation degree and are probably more popular with smaller companies as a result. However, funding restrictions for students with Equivalent or Higher Level Qualifications (EHQL) might affect future demand, particularly amongst consultancy employers who might use qualifications at this level to retrain people with non-sector related degrees.

Table 5.5 Percentage of consultants sample who have an ongoing training need for technical skills at HND and foundation degree level

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	55%	60%	52%	52%	57%
No	45%	40%	48%	48%	43%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The low levels of engagement with foundation degrees, combined with an identified need for qualifications at this level, indicate a need for some further marketing of foundation degrees.

5.2 Use of universities by BSE consultants

Table 5.6 shows that most BSE consultants used universities for training and continuous professional development (CPD) activities, with larger consultancies a little more likely than their smaller competitors to do so.

Table 5.6 Percentage of consultants sample who use universities as part of their training and professional development activities

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	70%	60%	77%	62%	74%
No	30%	40%	23%	38%	26%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.7 shows the reasons consultants used universities for training, with the predominant factor being that the consultants need professionally qualified engineers and/or that universities provide the courses required.

Table 5.7 Main reasons cited by companies for using universities for staff development and training

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Provide the course required	36%	33%	38%	38%	35%
We require professionally qualified employees	36%	40%	33%	31%	38%
Courses are industry accredited/ recognised	21%	13%	25%	15%	23%
Employees are encouraged to progress/ learn more	21%	20%	21%	31%	15%
It's the best way to train employees	13%	13%	13%	23%	8%
It's historical/ the way we do things	8%	7%	8%	0%	12%
Other	13%	20%	8%	8%	15%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12 show the levels and types of qualifications that universities were being used for by the interviewees:

Table 5.8 Percentage of consultants sample who use universities for foundation degree qualifications

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	36%	27%	42%	15%	46%
No	54%	67%	46%	77%	42%
Don't know	10%	7%	13%	8%	12%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

When looking at table 5.8 it should be considered that whilst foundation degrees are usually university-accredited, they are often delivered by colleges. Therefore it is possible that some employers may use foundation degrees without recognising the use of universities. However, the data shown earlier in tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 would not support a hypothesis that significantly more than 36% of consultants used foundation degrees at the time of being surveyed.

Table 5.9 Percentage of consultants sample who use universities for Honours degree qualifications

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	77%	80%	75%	77%	77%
No	23%	20%	25%	23%	23%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.10 Percentage of consultants sample who use universities for Masters degree (MEng) qualifications

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	51%	33%	63%	23%	65%
No	44%	60%	33%	77%	27%
Don't know	5%	7%	4%	0%	8%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.10 suggests that a higher percentage of larger consultancies used Masters degree training than smaller companies. Further research might explain this, but one reason may be that the larger consultancies are able to engage in specialist areas of work such as environmental technologies, which are not being developed within smaller practices.

The same pattern can be seen in relation to research degrees such as MPhil/ PhD, although engagement was generally low, as shown in table 5.11:

Table 5.11 Percentage of consultants sample who use universities for Research Degree (MPhil/ PhD) qualifications

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	36%	27%	42%	15%	46%
No	54%	67%	46%	77%	42%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

As table 5.12 shows, smaller consultancies were a little more likely than larger companies to use universities for CPD. This may be because larger employers have more resource to purchase in-house training, even though it is often bigger companies that have most input to university curriculum development.

Table 5.12 Percentage of consultants sample who use universities for CPD

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	56%	60%	54%	46%	62%
No	44%	40%	46%	54%	38%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

In the SummitSkills ACP, there was evidence of some unhappiness with the quality of university provision; this subject was also covered in the CIBSE patrons' debate in 2008. Table 5.13 below shows that 16% of the consultants (scores 1 and 2 combined) were unhappy with the quality of learning provided, 41% of the total were only satisfied with the quality of learning that their employees received from universities and 43% of the consultants were either 'highly satisfied' (measuring 4 on the survey) or very satisfied (score 5). Smaller consultants were more likely to report being unhappy than the larger companies and, whilst a quarter of larger employers reported being very satisfied, no smaller companies were in the very satisfied category, which suggests that the curriculum or delivery style may be less suitable for smaller employers.

Table 5.13 Surveyed consultants satisfaction with the quality of training provision from universities

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
1- Very dissatisfied	8%	13%	4%	15%	4%
2	8%	13%	4%	8%	8%
3	41%	40%	42%	23%	50%
4	28%	33%	25%	31%	27%
5- Very satisfied	15%	0%	25%	23%	12%
Base for stats	39	15	24	13	26
Mean	3.36	2.93	3.63	3.38	3.35
Standard error	.17	.27	.22	.38	.18

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.14 shows the reasons given for why respondents were dissatisfied with the quality of university provision. The percentages do not add up to 100% as more than one answer may have been given. It is the smaller rather than larger consultants who were unhappy about course structure, which may support previous speculation about the content of provision being more suitable for larger practices. Lack of availability of required courses was cited by more than half the consultants. This might be expected, considering there are regions with no universities offering BSE-specific programmes and where provision does exist, choice is often limited to one or two providers in a region (SummitSkills, 2007c).

Table 5.14 Reasons why consultants who use universities are unhappy with the quality of the training they receive

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Course/s required aren't available	67%	75%	50%	67%	67%
Course/s available aren't structured correctly	50%	75%	0%	67%	33%
Other	50%	50%	50%	33%	67%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The main reason cited by BSE consultants for not using universities was that there was no business requirement for them to do so. Table 5.15 shows all the reasons cited for not using universities by those consultants who did not use them. As with table 5.14, the percentages do not add up to 100% as multiple answers were given by respondents.

Table 5.15 Reasons given by consultants who do not use universities for training why they do not use them

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
No business requirement	59%	70%	43%	75%	44%
Employees are already qualified	24%	30%	14%	25%	22%
Course/s required aren't available	18%	10%	29%	13%	22%
Other	29%	20%	43%	25%	33%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

5.3 Private training providers

Most of the BSE consultants interviewed used private providers for training and continuous professional development. Table 5.16 suggests that 75% of the sample interviewed did so:

Table 5.16 Percentage of consultants sample who use private training providers for their training and continuous professional development

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	75%	76%	74%	67%	80%
No	25%	24%	26%	33%	20%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.17 shows that none of the interviewed consultants had been very dissatisfied with the quality of training received from private training providers.

Table 5.17 Surveyed consultants satisfaction with the quality of training provision from private training providers

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
1- Very dissatisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2	5%	11%	0%	7%	4%
3	33%	37%	30%	29%	36%
4	40%	42%	39%	36%	43%
5- Very satisfied	21%	11%	30%	29%	18%
Base for stats	42	19	23	14	28
Mean	3.79	3.53	4.00	3.86	3.75
Standard error	.13	.19	.17	.25	.15

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The two respondents who were unhappy with the quality of training gave 'other' reasons for not being happy, and were both small companies.

5.4 Further Education colleges

Table 5.19 shows that half the consultancy firms used FE colleges, with a slightly larger percentage of smaller BSE companies using the provision than the larger consultancies.

Table 5.19 Percentage of consultants sample who use FE colleges for their training and continuous professional development

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	50%	56%	45%	48%	51%
No	50%	44%	55%	52%	49%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

Table 5.20 shows the consultants' satisfaction levels with the quality of training received at FE colleges. None said they were 'very dissatisfied'.

Table 5.20 Surveyed consultants satisfaction with the quality of training provision from FE colleges

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
1- Very dissatisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2	4%	7%	0%	10%	0%
3	32%	43%	21%	30%	33%
4	54%	43%	64%	50%	56%
5- Very satisfied	11%	7%	14%	10%	11%
Base for stats	28	14	14	10	18
Mean	3.71	3.5	3.93	3.60	3.78
Standard error	.13	.20	.16	.27	.15

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The one small consultant interviewed who was unhappy with provision said it was for 'other' reasons than the ones cited for universities.

5.5 Engagement in the design or delivery of qualifications in the last five years

About 18% (see table 5.22) of the BSE sector companies sampled had been involved in the design or delivery of qualifications. This figure is identical to that in table 5.2 for involvement in foundation degree development. Perhaps not surprisingly, a larger percentage (23%) of this group was large consultancies, who presumably would have more capacity to release staff for this function. However, the downside of this could be that larger companies may have dominated the curriculum design, which might explain the unhappiness among smaller companies.

Table 5.22 Percentage of consultants sample who have had any involvement in the design or delivery of qualifications in the last five years.

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	18%	12%	23%	5%	26%
No	82%	88%	77%	95%	74%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

5.6 Comparison of experiences of different types of training provider

Table 5.23 uses data from tables 5.6, 5.16 and 5.19 to compare the use of different types of provision amongst the sample consultants.

Overall, consultants were more likely to use private training providers. However, larger practices were more likely to use universities.

Table 5.23 Comparison of types of provision used

	Total	1-24	25+	Single site	Multi site
Universities	70%	60%	77%	62%	74%
Private training providers	75%	76%	74%	67%	80%
FE	50%	56%	45%	48%	51%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

From table 5.24, on the whole it would appear that consultants were more satisfied with the training received from private providers (and, in this case, FE colleges) than training from universities. This triangulates the findings of the Assessment of Current Provision research published in 2007.

Table 5.24 Comparison of satisfaction levels across provider types

	Universities	Private Providers	Further Education
1- Very dissatisfied	8%	0%	0%
2	8%	5%	4%
3	41%	33%	32%
4	28%	40%	54%
5- Very satisfied	15%	21%	11%
Base for stats	39	42	28
Mean	3.36	3.79	3.71
Standard error	.17	.13	.13

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

6 Management courses

In the additional research from the Sector Needs Analysis (SummitSkills, 2008) management qualifications and engagement in management training from craft workers was considered to be inadequate. The data in table 6.1 suggests that just over fifty percent (52%) of the companies sampled used management training courses for their managers and supervisors. Considerably more investment was made by the larger consultants than the smaller ones. This is perhaps not surprising, as larger consultants will have a greater need for staff management. However, management training may help all firms with project management, as well as having potential to help smaller companies develop their business, particularly if they start to grow at the end of this recession.

Table 6.1 Percentage of consultants sample who use management training courses for their training of managers and supervisors

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	52%	36%	65%	33%	63%
No	48%	64%	35%	67%	37%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The twenty-nine companies who used management training for their staff used courses focused around the themes shown in table 6.2 below. This suggests there was no single type of management course being used.

Table 6.2 Management courses currently being used by BSE consultants surveyed

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
People management/leadership	24%	11%	30%	14%	27%
General	21%	11%	25%	0%	27%
Management skills	10%	11%	10%	14%	9%
Other	52%	44%	55%	57%	50%
Don't know	34%	56%	25%	43%	32%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

7 Skills deficiencies of BSE consultancy staff

Table 7.1 shows the skills deficiencies the respondents felt their staff had at the time of the research:

Table 7.1 The skills deficiencies that interviewed BSE consultants feel their employees have

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Engineering/ technical/ IT specific	20%	20%	19%	29%	14%
People management/leadership	18%	16%	19%	10%	23%
Communication	11%	8%	13%	10%	11%
Business/business management	9%	4%	13%	5%	11%
Vocational/industry related	9%	12%	6%	10%	9%
Interpersonal/team	9%	4%	13%	5%	11%
Sales/marketing	7%	8%	6%	0%	11%
Skills developed from completing a degree course	5%	4%	6%	0%	9%
Other	5%	4%	6%	10%	3%
None	27%	16%	35%	19%	31%
Don't know	30%	44%	19%	38%	26%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

The data in table 7.1 replicates and triangulates the work published by SummitSkills in its Sector Needs Analysis and post-Sector Needs Analysis research (SummitSkills, 2007a; SummitSkills, 2008), which suggests that predominantly the BSE sector at both craft and professional levels either believes it has no skills deficiencies, or doesn't know if it has any skills deficiencies.

8 CIBSE membership

The data in table 8.1 suggests the majority of consultants who were interviewed for this research encouraged their employees to become members of the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE). This is perhaps unsurprising, considering that the research sample was generated from a list of consultants with CIBSE-member staff, but nonetheless underlines the importance of courses being CIBSE-accredited.

Table 8.1 Percentage of consultants sample who encourage their staff to become members of the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)

	Total	1-24	25+	Single Site	Multi-Site
Yes	96%	96%	97%	95%	97%
No	4%	4%	3%	5%	3%

BMG/SummitSkills (2009)

9 Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 The recession

When the primary research for this report was carried out the recession had not reached the depths to which it slumped later in 2009. However, the consultants interviewed had a clear view of the potential ramifications of the recession on their workload in late 2008 and early 2009.

Although there were some attempts to respond to the potential impact of the recession, there did not seem to be a sense of a co-ordinated strategy emanating from the majority of consultants. Whether the approach to any future downturns could be addressed through business management training of the kind suggested in SummitSkills' SNA, is something SummitSkills and its partners and stakeholders should consider.

9.2 Education and training

The understanding of foundation degrees among BSE consultants still appears to be remarkably low, with 82% of the consultants sampled having little or no awareness of them. SummitSkills needs to work with Foundation Degree Forward, CIBSE and other partners and stakeholders to considerably raise the knowledge and prestige of foundation degrees among BSE sector consultants.

There remains concern about curriculum delivery within universities; predominantly these concerns relate to courses not being structured properly or not being available. Smaller companies seemed to be more dissatisfied than larger companies. SummitSkills needs to continue to clearly represent these concerns to the university sector and work with universities, partners and stakeholders to try and address these issues.

In relation to management training for managers or supervisors of teams of consultants, there is evidence to suggest that over fifty percent of companies (52%) had used management training, which is considerably higher than craft companies. This is encouraging; however there should be no complacency to this issue and SummitSkills will work with partners and stakeholders to continue to promote management training as a way to improve quality and productivity. Management training could also be incorporated into training on business acumen and coping with potential downturns.

A large percentage of companies surveyed either did not know what their training needs were, or felt they had no training needs. Given the increasing demands for innovative design and procurement solutions and new business methods, there is a need for the BSE sector, as with all sectors of the UK economy, to foster a continuous learning culture. SummitSkills and its partners and stakeholders should challenge complacency and stress the importance of continuous training, making the BSE sector (both craft and consultants) aware of the training opportunities available. This could be done through more effective marketing of available training provision and/or by working with providers to design appropriate provision to meet the needs of both small and large consultants.

10 References

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