



## SymphonyIRI Group CEO on Who He'll Hire Next

By Allison Enright, managing editor  
allisonenright@ama.org

Last month, *Marketing News* sat down with SymphonyIRI Group President and CEO John G. Freeland to discuss his company's progress on rebranding IRI and extending its services, namely in launching a broader, deeper, data-driven consulting practice. Freeland, who previously led Accenture's CRM consulting practice, here describes what he's looking for in new recruits.

**Q:** What is the pedigree of your ideal new hire?

**A:** It is a very different profile than the traditional IRI profile. The ideal combination is someone who has both working experience in CPG or retail, so he knows the company from being on the inside as a brand manager or front-office sales and marketing function, but also has a background in consulting from the top-tier boutique firms—the McKinseys, Boston Consulting Groups and the Bains. [Also,] he needs to have a very strong analytics orientation. What we *aren't* trying to hire are people who have good conceptual grasps and who, at the high level, can play at strategy but don't know the basics on how to optimize a marketing mix. That's an unusual combination because sometimes you have consultants who know nothing about analytics or you have analytics people who are not good consultants. ...

We needed to recruit a different type of talent [that has] the right type of confidence but not the swagger you see at some other places. [We needed to find] special talent that could be effective as consultants and prescriptive as consultants, but also be deeply rooted in our assets around the data and technology. ... So that's the profile. We have now scaled up that group in the last year so we have critical mass. We expect to double the size of our consulting over the next year and then go from there.

**Q:** How will you develop current employees?

**A:** There are synergies between our traditional business and our higher-end consulting business, [and] over time there will be more fluidity [between the two]. I think this is a career path for our client services people as well. As they become better at delivering day-to-day operational insights, they are going to develop the consulting skill set and there will be movement. Also, some of the people in our consulting group may end up leading major client service teams. There's a natural continuity between what our client services teams do ... and what our consulting teams do.

*You can read more from this interview in the June 30 print edition of Marketing News or online at [MarketingPower.com/marketingnews](http://MarketingPower.com/marketingnews). The June 30 issue also features the annual Honomichl Top 50 Report on the largest research firms operating in the United States. SymphonyIRI Group ranked No. 5, with more than \$440 million in revenue.*