ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE & CHANGE COMMUNITY EVENT: 13TH JULY 2023

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

CRF's Organisation Development, Culture and Change community came together on 13th July to discuss effective stakeholder management. The session was chaired by Will Pemberton, Senior Projects and Events Executive at CRF, with expert input from Emma Lucas, former Group Head of Leadership & Learning at Marks and Spencer and Founder of Think Coaching, John Whelan, Director at CRF, and Nick Holley, Director of CRF Learning.

Topics discussed included identifying stakeholders, methodologies for mapping stakeholders, and ways to achieve stakeholder buy in. These summary notes outline the key insights from the session.

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

The simple definition of a stakeholder is anyone who has an interest, stake or influence in your project. What your stakeholders look like will be dictated by the project itself, rather than who you think they are or who you want them to be. The types of populations that could be considered to be stakeholders is also changing:

- The growth of social media increases the need to think about employer brand and reputation, and therefore consider the broader community and future talent network as potential stakeholders.
- Employee activism is increasing; employee activists may be key stakeholders for your project.
- The growing impact of the ESG and DE&I agenda mean there are new groups and networks that need to be considered. Investors and Boards may also have new priorities and requirements relating to the changing social agenda.

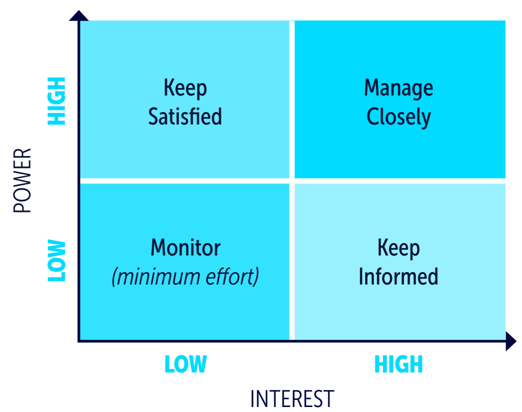
The following steps can help with stakeholder identification:

- Begin as broadly as possible, considering the objectives of the project and all the different individuals, groups and communities (both internally and externally) that might be interested in, or have an influence over, what you're doing.
- Bring together a diverse group of people to brainstorm as many different stakeholders as possible. Avoid groupthink by first asking everyone to create their own individual lists, and remember that you can classify and validate stakeholders at a later date.
- Consider who interests or influences your critical stakeholders (such as your boss, the board, the project's funders or sponsors).
- Be curious and open when talking to initial stakeholders. Consider who else in their team may be interested, who they are thinking about, and who you might have missed.
- Be aware of any stakeholders who may emerge during the course of the project, and be ready to include them in your mapping and management activities.
- Don't forget that the end users or receivers of a project can also count as stakeholders.

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Stakeholder mapping helps you to identify stakeholders that may be less obvious and think about the different types of engagement they may require. Without proper stakeholder mapping, you may miss influential stakeholders. This can lead people to question whether you conducted your stakeholder engagement properly and potentially undermine your whole process.

The below 2 x 2 power and interest matrix is a helpful tool, particularly for spotting less obvious stakeholders. It's particularly important to engage the high power and low interest quadrant, as these are the stakeholders who are not that invested in your project, but have the power to stop or interfere with it.



It can be helpful to physically map out your stakeholders, especially as this can spark useful conversations and lines of questioning: what is needed to engage their interest? How will this be built into your objectives and conversations? Avoid spending too much time on just mapping stakeholders without taking action; stakeholder mapping is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

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IDENTIFYING 'HIDDEN INFLUENCERS'

It's important to identify and reach out to employees who have the ability to shape opinions, even if they are not necessarily in positions of formal power. Organisational network analysis software tools can help to map these webs and nodes of influence.

One participant shared their experience of introducing a shared services business into their people function. After conducting their original stakeholder mapping, they are now having conversations with business partners to identify the influential line managers that they need to bring on board to influence change and support the project.

STAKEHOLDER BUY IN AND ENGAGEMENT

IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDER NEEDS

It is important to meaningfully engage stakeholders, rather than only speaking to them at the end of a project to 'tick a box.' To achieve buy in, you will need to find out what products and services your stakeholders need, though they may not always know this themselves! The Five Question Model can help you to think strategically about the needs of future stakeholders:

1. What is our business plan?
2. What is our commercial reality? (How will we create value? Who are our competitors? How will we win in the market?)
3. What are the capabilities we will need to implement our strategy?
4. What are the capability gaps? What is the gap between what we currently have and where we need to be in the future?
5. What does HR need to do?

A sales approach, such as the SPIN selling model, is another way to identify stakeholder need:

S ituation: what's the current situation?

P roblem: what's the actual problem?

I mplications: what would happen if we don't act?

N eed / payoff: if we get this right, what's the payoff?

ACHIEVING BUY IN

The following steps can help to achieve stakeholder buy in:

- Think about the end user's perspective and about how your project will help them. Don't assume that anything you are trying to 'sell' to stakeholders is necessarily of interest to them.
- Adopt a conversational and listening-based approach, and revisit this continuously.
- Constantly check in and don't assume that what you say has been interpreted as you intended. Misunderstandings are common, especially when working across different cultures or online.
- Helping people to feel involved creates buy in. When managing a large number of stakeholders, remember that you can't keep everyone happy and on board all the time – you will need to prioritise against business outcomes. Consider how to segment your stakeholders according to different interests, expectations and responsibilities, and engage with your communications team. Also consider creating a working group with representatives from different stakeholder groups, so people feel that their voice is heard through a representative.
- Bring your project to life through telling a story. The below ORACLE model is one way of doing this.

  O utcome: what do you want your stakeholders to be doing, thinking, or feeling differently as a result of the story?

  R esearch: understand your audience, and understand what your *different* audiences might want.

  A spiration: how do you create a 'call to arms,' connecting with people's hearts and emotions?

  C ede control: manage the message, rather than control it. It may sometimes be better for a story to be told by someone else, if they have more credibility in the area.

  L everage: leverage data, stories or other people.

  E valuate: continuously check in and evaluate whether your story is having the impact you expect, and adjust if needed.

FURTHER READING

CRF. 2014. ***Storytelling – Getting the Message Across.*** Research Report. https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/storytelling-getting-the-message-across-2

SAVE THE DATE

The next ODC&C Community event will take place on Wednesday 29 November, with the topic to be confirmed. Register your place here.

If you have any further questions or comments, please contact Senior Projects and Events Executive, Will Pemberton, will@crforum.co.uk.

These community event summary notes were prepared by Jo Nayler, Senior Research Executive at CRF.