

## Agreeing client expectations is the key to delivering consultant value

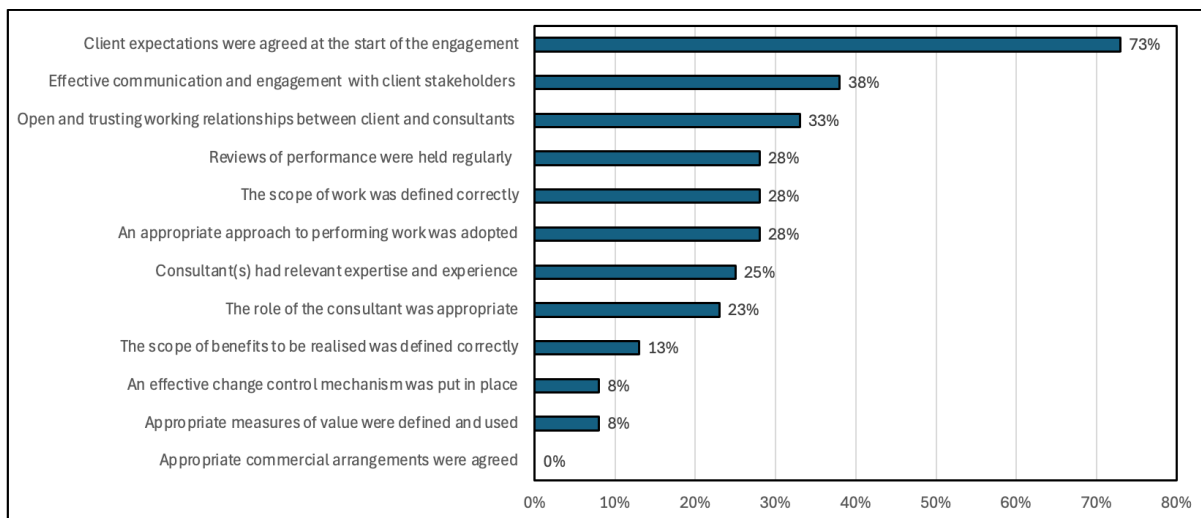
### 1 Introduction

The Centre for Management Consulting Excellence (CMCE) has just completed its latest study into factors that impact how management consultants provide value to their clients.

In this study we asked respondents to provide their views on those factors that promoted and prevented the provision of management consultant value in consulting projects in which they had been involved.

### 2 Factors promoting the provision of value

Table 1 contains the responses to the question “What were the three most important actions or factors that impacted on the consultant providing value?”



**TABLE 1: ACTIONS AND FACTORS THAT DELIVER CLIENT VALUE**

“Agreeing client expectations” was identified by an overwhelming majority (73%) of respondents as the most important factor impacting the delivery of value by consultants to their clients. The responses also provided important insights into how best to manage expectations during the consulting engagement. “Effective communication” (identified by 38% of respondents) and “Building open and trusting relationships” (identified by 33% of respondents) were identified as the next most important factors.

The importance of managing client expectations, communicating effectively and building trust was reinforced by the following comments:

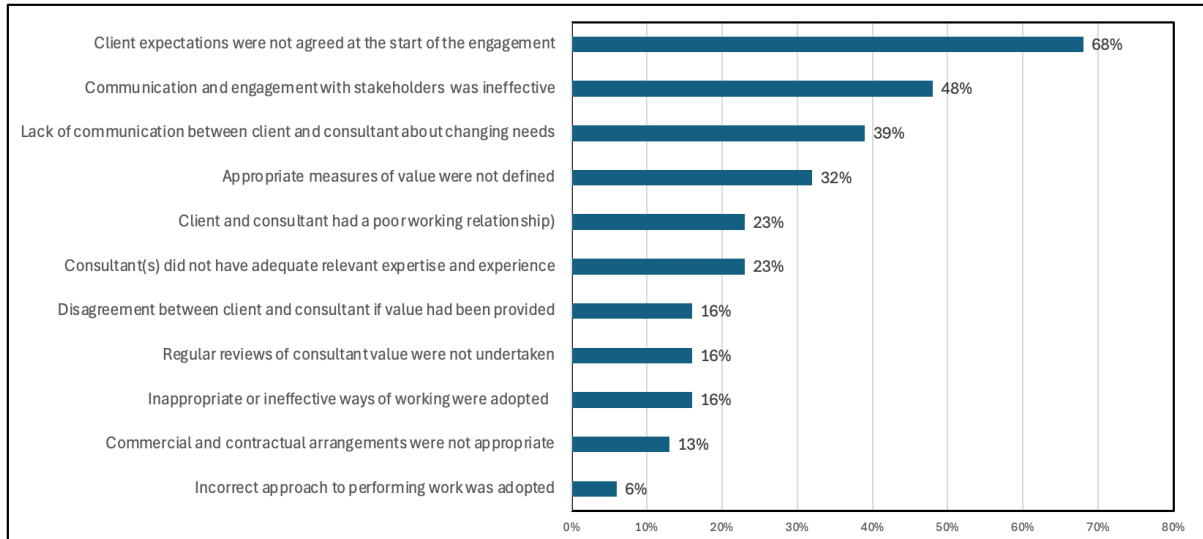


These results highlight the challenge faced by consultants in providing value. The factors that have least impact tend to be more measurable and controllable than the factors that have most impact. It is likely to be more difficult to determine whether a client trusts you than to define an effective change control process.

It is also interesting to note that none of the respondents considered that commercial arrangements are a factor in delivering value and yet these are likely to be a key factor in selecting a client. In our earlier reports on consultant value, we noted the potential disconnect between the criteria used by clients in selecting a consultant and their views on how consultants provide value. This is another example of that phenomenon.

### 3 Factors preventing the provision of value

Table 2 contains the responses to the question “What were the three most important reasons that the consultant failed to provide value?”



**TABLE 2: REASONS WHY CONSULTANT VALUE NOT PROVIDED**

These results reinforce the importance of agreeing client expectations and the need for effective communication between client and consultant.

Given the previous comment about the lack of impact of commercial and contractual arrangements, it is interesting to note that the right arrangements do not impact value, but the wrong ones do.

### 4 Key conclusions

The key message from our research is that agreeing client expectations is the key to delivering consultant value.

The research also provides important insights into how best to manage expectations during the consulting engagement: by communicating effectively and by building a trusted relationship between the client and consultant.

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