

## Philosophy

Consultancy for Beckford Consulting is not about toolkits, it is about principle and philosophy; 'why' is really important – more so than 'what' or 'how'. If we can understand meaning, the purpose, vision and intent, then the creation of a tool or method for solving the problem becomes relatively easy. But it is important to understand why things are being done.

Tools can be made or invented which are appropriate to the problem in context and context is really important. Early in his consulting career, John found that he'd go and look at a problem, develop a solution, get agreement to it, and, by the time all that was done, find that the situation had changed and the solution was no longer appropriate. This came to be known as the 'perpetually failing problem solving engine' (Beckford, 1993). In order to overcome this, problems are solved with the affected people involved, so that the current system evolves into its new incarnation with as little disruption as possible. Problems and solutions don't often come without human dimensions, and the messy human dimension is something some consultancies sometimes prefer to ignore – it's 'outside the scope'. But John doesn't mind a bit of mess.



There are two key thoughts that underpin this consulting approach. One is captured most effectively by Aime-Jules Dalou's sculpture "Wisdom Supporting Liberty" and John believes there is much of value in that. Enabling people to make their own decisions – sharing your wisdom to enable their liberty – is perhaps the real measure of value in consultancy.

A believer in 'light management' John considers that if he makes decisions for you he's going to be kept terribly busy, and he doesn't want that. So he aims to make himself perpetually redundant by ensuring you have all the information and skills you need to effect change yourself. As Herbert Spencer said: "The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools".