

SYLLABUS**Master Seminar****„Management in Professional Service Firms“**

Summer Semester 2025

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| Type | Research Seminar |
| ECTS | 8 Credits |
| Language | English |
| Pre-requisites | - No formal requirements - Knowledge in Organization Studies, Human Resource Management and Strategic Management recommended |
| Class | Tuesdays 16-18 h R 0.05 |

Concept

Professional Service Firms (PSFs) play a crucial role in today's dynamic economy (Greenwood et al. 2010; Kaiser/Ringlstetter 2010). They provide knowledge-intensive and specialized services to other businesses, including consulting firms, law firms, audit firms, investment banks, and advertising agencies (Kaiser/Ringlstetter 2010; von Nordenflycht 2010).

A defining feature of PSFs is their reliance on highly skilled professionals, who are central to value creation. These firms operate within a service-driven and client-oriented framework (Kaiser/Ringlstetter 2010). Their success depends on the expertise and motivation of their employees, as well as their ability to act as professional advisors to clients (Schulze-Borges 2011).

Leadership in PSFs is a key factor in managing teams and shaping the work environment. Partners, particularly in law firms, consulting firms, and audit firms, play a dual role as strategic decision-makers and market representatives (Mawdsley et al. 2023).

PSFs are also characterized by complex organizational structures. They navigate tensions between professional logic (focused on expertise, independence, and accuracy) and commercial logic (oriented toward profitability and business growth) (Pruijssers 2024). This duality influences strategic and daily decision-making and internal dynamics within PSFs.

Subsequently this course aims at exploring theoretical and institutional foundations, current concepts and practical insights into the Management of Professional Service Firms. The course will familiarize students with concepts on and strategic decision-making in this type of organizations, current challenges in the industry and empirical insights into PSF management.

Assessment

- (Team) Research Article Presentation
Every other week
30% of the Grade
- Facilitated Term Paper
5'000 Words
70% of the Grade

Timeline

- Enrolment: Send an email with your name, matrikelnr., degree and study program to Marvin Lutz Müller (marvin.mueller@ur.de)

29.04.25 Introduction to Professional Service Firms (PSFs)

- Definition and classification of PSFs (consulting firms, law firms, audit firms, investment banks, etc.)
- Key characteristics: knowledge intensity & client focus

06.05.25 Resources, Management and Strategies in PSFs

- Critical Resources – identifying and dealing with them
- Resources as management anchor in Professional Service Firms
- Resources as the Professional Service Firms strategy driver

13.05.25 Research Article Presentations

20.05.25 HRM & Knowledge Management in Professional Service Firms

- Professionals – PSF’s Key Resource #1
 - Acquisition
 - Motivation
 - Development
- Knowledge – PSF’s Key Resource #2
 - A short conceptual introduction to “knowledge”
 - Managing knowledge in PSFs

27.05.25 Research Article Presentations

03.06.25 Organizational Considerations

- Hierarchical structures and internal governance
- Leadership, Leadership Development & Silence

10.06.25 Research Article Presentations

17.06.25 Current Challenges & Future Trends in PSF Management

- Controlling and Performance Management vs. Talent retention and motivation
- The tension between professional and commercial logic
- Ethical and regulatory challenges in PSFs
- Innovations and the future of PSFs
- AI in PSF

24.06.25 Research Article Presentations

Case Consultations (01.07.25; 14.07.25)

Term Paper Deadline (25.07.25)

Further questions can be addressed via email to Andreas.Hilger@ur.de.

Literature

Kaiser, S., & Ringlstetter, M. J. (2010). Strategic management of professional service firms: theory and practice. 1st Ed., Berlin, Heidelberg.

Mawdsley, J. K.; Paoella, L.; Durand, R. (2023). A Rivalry-based Theory of Gender Diversity. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 5, pp. 1254-1291.

Pruijssers, J. L. (2024). Institutional Complexity in Professional Service Firms and Dysfunctional Behaviors: Evidence from a Multi-Country Study. *Management International*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 100–114.

Schulze-Borges, F. (2011). *Performance in professional service firms. 1. Aufl., Wiesbaden*

Von Nordenflycht, A. (2010). What is a professional service firm? Toward a theory and taxonomy of knowledge-intensive firms. *Academy of management Review*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 155-174.