

## 4.4: Managing and Monitoring Stakeholder Engagement

After we identify the stakeholders, analyze their positions in terms of interests, power, influence, involvement, interdependencies, and potential impact on the project success, and accordingly develop strategies to involve them in the project to make them supportive of the project (and at least not opposing the project), we can manage and monitor their engagement<sup>[1]</sup>. This engagement should be detailed in a stakeholder engagement plan which is a component of the project management plan that identifies the strategies and actions required to promote the productive involvement of stakeholders in decision making and execution<sup>[2]</sup>. The stakeholder power/interest grid, stakeholder register, and other data gathering and analysis techniques are included in this plan created to guide the project team throughout the project to identify the strategies and approaches for engaging stakeholders.

During the execution of project activities, the project manager allocates most of the workforce and resources required for activities and spends a substantial amount of the budget. Based on the stakeholder engagement plan and its components, project managers should communicate and work with stakeholders to meet their needs and expectations, address issues, and foster appropriate stakeholder involvement<sup>[3]</sup>. This plan helps us while eliciting stakeholders' requirements, expectations, and concerns, having meetings, interviews, and workshops with them, sending them periodic newsletters to keep them updated about the progress of our project, carrying out the activities to create deliverables that can satisfy their needs, and closing out the project after the approval of the client.

Identification of stakeholders brings about another key aspect of stakeholder management – communication with them. The communication protocol must be incorporated into the stakeholder engagement plan. Communication methods can be adapted to suit the unique nature of the project. This adaptation will also strongly affect project success. Key questions the project team needs to address are:

- Which stakeholders will make the decision in the organization on a specific issue, and which of them should be involved in this process? In particular, to whom we should consult about an issue, and inform?
- What type of communication types and methods should we utilize? Do the stakeholders want lengthy documents? Formal or informal communication? Is “short and sweet” the typical standard?
- What medium of communication is preferred? What kind of medium is usually chosen for various situations? Check the lessons learned repositories to see what past projects have done.

Although project managers keep each stakeholder's expectations and needs in mind throughout each conversation, report or email, we should always remember that the interests of both our company and the client are more important than any stakeholder's interests. However, preferring our company's or client's interests over other stakeholders' may lead to failure during the implementation or after the deliverables of the project are made available for the clients and customers in the market. Market demand is a critical determinant of the success of our project outcome.

No matter what stakeholders' needs or wants are, all of them will respect the project manager who:

- always provides justification of the actions and results, even when telling them something they don't want to hear,
- Takes ownership of the project,
- Is predictable and reliable,
- Stands by his or her decisions, and
- Takes accountability for mistakes.

Achieving a project's objectives takes a focused, well-organized project manager who can engage with a committed team and gain the support of all stakeholders. Building strong, trusting relationships with interested parties from the start can make the difference between project success and failure. Managing stakeholder engagement helps to ensure that stakeholders clearly understand the project goals, objectives, benefits, and risks for the project, as well as how their contribution will enhance project success<sup>[4]</sup>.

The project manager's interpersonal skills are needed especially while communicating with the stakeholders (see Chapter 6 for more discussion of interpersonal and leadership skills). Project managers must rely on their soft skills to be effective. Effective project management spends a significant amount of time building relationships with stakeholders. It is of high importance for a project manager to obtain, confirm, and maintain stakeholders' commitment to the success of the project. Project managers manage their expectations through negotiation and communication. Building trust and maintaining an open line of communication are critical in working with all stakeholders. Keeping stakeholders involved is essential and it requires more than simply sharing information. The project manager must ask for their input and demonstrate an understanding of a stakeholder's unique business challenges. This level of understanding is often done through simple and regular check-ins with stakeholders. Project managers

who are successful in relationship building understand each stakeholder's capacity to participate and honor their time constraints. Then, addressing risks or potential concerns and anticipating future issues that may be raised by stakeholders would be less challenging for a project manager equipped with effective interpersonal skills. Finally, project managers can clarify and resolve issues that have been identified.

Besides managing stakeholder engagement, project managers should assure that they and their teams monitor stakeholder relationships, and modify engagement strategies and plans during the project when needed. As is the case for all knowledge areas, project managers have a critical responsibility to track, review and regulate the progress and performance of the project, and accordingly to identify areas where modifications are required in the plan, and to perform corrective and preventive actions if needed. Stakeholders' interests and power levels may change during the project. This leads to a change in strategies to engage them. Moreover, a stakeholder's support of the project objectives and outcomes may change in an opposite direction. It may move from supportive to resistant due to various factors. Supporting stakeholders may find new information that isn't in favor of their interests, and even may give harm. In our rental vehicle booking case, assume that one of the insurance companies that we work with is not included in the new system as an insurance provider. This company's representatives thought that their company's partnership with BRCW would continue. However, they were informed that their company's offer will be listed as an alternative to another insurance company's offer. Therefore, their attitudes may change to oppose the project when they are informed about it.

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1. Project Management Institute. (2017). A guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide) (6th ed.). Project Management Institute. [↩](#)
  2. Project Management Institute. (2017). A guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide) (6th ed.). Project Management Institute. [↩](#)
  3. Project Management Institute. (2017). A guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide) (6th ed.). Project Management Institute. [↩](#)
  4. Project Management Institute. (2017). A guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide) (6th ed.). Project Management Institute. [↩](#)
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