What Consulting Costs in Private Equity

Fee references and planning ranges

An expert call, an embedded operator and a strategy team buy different kinds of work. Compare proposals against the same deliverable and level of effort, then check which expenses are included.

Fee ranges by engagement

USD

Engagement	Fee reference	What the figure covers
Expert calls	**$1,000–$1,250/hour** plus $500 per project	One platform's published buyer price for expert interviews. The hourly charge includes access and platform services. Published pricing
On-site operations support	**$2,000–$5,000/day** per specialist	ProfessionaLink planning range for on-site operations work. Scope the role, number of plant days, and travel separately.
Market and competitive research	**$25,000–$90,000/week** per engagement team	ProfessionaLink planning range for market sizing, competitor analysis and customer research. Identify the markets covered and any separately billed research costs.
Strategy firm project	**$75,000–$150,000/week** per engagement team	ProfessionaLink planning range for a staffed strategy engagement. Confirm team allocation, senior involvement and the deliverables covered by the quote.
Improvement and value creation	**Daily, weekly or fixed base fee** Optional savings share	Fees depend on staffing and delivery scope. A hybrid can pair a base fee with an agreed percentage of verified annualized run-rate savings or savings realized over a defined period. See page 3.

Comparing proposals

Ask for the number of interviews, billable days or named roles, plus a list of deliverables. Confirm whether travel, datasets, recruiting, time above the agreed allocation and revisions are included. For a fixed fee, agree what triggers a change order.

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One Buyout, Four Possible Scopes

Illustrative budgets for a hypothetical B2B services acquisition

The sponsor wants to test whether customers will renew and whether growth can continue under new ownership. Each scope answers a different question. The deal team can commission the work it needs as the evidence develops.

Test the thesis with five expert calls	$5,500–$6,750

Five one-hour interviews at $1,000–$1,250 each plus one $500 launch fee. Use an internal deal team to synthesize the calls.

Calculated equivalent from published platform pricing

Commission a market and competitive assessment	$25,000–$90,000

One week of market sizing, competitor research and synthesis. The scope specifies the segments covered and the evidence required for the investment decision.

One week at the ProfessionaLink planning range

Embed an operations lead after close	$32,000–$80,000

One specialist for four on-site days per week over four weeks. The budget covers 16 days at $2,000–$5,000 per day.

Calculated from the ProfessionaLink daily range

Run a four-week strategy sprint	$300,000–$600,000

Four weeks at $75,000–$150,000 per week. Ask for the team allocation and agree on the fact base, strategic options and management readout.

Calculated from the ProfessionaLink weekly range

How to use the ranges

The ProfessionaLink ranges are budgeting assumptions. For a fixed fee, use the expected days or weeks to estimate a budget and agree on deliverables before signing. Add costs only for distinct scopes to avoid double counting, especially when a research or strategy proposal already includes expert interviews. The examples exclude separately billed expenses and taxes.

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Improvement and Value Creation

Base fees, performance incentives and savings measurement

Some improvement consultants charge a daily, weekly or fixed base fee for delivery and earn additional compensation tied to verified savings. Other engagements price the work entirely on results. The share and the savings measure are defined in the engagement terms.

How the fee can be structured

Monthly retainer plus a savings share

A procurement advisory firm publishes a retainer model covering ongoing sourcing capacity, plus an agreed share of validated realized savings. The percentage is set for each engagement.

Performance fee on an annualized measure

A cost improvement practice applies a pre-agreed fee percentage to validated savings. Its published method compares prior-year spending with projected spending over a full year after implementation.

Performance fee on realized savings

A Miami-Dade County contract document limits the fee to 20% of the first 12 months of verified realized savings from eligible, approved initiatives. That cap applies to this contract example.

Illustrative hybrid fee

Assume a **$100,000 base fee** and a **10% savings share**. An implemented change saves $500,000 a month at steady state. For this illustration, assume the company realizes six months of those savings in the measurement window.

Savings measure	Eligible savings	Total fee
Annualized run rate	$6M	**$700,000**
Six months of realized savings	$3M	**$400,000**

Both examples add the base fee to 10% of eligible savings. The inputs are hypothetical.

What to agree before work starts

Define the baseline, how volume and mix changes are handled, which savings count, and who validates the result. Set the measurement window, payment timing and any cap or true-up. Agree how implementation costs and initiatives already underway affect the calculation.

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INDEPENDENT ADVISORY & RESEARCH

About ProfessionaLink

ProfessionaLink is an independent advisory and research firm that connects private equity investors, portfolio companies, and corporate teams with specialized consulting expertise. We research the advisory market, define the capabilities each assignment requires, and identify firms suited to the work, from commercial due diligence and market intelligence to operational improvement and portfolio company growth.

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