

Fact Sheet – Managing stakeholders

Introduction

We have already seen how important people are to a change project, in fact, almost 100% of the reason that projects fail can be traced back to people in some shape or form. The most important person in your change landscape is your stakeholder.

Identifying stakeholders

Your first mission as a project leader in this regard is to find out who is your stakeholders. Stakeholders can be senior to you where you might require authority or sign off, they might be peers that need to understand more of the change, and they are also the people affected by the change, specifically those affected directly.

Start with your project group and discuss who you think are stakeholders and list them out. As with all brainstorming activity it is worth just going for quantity not quality and build the biggest list you can regardless of their perceived importance.

Another method of finding out stakeholders is from the roadshows that you will be doing as part of your communications plan. If people are engaged and even emotional over the change then add them to the list of stakeholders. Just because somebody is a low rank in the organisation doesn't mean their influence is small.

The key reason for identifying your stakeholders is so that you can manage them, keep them onside, build their trust so that ultimately they are change positive not change negative.

Once you have your list you have to start grading them and a number of options exist for this. For those engineers reading this, this grading is never an exact science it is an estimation intended to give you a management strategy.

Mapping stakeholders

With your list of stakeholders start grading them. The simplest technique I have found is this chart:

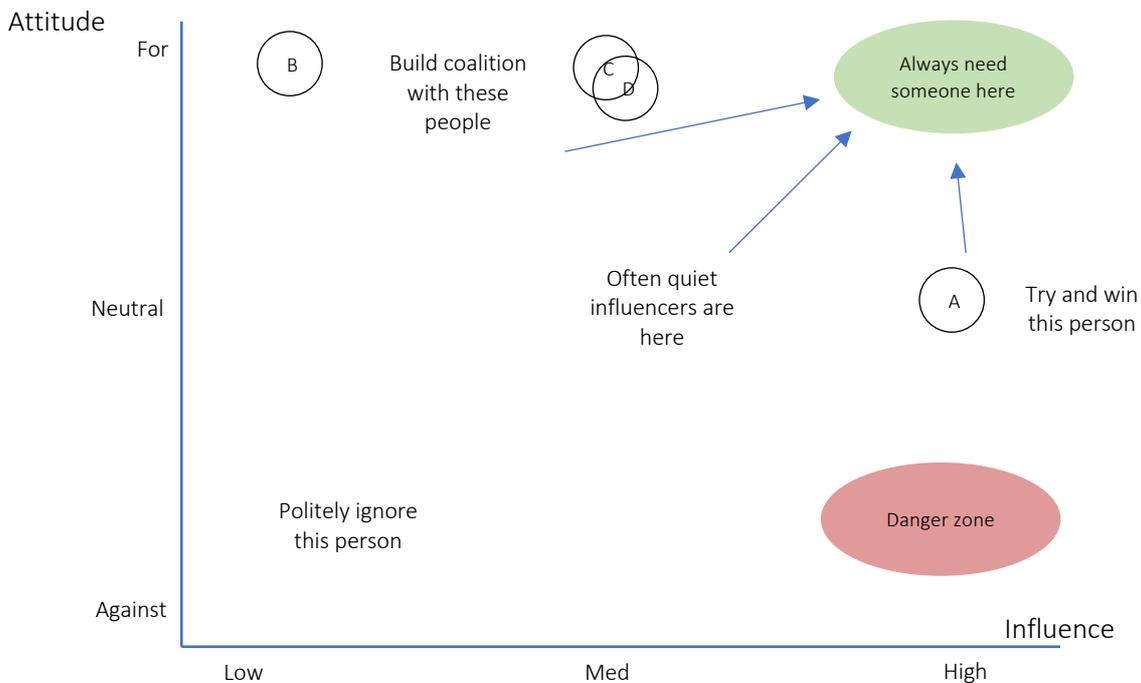
Who are the key people involved in this?	How influential is this person? (High/Medium/Low)	Decision maker?	Their attitude toward the change project (For/neutral/against)	What does this person want to happen? (Hot buttons)
Person A	High	Yes	Neutral	They want to...
Person B	Low	No	For	All we do is fantastic!
Person C	Med	Yes	For	Cautious, productivity
Person D	Med	No	For	Unsure

Another approach that can add some value is to apply the RACI model to the stakeholders. RACI is actually an accountability model, standing for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed. If you annotate each of your stakeholders regarding the change project in the RACI model it sometimes helps flesh out the influence.

Fact Sheet – Managing stakeholders

Once you have this data it is worth building a map of the stakeholders. Now be cautious you must be extremely careful where you show this map, people, especially senior people do not like seeing themselves on a map.

Using the table above our map might look like:



Managing stakeholders

Your time as a project manager will be tight, it always is because nine times out of ten you have your day job to do as well. Spending time with the right people is the most important thing to understand.

Your sponsor, the person who is high influence and highly supportive is critical to success. Without a person in this section it is likely you will struggle to embed the change unless it is a transactional, process amendment type change. Spend time with your sponsor make sure that you understand their success criteria so that you can build the change projects to match. Help them be brilliant.

Person A above is the best we have to find the top right person. Spend time with this person understand their hot buttons, their drivers and personal success criteria. Map the projects towards this and try and build a bridge that allows this person to see their success through the project. This will build a key ally.

The person bottom left can be a noise maker and will drain the life force from you, so politely ignore them. Just before you do though, double check they are not one of those quiet highly influential people. Low rank but all the shop floor listen to them.

Keep reviewing this map as people move and change. Wicket roll ideas with key stakeholders, share project news and milestones, build their interest and help them to keep see how they can succeed through its delivery.