

Consulting Firms Report 18% Increase in OC

Deloitte Regains No. 1; Slalom Makes Big Debut

By PETER J. BRENNAN

Orange County's largest management consulting firms are reporting a return to hiring this year.

The 23 largest firms on the Business Journal's annual list reported a 18% increase to 2,103 consultants and a 10% rise in Orange County employees to 5,028.

A year ago, they reported a 3.7% decline in consultants and a 4.7% drop in OC employees.

Management consultant firms provide an array of specialists in information technology, operations, strategy, and mergers and acquisitions aimed at improving the performance of businesses.

This week's list, which ranks firms with a minimum cutoff of 10 area consultants, includes management consulting firms with headquarters in Orange County and others with operations here.

Companywide, firms on the list grew 13% to 2 million employees, compared to a 6.3% growth last year.

Irvine is clearly the city to be a consultant as 15 reported its offices here, followed by Costa Mesa with three and Newport Beach with two.

Thirteen of the firms reported gains, including 11 that grew by more than 10%. On last year's list, only seven of the firms reported an increase in consultants.

Only two reported declines, compared to



61% boost to headcount at local office of Slalom, No. 5 on list

five a year ago. Eight didn't report any changes.

Deloitte LLP, which has an office in Costa Mesa, regained its top slot by boosting headcount 30% to 361 and its OC employee count 15% to 978. Last year, its OC consultant count fell 10%.

Accenture, which has an Irvine office, fell to No. 2 even though it increased its consultants 18% to 347 and its OC headcount by 15% to 390. A year ago, it reduced its consulting headcount by 13%.

"The most profound change we are seeing in business is the demand for total enterprise transformation, which goes beyond a specific industry, business unit or function," said **Marty Hodgett**, Accenture's office managing director for Southern California. "Many organizations are driving bold transformation programs in accelerated time frames as they recognize the need to engage every part of their enterprise and their people using technology, data and AI to work in new ways."

Consulting Blur

The advances in tech and greater access to data are even further blurring the lines between consulting and accounting, according to **Vivek Mande**, director of the school of accountancy at **California State University, Fullerton**.

"Clients want to make business decisions on things like margins for products and sales," Mande told the Business Journal.

"They could get consultants or outside people, but accountants have a unique advantage because they are the custodians of their clients' data."

"That's why the consulting arm of accounting firms is starting to grow. Clients now not only want advice on the traditional accounting fields like taxation and auditing, but also advice on various business decisions that are data-driven," he said (see related story, page 22).

For the second straight year, Irvine-based No. 7 **Blythe Global Advisors LLC** reported

a significant growth of 30% to 103 employees, which follows a 76% gain on last year's list.

"Our flexible work environment coupled with our seasoned experienced team of former Big Four trained CPA professionals has led directly to our tremendous growth the past year," President **Marc Blythe** said in an email to the Business Journal.

"We expect to continue to ensure the demand of our services due to the prolific shortage of accounting talent within public accounting and industry combined with the recent IPO/SPAC activity."

Notable Changes

■ Making its appearance on this year's list is **Slalom LLC**, which said the employment count at its Irvine office jumped 61% to 135, good for the No. 5 spot. The Seattle-based company says it can "push the boundaries of what's possible" to help clients "explore the next frontier of technology and customer experiences."

■ Another company making an appearance on this year's list is No. 21 Chicago-based **Crowe LLP**, which said its Costa Mesa office climbed by four to 11 consultants.

■ Another fast grower from Chicago was **RSM US LLP**, which rose 55% to 76 at its Irvine office.

■ No. 10 **Tevora** of Irvine said its headcount fell by four to 83 consultants. The company grew elsewhere as its employee count increased 14% to 183 companywide. ■

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Overair

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The Butterfly vehicles are being designed to have a range of over 100 miles, the ability to recharge quickly between trips, and a top speed of around 200 miles per hour.

"We've proven Butterfly's propulsion system, so we'll now begin validating Butterfly's ability to operate safely in real-world weather conditions, carry significant payloads, and fly incredibly quietly," Tigner said in a statement on June 14.

The slow turning propellers used by Overair produce extraordinarily little sound, which will allow Butterfly to operate in high-density areas with noise sensitive communities, the company said.

As the company continues to work toward FAA certification, Overair is also working with **NASA** and **Urban Movement Labs** in Los Angeles to develop urban air mobility routing and infrastructure.

While Overair has been testing its electric motor systems in the Southern California desert, it operates out of 203,000 square feet of space in two buildings at 3001 S. Susan St. and 3030 S. Susan St., near **Segerstrom High School**.

Supernal Neighbor

Along with Overair and Joby Aviation, other companies charging into the flying taxi sphere include **Supernal**, a new division of South Korea's **Hyundai Motor Group**. Supernal's headquarters are in Washington, D.C., but its engineering base and largest source of jobs was established in Irvine last year.

Other competitors include European plane maker **Airbus** and Germany's **Volocopter**.

The skies won't be too crowded with



Staff outside Santa Ana HQ

PHOTO CREDIT: OVERAIR

eVTOL competition, Tigner told the Business Journal earlier this year.

"There's a group of companies that are all in a competition with each other of sorts, although I will say at least in the short term it's far more collaborative than competitive," Tigner said of the industry.

He adds: "The potential market is much, much larger than any one company can fill."

The development of the eVTOL industry has faced numerous challenges, chief among them the safety of the people on the ground and those in the air.

"We are working very closely with the FAA to see how these kinds of aircraft are going to be certified," Tigner said. "We don't fit cleanly into the mold of a regular airplane or a regular helicopter or any other known category." ■

Korean Heavyweights Back Overair

Hanwha Aerospace and **Hanwha Systems** are the two South Korean firms backing flying taxi company **Overair** of Santa Ana.

Overair calls them "global leaders in ultra-precision communications and aircraft technologies." Hanwha Aerospace is the only large aircraft engine manufacturer in South Korea. It's also involved in outer-space, including its 2021 buy of **Satrec Initiative**, a domestic satellite specialist.

Hanwha Systems provides "differentiated smart technologies" in defense electronics and other high-tech fields.

The South Korean firms say they are looking to invest in disruptive businesses that can "really excel in the future," and believe Overair's eVTOL vehicle is one of those game changers.

"With regard to our investment decision in Overair, we assessed that the company had the numerous patents and core technologies required to develop [a] highly efficient, low noise vehicle," **Sungchul Eoh**, CEO of Hanwha Systems, said in a statement.

"We see the potential of Overair's Optimum Speed Propulsion system and we will continue to work together to find synergies and bring this breakthrough technology to the world," he said.

—Kevin Costelloe

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RANKED BY NUMBER OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS IN OC

Rank	Company	OC management consultants	OC employees	Firmwide employees	Percent breakdown of management consulting				Primary industries served	Top local official(s)		
					•yearly % change	•yearly % change	•yearly % change	•Information technology			•Strategy	•Operations
1 (2)	Deloitte 695 Town Center Drive, Ste. 1000 Costa Mesa 92626-1924 New York Website: deloitte.com Email: msolomon@deloitte.com		361 30%	978 15%	345,000 4%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Technology, financial services, retail, healthcare, real estate	Marshall Solomon managing partner, Orange County (714) 436-7100/(714) 436-7200	
2 (1)	Accenture 300 Spectrum Center Drive, 14th floor Irvine 92618-4925 Chicago Website: accenture.com Email: michelle.horn@accenture.com		347 18%	390 15%	699,000 30%	56%	31%	4%	9%	Communications, media, technology, financial services, health and public services, products, resources	Martin Hodgett office managing director, Southern California (310) 726-2700	
3 (NR)	KPMG LLP 20 Pacifica, Ste. 700 Irvine 92618-3391 New York Website: kpmg.com/us		210 11%	498 13%	236,000 4%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Alternative investments, asset management, banking and capital markets, energy, natural resources and chemicals, government, healthcare and life sciences, industrial manufacturing, insurance, private equity, retail, technology, media & telecommunications	Mark Clemens office managing partner (949) 885-5400/(949) 885-5410	
4 (3)	PwC 2020 Main St., Ste. 400 Irvine 92614-8227 New York Website: pwc.com Email: tracee.jones@pwc.com		156 27%	414 12%	295,000 7%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	would not disclose	Tracee Jones office managing partner (949) 437-5200/(949) 437-5300	
5 (NR)	Slalom 300 Spectrum Center Drive, Ste. 1500 Irvine 92618-3095 Seattle Website: slalom.com Email: jay.kuderka@slalom.com		135 61%	153 43%	12,500 59%	40%	25%	25%	10%	Financial services, healthcare and life sciences, direct-to-consumer tech, mid-market and emerging	Pritha Sridharan general manager (949) 923-2500	
6 (4)	Ernst & Young LLP 18101 Von Karman Ave., Ste. 1700 Irvine 92612-0181 London Website: ey.com		114 5%	578 7%	312,000 4%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Real estate, manufacturing/distribution, life sciences, healthcare, technology	Mary Garrett office managing partner (949) 794-2300/(949) 437-0595	
7 (8)	Blythe Global Advisors LLC 19800 MacArthur Blvd., Ste. 300 Irvine 92612-2479 Irvine Website: blytheglobal.com Email: marc@blytheglobal.com		103 30%	89 29%	125 26%	15%	25%	45%	15%	Public, private equity, venture capital-backed and other private companies; technology; healthcare; manufacturing and distribution; real estate; restaurants; retail; cannabis	Marc Blythe president (949) 757-4180/(866) 585-1510	
7 (5)	Profit Recovery Partners LLC 1600 Sunflower Ave. Costa Mesa 92626-1544 Costa Mesa Website: prpllc.com Email: dons@prpllc.com		103 0%	103 0%	103 0%	30%	30%	30%	10%	Professions, real estate, financial services, legal, hospitals, insurance, manufacturing	Donald Steiner CEO (714) 617-3900/(714) 617-3910	
9 (9)	Resources Global Professionals (RGP) 17101 Armstrong Ave., Ste. 100 Irvine 92614-5742 Irvine Website: rgp.com Email: ywei@rgp.com		94 NA	203 6%	4,259 13%	11%	22%	66%	1%	All industry types	Kate Duchene CEO (714) 430-6550	
10 (6)	WTW⁽¹⁾ 2010 Main St., Ste. 1050 Irvine 92614-7261 London Website: wtwco.com Email: michael.fox@wtwco.com		90 ⁽²⁾ NA	120 ⁽²⁾ NA	46,600 ⁽²⁾ NA	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Technology, financial services, healthcare	Michael Fox managing director, Southern California/Southwest (949) 253-5200/(949) 253-5288	
11 (7)	Tevora 17875 Von Karman Ave., Ste. 100B Irvine 92614-5228 Irvine Website: tevora.com		83 -5%	123 -3%	183 14%	0%	100%	0%	0%	Education, entertainment, financial, technology, financial services, manufacturing and logistics, retail, restaurant and hospitality, service providers, technology	Ray Zadjimool CEO (949) 250-3290/(949) 250-9993	
12 (10)	RSM US LLP 17400 Laguna Canyon Road, Ste. 200 Irvine 92618-5425 Chicago Website: rsmus.com		76 55%	268 5%	14,650 15%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Manufacturing, consumer products, technology, financial services, private equity, healthcare, real estate, business services, SEC	Paul Short Orange County office managing partner (949) 255-6500/(949) 255-5091	

Abbreviations: NA: not applicable; wnd: would not disclose; NR: not ranked
 Note: To the best of our knowledge, this information is accurate as of press time. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of the list, omissions and typographical errors sometimes occur. Unless otherwise noted, the information on this list was provided by the companies themselves. List may not be reprinted without permission of the editor. Photos show the first top official listed.

⁽¹⁾ Previously listed as Willis Towers Watson
⁽²⁾ Business Journal estimate

Researched by Meghan Kiewer

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					•yearly % change	•yearly % change	•Information technology	•Strategy			•Operations	•Other
13 (12)	Moss Adams 2040 Main St., Ste. 900 Irvine 92614-8213 Seattle Website: mossadams.com Email: shannan.gardner@mossadams.com		36 16%	283 0%	3,857 13%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Consumer products, construction, healthcare, manufacturing/distribution, technology, transportation, retail, apparel, dealer services	Shannan Gardner partner-in-charge (949) 221-4000/(949) 221-4001	
14 (13)	CliftonLarsonAllen LLP (CLA) 2875 Michelle Drive, Ste. 300 Irvine 92606-1020 Irvine Website: claconnect.com		30 0%	165 14%	8,000 7%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Manufacturing, distribution, business and professional services, retail, financial services, nonprofit, government, entrepreneurial, high-net-worth individuals	Paul Treinen office managing principal (714) 978-1300/(714) 978-7893	
15 (11)	Grant Thornton LLP 4695 MacArthur Court, Ste. 1600 Newport Beach 92660-1873 Chicago Website: grantthornton.com Email: colleen.costello@us.gt.com		29 -6%	146 -1%	9,024 7%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Consumer and industrial products, technology, financial services, not-for-profits, real estate	Brett Beightol office managing partner (949) 553-1600/(949) 553-0168	
16 (14)	Development Planning & Financing Group Inc. 26840 Aliso Viejo Pkwy., Ste. 110 Aliso Viejo 92656-2649 Aliso Viejo Website: dpfg.com Email: chris.cole@dpfg.com		25 0%	32 0%	50 0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	Real estate consulting	Chris Cole president (949) 388-9269/(949) 388-9272	
16 (15)	TriVista 18565 Jamboree Road, Ste. 350 Irvine 92612-2566 Irvine Website: trivista.com Email: info@trivista.com		25 ⁽²⁾ NA	25 ⁽²⁾ NA	75 ⁽²⁾ NA	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Aerospace and defense, automotive and automotive suppliers, consumer products, food and beverage, industrial manufacturing, medical and pharma, private equity	Michael McSweeney senior managing director (949) 218-4830/(949) 382-6359	
18 (16)	RJI Ramirez Jimenez International CPAs 18012 Sky Park Circle, Ste. 200 Irvine 92614-6671 Irvine Website: rjicpas.com Email: info@rjicpas.com		21 5%	60 11%	60 11%	0%	33%	33%	34%	SEC, international tax, real estate, manufacturing/distribution, hospitality, professional services	Manuel Ramirez/Fernando Jimenez chairman/CEO (949) 852-1600/(949) 852-1606	
19 (18)	Talley LLP 600 City Parkway W., Ste. 650 Orange 92868-2946 Orange Website: talleyco.com Email: info@talleyco.com		18 13%	79 11%	79 11%	10%	60%	10%	20%	Entrepreneurial, manufacturing/distribution, healthcare, transportation/logistics, athletes/entertainment, engineering, professional services firms, food/restaurant industry	Andrew Talley managing partner (714) 867-2200/(714) 867-2201	
20 (17)	Annealta Group 5151 Oceanus Drive, Ste. 103 Huntington Beach 92649-1057 Huntington Beach		15 ⁽²⁾ NA	25 ⁽²⁾ NA	25 ⁽²⁾ NA	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Governmental agencies: local municipalities, counties, water districts and special districts	Tim D'Zmura CEO/president (714) 661-5761	
21 (21)	Crowe LLP 650 Town Center Drive, Ste. 740 Costa Mesa 92626-7192 Chicago Website: crowe.com		11 57%	59 9%	5,111 21%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Banking; cannabis; consumer markets; financial services; fintech; food and commodities; healthcare; insurance; life sciences; manufacturing; metals; private equity; public sector; real estate and construction; retail dealer; technology, media, and telecommunications	Kathy Lai office managing partner (714) 668-1234/(714) 668-1235	
21 (21)	Management Action Programs Inc. (MAP) 20101 SW Birch St., Ste. 250 Newport Beach 92660-1770 Newport Beach Website: mapconsulting.com Email: map@mapconsulting.com		11 10%	14 17%	27 8%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Services, HVAC, construction, financial services, technology, healthcare, manufacturing, food and beverage	Michael Caito CEO (888) 834-3040/(949) 752-0502	
23 (20)	Baker Tilly US 18500 Von Karman Ave., 10th floor Irvine 92612-0527 Chicago Website: bakertilly.com Email: steve.milner@bakertilly.com		10 ⁽²⁾ NA	223 6%	6,000 30%	wnd	wnd	wnd	wnd	Technology, real estate, financial services, SEC, bankruptcy, nonprofit, entertainment, consumer, industrial products	Stephen Milner managing partner, Western U.S. (949) 222-2999/(949) 222-2989	

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⁽²⁾ Business Journal estimate