

Goizueta Business Library

Creating Bridges to Knowledge

Research Best Practices & Pitfalls

Research Strategy	DO	DON'T
Approach research with an open mind, free of bias and assumptions	Conduct assumption free, open-ended research to test and inform your hypothesis.	Skew your research to support what you believe to be the right solutions.
Start by thinking broadly	Step back and start your research by focusing on fully understanding context, e.g., the industry, competitors, market size and segmentation, geographic, economic or regulatory factors, etc. Begin your research with the goal of understanding your problem/situation, not immediately solving it.	Start by trying to solve the problem and dive right into the weeds. Imagine a search path shaped like a funnel, with the broadest part representing the first stage of your research (e.g., focused on fully understanding the context of your topic), and the increasingly narrow section focused on more specific insights and data.
Build your case by conducting thorough, intentional research	Use multiple information types to benefit from different perspectives, validate content, and minimize bias (e.g., industry magazines & associations, market research reports, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, etc.)	Base your recommendations on a single report or minimal and poor-quality research; they will not hold up.
Think outside the box	Think about using proxies from which you can glean relevant insights. Are there other industries, organizations or issues that are reasonable substitutes for identifying insights, data, best practices, successes, or even failures.	Be too literal or narrow when framing your questions; be persistent, keep probing, and don't give up too easily.
Keep probing problems and considering risks	Push yourself to keep questioning the evidence, to identify and probe potential issues and risks. Use your evidence-based research to anticipate and prepare your client for these realities.	Ignore problems and risks; failing to identify these as part of your recommendations undermines the strength of your case.
Seek out the timeliest data	Rely on data that is appropriately timely for your project.	Use old data as it may undermine the impact of your recommendations and reflect poorly on your research process.
Build your case by using solid, credible evidence	Use only credible, authoritative, reliable sources for your research.	Use any questionable sources; even just one can undermine the credibility of your recommendations.
Document all of your research	Include a properly formatted bibliography and cite all sources referenced throughout your deck. At a glance, it tells the story of your intellectual discovery process and the research you conducted to inform and support your thinking and recommendations.	Fail to document all sources used. Clients want to know where your data came from, and the lack of citing your sources might infer that the evidence is not credible, undermining confidence in your recommendations.