

Quality assurance and validation of project findings is part of a well-defined project management function within MSC. The key constituents of this function include:



Governance and Management

Every project has a dedicated team headed by a Project Director/ Lead and managed by an experienced Project Manager or subject matter expert. Regular 3P (progress, problems, plans) calls are held with senior management to monitor and support projects.



Project Planning and execution standards, protocols, and tools

All consultants in MSC are trained on prescribed standards, protocols, and tools (e.g., resource planning and scheduling tools, 4CQ and a range of analytical frameworks, research design, and methodology, reporting using Minto's Pyramid, etc.). The Project Director/Lead ensures that the required protocols are followed at every stage during the assignment life cycle.

The Project Manager holds periodic review calls with the research team to track the findings, analyze trends, and identify areas for further probing, as needed. Such review calls also allow the research team to visualize the final report, identify gaps, and modify research tools, as necessary.



Project progress monitoring and reporting

Our project management tool tracks the progress of each activity, task, and sub-task with respect to committed timelines and the level of effort. The tool also monitors project milestones and deliverables. If there are delays in achieving a milestone(s) or deliverable(s), the tool alerts the Project Manager, who can thereafter take suitable action. Teams must also submit regular 3P (progress, problems, and plans) reports to their Project Director/Lead.



Documentation

MSC follows rigorous standards when it comes to documenting our work. All reports go through a rigorous three-layer review before they are submitted to the client or released in the public domain, with the requisite approvals from the client institution. One of the main goals of the peer review process is to critically examine the analysis and findings, validate them and assess if they are relevant and adequate to meet the project's objectives. Reports go through two additional levels of review - first by the practice lead and then by the domain lead. The final report/deliverable requires approval from a director before it is provided to the clients/stakeholders. Our in-house team of designers, data visualization experts, and copy editors edit the reports and produce relevant designs, infographics, icons, and overall formatting.



Reporting and feedback

Our project management protocols require every project team to develop templates and dashboards to report on the progress of the project internally and externally. Regular reports are submitted to the client after a thorough internal review.



Quality control

The quality assurance system applies to the project and back-end teams comprised of research analysts, knowledge management experts, and legal, finance, and administrative staff. This ensures that quality is engrained in all processes related to project implementation. In addition, all staff is formally assessed by their supervisors and peers upon completing tasks for the project (or for larger assignments, at each significant milestone). This assessment and feedback are complemented by client feedback on the team's performance in a structured manner. This client feedback is reflected in the quarterly appraisals delivered to all staff.



Communication

Effective communication is at the core of project management. At the project's onset, our teams define the communication protocols for internal communication with the client's project teams. Defining the communication channels ensures that communication is efficient and issues are addressed within the shortest possible time frames. Communication is maintained via email, phone calls, Skype, and, increasingly, a range of web-based tools. We use our dedicated repositories and information storage databases to manage documents that are referred to, used, and produced.



Client relationship management

MSC assigns high importance to the management of client relationships. Throughout the project duration, we remain in touch with the client to keep them apprised of the progress, seek their advice and approval on different aspects of the project as needed, and submit the project deliverables as per the agreed schedule. Depending on the nature and duration of the project, we constitute a Technical Project Committee and/or Project Steering Committee with representation from MSC's Team Lead and Project Manager, as well as from the client and funding agency. We organize regular calls with these Committees at pre-defined intervals to review the project progress against the plan, record achievements, plan, and raise critical issues. All discussions are documented and shared with the client for reference and record.