

# Who Cares About Your Project Anyway?

## Part 2: Communication Planning for Your Project – Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

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Who cares about your project? Probably more people than you and your project team realize. By identifying your stakeholders and analyzing their needs and impact on your project, you will increase the likelihood of their support for your efforts.

This article is **Part Two** of a four-part series on planning your project communications.

### Improve Your Project's Chances for Success

A stakeholder analysis is a technique used to identify and assess the importance of key people or groups of people that may significantly influence the success of your activity or project. You can use this technique alone or with your team members.

A stakeholder analysis will help improve the results of your project. The Following are a few examples of how:

- ◆ The opinions of the most powerful stakeholders help shape your projects at an early stage. Not only does this make it more likely they will support you, but their input can also improve the quality of your project.

- ◆ Gaining support from powerful stakeholders can help you to win more resources.
- ◆ By communicating with stakeholders early and frequently, you can ensure they fully understand what you are doing and understand the benefits of your project. This means they can support you actively when necessary.
- ◆ You can anticipate what people's reactions to your project may be and build into your plan actions that will win their support.
- ◆ You can anticipate the kind of influence, positive or negative, these groups will have on your initiative.
- ◆ You can develop strategies to get the most effective support possible for your initiative and reduce any obstacles to successful implementation of your project.



## Identifying & Analyzing Stakeholders

A stakeholder is anyone (individual or organization) with a "stake" in the outcome of a project and/or is affected by the project results. This could include a few people or many—depending on the scope of your project. Stakeholders may be positively or negatively affected by the execution or completion of the project. They may also exert influence over the project and its deliverables.<sup>1</sup>

You and your project team can walk through five steps to identify and analyze your project stakeholders. Following is an overview of the process.

### Step 1: Identify Stakeholders



Individually or in an organized group brainstorming session, identify all the stakeholders using the critical questions:

- ◆ Who has a vested interest in the project in terms of process or outcome?
- ◆ Who has information or expertise to contribute?
- ◆ Who has functional responsibility for the project or its outcome?
- ◆ Who must be involved in project decisions and approvals?
- ◆ Who has the authority to approve project expenditures and purchases?

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<sup>1</sup> *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (PMBOK® Guide) Third Edition, 2004 Project Management Institute (PMI®).

- ◆ Who would benefit from participation or observations?
- ◆ Who must be involved from an organizational or political perspective?

### Step 2: Determine Sensitivities & Needs

Once you have a list of all potential stakeholders, review the list and identify the specific interests these stakeholders have in your project. Ask questions such as:

- ◆ What are the sensitivities or "hot buttons" for each of the stakeholders or stakeholder groups?
- ◆ What are their specific concerns or needs resulting from the project or its deliverables?

The following items are examples of sensitivities and needs of specific stakeholders.

- ◆ Project success.
- ◆ On time, on budget, and expected deliverable results.
- ◆ Don't want surprises.
- ◆ Want to have early warnings.
- ◆ Want to know impact of, risks, and implications of the project.

### Step 3: Identify Expected Results

For each stakeholder or stakeholder group, brainstorm what your project needs from them and the expected results from your communications with this stakeholder.

Following are some examples of needs and expected results:

- ◆ Continued support of the project.
- ◆ Problem solving when necessary.
- ◆ Effective communications throughout the university.
- ◆ Understanding of the impact of the project to help them make accurate decisions about their business processes.

#### Step 4: Assess Stakeholder Impact

Now review each stakeholder listed in column one. Ask the question: how important are the stakeholder's interests to the success of the proposed project?

Consider the role they must play for the project to be successful, and the likelihood that the stakeholder(s) will play this role. Also consider the likelihood and impact of a stakeholder's negative response to the project.

Assign A for extremely important, B for fairly important, and C for not very important.

#### Step 5: Assess Possible Strategies

The final step is to consider the kinds of things that you could do to gain stakeholder support and reduce opposition. Consider how you might approach each of the stakeholders.

- ◆ What kind of information will they need?
- ◆ How important is it to involve the stakeholder in the planning process?
- ◆ Are there other groups or individuals that might influence the stakeholder to support your initiative?

#### Other Questions to Consider

Following are some additional questions you might consider when analyzing your project's stakeholders.

- ◆ What is their current opinion of the project?  
Is it based on good information?
- ◆ Who influences their opinions generally, and who influences their opinion of the project?  
Do some of these influencers therefore become important stakeholders in their own right?
- ◆ If you don't think you will be able to win them around, how will you manage their opposition?

#### Summary

According to PMI® and the PMBOK®, actively managing stakeholders increases the likelihood that your project will not veer off track due to unresolved stakeholder issues. A strong analysis of stakeholders also enhances the ability of getting stakeholders to operate synergistically to limit disruptions during the project.<sup>2</sup>

In Part 3, we will provide you with proven communications vehicles and opportunities to match your stakeholders' needs.

**If you found this article helpful and would like to read more, please go to our website at [www.collegiateproject.com](http://www.collegiateproject.com) and browse our ERP Library.**

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<sup>2</sup> *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) Third Edition, 2004* Project Management Institute (PMI®).