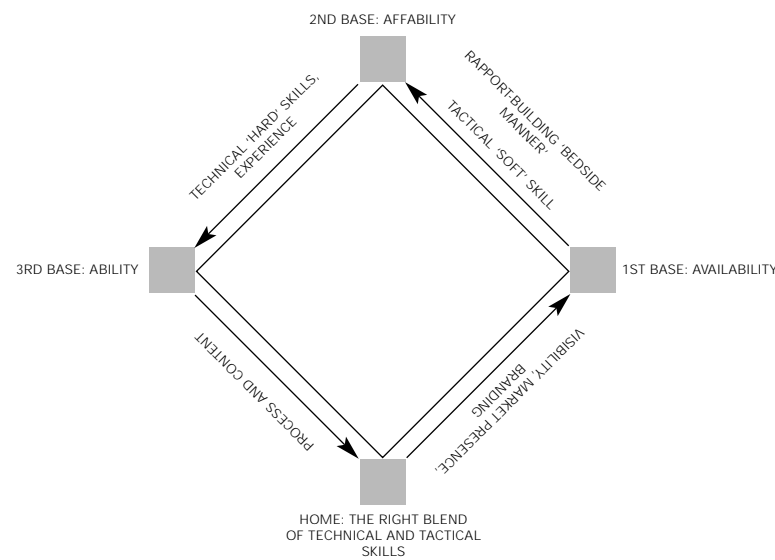


FIGURE 1.6. THE MASTER CONSULTING GAME



**first base: availability**

Chapter 2 covers first base in this Master Consulting game — availability. The client needs to know two things to use consultancy services: first, that the services exist, and second, which consultants provide them. Many great ideas have died through lack of a market — not because the market wasn't there, but because the market was unaware of the services or their providers.

Specialist consultancies I have heard of include a service with a catchy name like 'Wife Without Strings' which does everything that wives used to do in less enlightened times — short of having sex and raising children — from making sure the dry cleaning happens, to waiting around for the plumbers to turn up, to getting your will drafted. I don't know if they provide career-counselling services too, but why not?

Another classic is a nanny who specialises only in twins. She doesn't do full-time nannying any more, she just advises parents of twins on how to set up their home, their nursery, and their schooling systems, and helps them recruit their own nanny if they need one.

These two specialists need to have excellent availability factors, or their businesses would have trouble finding clients. Then again, the fact that I have heard of them through reading magazines and newspapers is in fact testimony to their availability factor!

So Chapter 2 analyses the way the consulting industry, whether highly

specialised or generalised, increases its availability factor through advertising, branding and networking, among other things.

**second base: affability**

Second base then is affability — bedside manner if you will — covered in detail in Chapter 3. The client may call a consultant in to talk about doing some work, but if the consultant offends either the client or their gatekeepers, it will be a waste of time for everyone concerned.

Similarly if someone else is more affable, nicer, or just makes a better first impression, it's 'thank you for playing'. The client cannot readily judge your ability, but they can have a darn good go at judging your affability.

Chapter 3 looks at how affability works and what the industry does to enhance it.

**third base: ability**

Finally, at third base, is the ability issue. So many consultants think this is their edge, and they work on it. It's safe, it's easy, and there are many ways to do it: courses, books and all that jazz. But the difference between a skilled lawyer and a very skilled lawyer is a moot point to the average client engaging a lawyer. They'll want to be able to speak to the lawyer, they'll want the lawyer to understand their case and be able to explain it to them. Whether the lawyer who provides the service does so with more or less ability, they will never know. This is what we look at in Chapter 4.

**stealing home: a winning combination of skills**

Getting to home plate in the consulting mastery game requires a very important combination of technical and tactical skills.

I truly believe that consultants with no ability are eventually found out. All consultants must have some technical skill to be a consultant. And no-one makes it to true Master Consultant status on a single-tool kitbag. Some of the most important skills that Master Consultants display are the tactical skills of client handling. Besides affability, these include things like proposal writing and identifying when the customer is satisfied (or not) and taking action on that.

Please believe me when I say that success as a Master Consultant does not hinge on how good a consultant is in their technical field. It is important for the longevity of your business and for the business world in general that all consultants combine both technical and tactical how-to knowledge.

Hang onto your seats now as the ability myth rolls out.