

US Advisory Market Report 2026 — extract

Meridian Market Institute · March 2026

US MANAGEMENT CONSULTING MARKET – SEGMENT REVIEW (EXTRACT)

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1. MARKET DEFINITION

This report defines the US management consulting market as fee revenue billed by firms whose primary activity is advisory work for commercial and non-profit clients, excluding statutory audit, tax compliance filing, and staffing placement revenue. Segment figures cover calendar year 2025 unless stated.

2. MARKET SIZE BY SEGMENT (2025)

Table 2.1 – Fee revenue and growth, calendar 2025

Strategy and corporate advisory: \$38.4 billion, up 4.1 percent on 2024.

Operations and performance improvement: \$31.7 billion, up 6.8 percent on 2024.

Technology and data advisory: \$44.2 billion, up 11.3 percent on 2024.

Risk, regulatory and controls: \$19.8 billion, up 5.2 percent on 2024.

Human capital and organization: \$14.6 billion, down 0.4 percent on 2024.

Total defined market: \$148.7 billion in 2025, up 6.4 percent on 2024.

3. MID-MARKET FIRMS (50 TO 500 PROFESSIONALS)

Firms in the 50 to 500 professional band accounted for \$27.3 billion of 2025 fee revenue, or 18.4 percent of the defined market. Revenue in this band grew 3.2 percent in 2025, below the 6.4 percent market rate. The report attributes the gap to two factors: pricing pressure on time-and-materials engagements, and slower adoption of productized or subscription offerings relative to the largest twenty firms.

4. DEMAND DRIVERS, 2026 OUTLOOK

Driver 1 – Technology and data modernization. 61 percent of buyers surveyed (n=412) named data platform and AI enablement work among their top three planned advisory spends for 2026.

Driver 2 – Regulatory change. 44 percent of buyers expect increased spend on risk and controls advisory.

Driver 3 – Cost scrutiny. 58 percent of buyers said they had renegotiated at least one advisory rate card in the prior twelve months, up from 39 percent in the 2024 survey.

5. HEADWINDS

Fee compression. Median blended rate for mid-market advisory work rose 1.8 percent in 2025, below US CPI for the same period, which the report characterizes as real-terms price decline.

Buyer consolidation. 36 percent of buyers reduced their panel of advisory suppliers in 2025.

Internal capability. 29 percent of buyers reported moving work previously bought externally to in-house teams, most often in analytics and programme management.

6. PRICING MODELS OBSERVED

Time and materials remained 68 percent of mid-market advisory revenue in 2025, down from 74 percent in 2023.

Fixed-fee engagements were 24 percent. Subscription or recurring advisory arrangements were 8 percent, up from 3 percent in 2023. Firms with more than 10 percent recurring revenue reported median fee growth of 7.9 percent, against 2.1 percent for firms with none.