

# ***Ensure Project Success With Better Stakeholder Engagement***

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A critical success factor for large scale projects and change management initiatives is good stakeholder engagement. A solid working definition for a "stakeholder" is any person or organization that has a multitude of interests, expectations, and demands that influence outcomes. There are many different tools that have been developed to map stakeholders. Whether using a simple table or a more complex data capture tool with the ability to graphically display stakeholders, it is important to answer questions such as:

- Who can influence the success or the outcome of a project or change initiative?
- Who will be impacted (directly or indirectly) by the project or change initiative?
- Who will be accountable for the business success or failure associated with the project?
- Who has access to resources that can impact the project?
- Who can help with communications that will drive adoption of the project goals?
- What actions are needed to involve stakeholders and gain their commitment to the project?

The following are steps that can help with your stakeholder mapping.

**Step 1:** Brainstorm all potential stakeholders connected with the project or impacted by the change.

- Think broadly about who will be impacted (directly or indirectly) by the project or change.
- Think internally and externally to the organization.

**Step 2:** Organize the stakeholders by type. The following categories can help with prioritizing stakeholders and determining the optimal engagement approach:

- Decision stakeholders: Often senior managers or governance bodies; they can approve the project, have the power to approve budgets, and free up resources. "What will it take to obtain a positive endorsement and what information will they need to make decisions?"
- Working stakeholders: Usually represent decision stakeholders or stakeholder groups and often work with you on the project team. Their interests may be slightly different from the stakeholders they represent, particularly with regard to their personal time and effort working on the project. Their concerns may include questions such as: "How can we finish this project on time and be successful with implementation?"
- End Users: The people who will implement or use the change you are seeking. For this group, it will be important to answer the following question, "Will this really work in my day to day reality?"
- Indirect stakeholders: They cannot directly approve your work but can often slow it down or derail it. They often control policies and systems in organizations. Examples include Human Resources, Legal, Safety, or Regulatory. Many of their questions relate to mitigating potential risks, consistency with existing practices, or other organizational implications.



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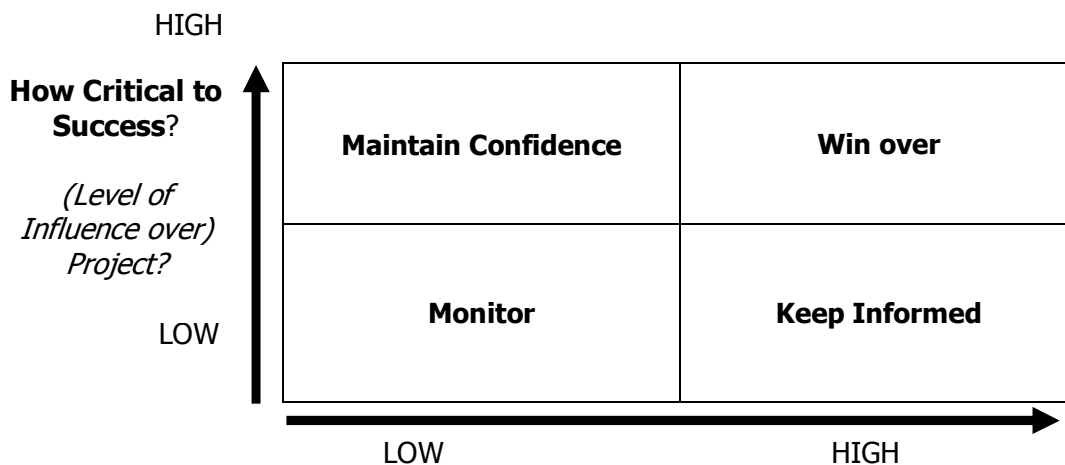
**Step 3: Identify the key issues associated with each stakeholder or stakeholder group.**

Determine what is important to each and why.

**Step 4: Determine the degree of influence** the stakeholder has over the success of your work or the change being implemented. (High, Medium, Low)

**Step 5: Assess the current level of commitment to the project / change.** Note that the level of commitment is based on past experiences or perceptions working with stakeholders.

**Step 6: Use a 2 x 2 matrix to prioritize stakeholders.**



**How much impacted by change and/or how supportive of the change?**  
*(Level of Project Support and/or Level of Project Impact to Stakeholder?)*

**Step 7: Develop action plans based on stakeholders.**

- Use effective project planning to identify timelines, key milestones, and responsibilities.
- Include specific communications required.

The goal for stakeholder management is to target specific messages and actions needed to help gain commitment for the project or change effort by various stakeholders. The old rule, “communicate early and often” must also be incorporated into the stakeholder management efforts. For some stakeholders, it is enough to simply keep them aware. For others it is important to seek their full adoption and ownership. Using a consistent and organized stakeholder management process provides an opportunity to build the desired commitment for the change. Going forward, incorporating a stakeholder engagement and management process helps ensure the project’s success.

For more information on how WLH Consulting, Inc. can work with your company on stakeholder engagement and large-scale change management, please email [Wendy@wlhconsulting.com](mailto:Wendy@wlhconsulting.com), or feel free to call (954) 385-0770.



