

By Tom Mochal

If you outsource a project to a third-party company, you also outsource the day-to-day project management responsibilities. However, your company still needs to have some level of involvement to validate that the project is going well and that the outsourcer will deliver within your expectations. This requires the outsourcer to provide meaningful and active feedback on the status of the project. It also requires you to be comfortable with the overall processes that the vendor is using to manage the project.

Quality assurance refers to the **processes** being used to manage the project and to build the deliverables. This is in contrast to quality control, which refers to the activities used to actually create the deliverables. Because you are not responsible for the creation of the deliverables (quality control), you need to be comfortable that the outsourcer is using sound processes (quality assurance) to manage the project and build the deliverables.

This quality assurance checklist for outsourced projects contains criteria necessary to verify:

- That the up-front agreements contain the information necessary to subsequently manage the relationship. For example, if you want periodic reporting, you need to make sure it is included in the project definition or contract. If you want to validate that interim deliverables are acceptable to your company, you need to agree on completeness and correctness criteria ahead of time.
- That the project is proceeding on track and that you know about any deviations from the project workplan. Progress can be validated at scheduled times or at previously agreed-upon project milestones.
- That the project concludes as you expect based on the project definition and contract.

This checklist contains basic questions to ask and what to look for when monitoring project progress. It should be supplemented with questions that are specific to your project and your contract with the outsourcer. If either party in the contract makes any agreements or commitments, you should add them to this checklist so that they can be monitored throughout the project.

Notes

- This checklist picks up when the project has already been defined and the outsourcer has been chosen. It should not be used to define the project or pick the outsourcer.
- This checklist assumes that you are outsourcing a project, such as an IT development project. This checklist does not apply if you are outsourcing a department or a service. For instance, if you are outsourcing your ongoing help desk services, this checklist will not be appropriate.
- The usefulness of this checklist is based on the assumption that a project definition has already been created, along with a formal contract. (Your company may have a different term for the project definition, such as project charter or statement of work.) If this planning document has not been prepared and formally approved, the information on the checklist needs to be included as a part of the contract.



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Beginning of the project

Project definition	Yes	No
Has a project definition (or similar document) been prepared by your company or the outsourcer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the project scope been clearly defined, including a description of every final deliverable to be produced?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have any out-of-scope areas been clearly documented?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have expectations been agreed upon for the level of quality of the deliverables, including completeness and correctness criteria?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have overall project costs been documented and agreed upon?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have firm deadline dates been agreed upon and confirmed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has systems, user, and code documentation been included as deliverables?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have training needs been addressed as deliverables?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a project definition been approved in writing by the appropriate stakeholders and managers at your company and the outsourcer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a comprehensive project workplan been created by the outsourcer? (Your company does not need to approve it. Just validate that it exists and is reasonable.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the outsourcer have clear procedures in place for managing issues, scope, and risk?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your company clear on what its role is in the management of issues, scope, and risk?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the outsourcer have a process in place to manage overall quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do your company and the outsourcer have an agreement on the level and frequency of formal communication that is expected during the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the vendor been clear on what resources it needs from your company and when they will be needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have turnover procedures been established and agreed upon?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have a number of milestones been established to review progress so far and validate that the project is on track for completion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contract	Yes	No
Does the contract describe a process for amending the agreement in the future?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If interim payments are expected, is the contract clear on when they will be made and what expectations need to be achieved for the interim payment to be made?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are appropriate security and nondisclosure statements included in the contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are appropriate code ownership and property rights included in the contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the contract been prepared, reviewed, and approved by your legal staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the contract been formally signed by your sponsor, the outsourcer, and any other appropriate parties?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Pursue any questions that have prompted a No answer to determine what the issues may be. The more No answers, the more potential trouble the project is in. Work with the outsourcer to explain the reason for each No answer and determine what can be done to remedy the situation.

Ongoing questions to validate at key milestones

Project management	Yes	No
Can the vendor clearly explain where the project is vs. where it should be at this time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the outsourcer following its procedures for managing issues, scope, risk, quality, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are issues being resolved in a timely manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are scope-change requests being managed and is the sponsor formally approving changes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are risks being identified and managed successfully?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is communication between the outsourcer and your company occurring as both parties have agreed upon?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Should the contract or project definition be updated to reflect any major changes to the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your company clear on what resources are required to assist the outsourcer in the completion of the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliverables	Yes	No
Have the deliverables specified in the project definition and the contract been completed up to this point?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will all the future deliverables specified in the project definition be completed on time and within budget?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have all deliverables from the outsourcer been formally approved based on adherence to the agreed-upon completeness and correctness criteria?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contract	Yes	No
If interim payments are expected, has the outsourcer completed all required work up to this point to the agreed-upon level of quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have all terms and conditions of the contract been satisfied as expected up to this point in the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Should the contract or project definition be updated to reflect any major changes to the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Pursue any questions that have prompted a No answer to determine what the issues may be. The more No answers, the more potential trouble the project is in. Work with the outsourcer to explain the reason for each No answer, and determine what can be done to remedy the situation.

End of the project

	Yes	No
Have the deliverables specified in the project definition and the contract been completed as specified in the completeness and correctness criteria?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have all agreed-upon deliverables been formally approved and accepted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have all contractual obligations been completed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has turnover occurred as expected based on prior agreements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has training occurred as expected based on prior agreements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has documentation been completed and turned over as expected based on prior agreements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have payments been made to the outsourcer based on the completion of agreed-upon interim deliverables?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your company ready to complete the contract and make final payments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The project should be ready to be completed and shut down. Any No answers should be pursued and explained.

Additional resources

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- Check out all of [TechRepublic's newsletter offerings](#).
- "[Avoid these common causes for project failure](#)" (TechRepublic)
- "[Start a recovery project to rescue a troubled project](#)" (TechRepublic)
- "[Manage quality through both quality control and quality assurance techniques](#)" (TechRepublic)

Version history

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