Practical Advice for Stakeholder Engagement

1. About
This informal, “just in time” guide is for managers and leaders at any level who find themselves looking for assistance in navigating a stakeholder environment. It is by no means the “end all, be all” to stakeholder engagement planning, but taps into a variety of sources to provide a good start. If you want something more formal and detailed, we recommend you try out two Defense Acquisition University (DAU) offerings:

- ACQ 452, an in-residence class Stakeholder Management
- CLM 402, a new online module for Stakeholder Management.

We also suggest you consider the following book: Boundary Spanning Leadership by Chris Ernst and Donna Chrobot-Mason (McGraw Hill: New York, 2011). We use terminology from this work because it is a useful framework for the purposes of this site. The way we use it will be roughly consistent with how the authors approach it, but for a more extensive treatment of the topic you really need to read the book.

Knowing stakeholders is all about knowing perspectives. This video shows what DAU instructor Pat Barker has to say about that.

Stakeholder Stuff: Program Situational Awareness

Meanwhile, take a look at what we have here. On these pages you will find advice (written and in video), considerations and tools to include downloadable worksheets and other items. Many, but not all, of these elements are derived from DAU seminars on stakeholder management. We designed this to help you and your team think about your stakeholder environment and derive a strategy for navigating across boundaries to achieve the acquisition outcomes you seek.

Is it really worth it to take the time to learn all this stakeholder analysis and engagement stuff? We think it is worth it! Watch the short video below to see what DSMC instructors Pat Barker and Dave Miskimens, both DAU executive coaches, have to say about this.

Stakeholder Stuff Applied: Do these tools work?

We encourage you to try this site out, click away, read and listen. Provide feedback to us so we can continually improve the material to meet your needs.

Feedback

2. Before you Begin

Closed Captioning
The close captioning software we currently use is not 100% accurate. Not even close at times. It takes a while to edit the script and align it with the actual video. We are working on it. Some of you might prefer to turn off close captioning. If not you will be entertained at times 😊.

Browser Compatibility
This site should work with any browser, to include those on smart phones. If you have any problems, let us know!

Videos and Downloads
We provide numerous videos and downloadable forms and worksheets. Almost all the videos are under 3 minutes in length, many 2 minutes or less. Formal videos are the exception rather than the rule. We create them intentionally as informal discussions, much like stepping into our offices and having a conversation. The smart phone is our camera of choice.
Feedback
The only way this evolves is through your feedback! Please provide feedback on how this works for you!

- Is the guide clearly explained?
- Is it usable?
- Do the videos enhance the learning/application experience?
- What can we do even better?

No suggestion is too small. If you see it, write us about it! Email Pat Barker at patrick.barker@dau.mil for all comments - good, bad and ugly.

3. Site Map and “Checklist”
You could quickly review this site and its featured tools, including most of the videos, in well under an hour. However, actual stakeholder engagement planning will – and should - take longer. We encourage you to take the time using the featured tools to examine your stakeholders.

We hear some of you: “All that is nice but could you just give us the guaranteed-to-work simple checklist to get to a plan?”

No we won’t because there is no such thing. Stakeholder engagement is about shaping perceptions and behaviors. That is hardly an exact science.

But we can provide a simple list of things you might consider doing. Below is an overview of what this site has to offer in “more or less a recommended order of ways to look at it” if you were putting together a stakeholder engagement plan for the first time. We encourage you to contact us if you have more ideas!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Why You Care</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder 101</strong></td>
<td>Provides a broad overview of stakeholders within the context of boundary spanning leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buffering:</strong></td>
<td>Figure out who you are and what you are all about before you start assessing others. Then go identify and sort your stakeholders. Includes topics such as bumper stickers, charters, the proximity tool and team assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting:**</td>
<td>Learn who your stakeholders are, what they want and how they view the world. Includes tools such as the ladder of inference, the power grid and interests-expectations-requirements-avenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting:**</td>
<td>Figure out how you want to have stakeholder conversations to move from “I” and “Them” to “We” and “us.” Includes topics such as buy-in and join-in as well as the stakeholder pre-mortem tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategizing:**</td>
<td>Includes tools such as the involvement diagram, a basic engagement strategy template, and a “crowd-sourced” strategy template derived by senior program managers.</td>
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4. Stakeholder Engagement 101

Food for Thought: White Space and Boundaries

We have all heard the term: “fences make good neighbors.” Much rings true about this statement, yet it is worth the time and effort to understand the fences we build (or built for us).

Consider a typical organizational chart, and reflect upon the passage below:

“Strategic opportunities exist in possible new patterns in the organization and ecosystem. As such, strategic leadership happens in the white space on organization charts: between functions and groups, between levels of leadership, and between the organization and external entities. Strategic leaders must encourage people to span boundaries and create direction, alignment, and commitment in service to strategic change.”


Leaders live and breathe in this white space. Thus the role of the leader is to activate this “white space” and grow “white space” collaboration skills everywhere, with everyone. And do it all by leading across, or spanning, boundaries.

This might sound too academic for some, and still others might not consider themselves to be leaders, let alone “strategic” ones. It doesn’t matter. Once you step into the world of stakeholder engagement you will find yourself challenged by boundaries of all sorts.

If you think it will be difficult to work boundaries, you are not alone. A recent study by the Center for Creative Leadership polled executive leaders from the world best companies and found that while the majority of them considered working across boundaries to be absolutely critical, few felt they had demonstrated adequate skills in making it happen.

This boundary stuff is hard. And by extension, stakeholder engagement is hard.

Boundaries are created through identity. Us versus them. We all identify with something, depending on circumstances. Red Sox fans. Cubs fans. Culture. Nationality. Profession. Family. Identify is rather powerful because it sits in the middle of two competing needs that are core to our existence. We each have a need to be unique, to somehow differentiate us from others. Yet we also have a need to belong to something greater than ourselves. It can be argued that the hardest part in this boundary spanning business is the fact one must come to grips with not only how people define themselves, but how we define those around us.

According to Ernst and Chrobot-Mason in Boundary Spanning Leadership there are five types of boundaries:

- **Vertical boundaries:** These are the boundaries of hierarchy. Rank. Authority. The kinds of boundaries that flow up (and down) an organizational chart.
- **Horizontal boundaries:** These are boundaries of function or specialty. In program offices these might be engineering, cost estimating, contracting and other functions. Most people, when thinking of boundaries, will think in “horizontal” terms.
- **Demographic boundaries:** These are boundaries of human diversity: age, gender, race, personality, education, to name but a few.
- **Geographic boundaries:** These are boundaries of distance, location, region. Virtual teams are all about geographic boundaries.
- **Stakeholder boundaries:** These are boundaries of customers, partners, networks external to your team, and the focus of this guide.

If you want more details on the broader subject of boundary spanning practices and wish to develop your knowledge, then we suggest you read the book and/or watch the following YouTube video.
To be sure, all boundaries are in play at all times within the context of stakeholder engagement. Let’s look closer at what stakeholders are all about.

**Knowing your Stakeholders**

Within the broader context of boundary spanning leadership, one of the boundaries has to do with stakeholders. Stakeholders consist of any external group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of your project’s or organization’s objectives. They may include:

- **Leadership (Who is paying the bills?)**
  - The entity(ies) ultimately accountable for the success of the organization
  - The functional or technical areas involved
  - Other services or headquarters
- **Ultimate customer or user of the service**
- **Project leadership and acquisition team**
- **Suppliers and sub-contractors**

Admiral William Hilarides, who spent 5 years as Portfolio Executive Officer (PEO) for PEO Submarines in Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) provides some interesting perspectives to stakeholder engagement in the video below:

[Admiral William Hilarides: Stakeholders in PEO Submarines](#)

Sometimes, but not always, the key stakeholders are the ones sitting around your table! Below, Professor John Mueller reflects upon who sat around his table when he was an ACAT-1 program manager

[Stakeholder Stuff: People Around the Table](#)

While it is important to recognize which stakeholders are critically important to your project - such as the client, the owner, the suppliers, the regulators, the customers or the funder - it is often the stakeholder you did not consider, that can cause your project to stumble, but collapse.

Many project failures involve, and are often traced to:

- A problematic stakeholder relationship.
- The owner or contractor optimistically underestimated the cost or the risks to get the project started.
- The new system was technologically superior but no one could or wanted to use it.
- The project trampled all over the interests of one tiny, but politically connected or savvy person.
- The project was so devoid of human involvement, there was no one looking when the wheels fell off.

Not every stakeholder story is about failure. In the video below, DSMC instructor Joe Chang describes his experience as a major program manager.

[Stakeholder Stuff: U2 Success Story](#)

**Stakeholder engagement success: It’s up to you**

Every stakeholder with whom you engage on your project, even those who oppose your project, have something useful to contribute, even peripherally. Your job as a leader is not to marginalize your opponents, but to work out a way to invite them into the effort, so they too can share in the benefits of what you will achieve together.
In short, your stakeholders can influence the success or failure of your project/program. You can help ensure the success of your project by identifying your stakeholders, understanding the roles they play, and then deriving a way on how combine talents for success.

**Try These Approaches!**
We offer a variety of tools or approaches we have used over the years that happen to fit within the context of the practices. They reflect a mix of sources ranging from DAU to some great books and even our classroom experiences with senior program managers, and fit roughly into these four (4) categories:

- Buffering
- Reflecting
- Connecting
- Strategizing

### 5. Buffering
Buffering is about defining yourself, creating the identity of your own team. It creates a psychological safe space, placing controls of the flow of information and resources across boundaries. That is all well and good and important; just remember that some organizations do not get far past this stage and as a result create “stovepipes.” On the other end of the spectrum, some organizations fail to buffer at all and as a result lose a sense of purpose and mission.

**Bumper Stickers**

One powerful, yet relatively easy way to establish buffering is to create an aligning narrative, or bumper sticker, that tells the world what you are about. The notion of a “bumper sticker” might sound silly, but the act of condensing a message is actually reflective of powerful thinking. From the perspective of your stakeholders, what short (and snazzy) phrase would describe your organization’s mission or project success?

**Team Charters: They Work!**
Another way to help buffer is to establish a charter. A charter is the “director’s cut” version of the bumper sticker. Charters not only define who you are and what you are about, but they can also set the stage for specific roles, responsibilities and expected behaviors. Formal charters are the hallmarks of great teams in the defense acquisition environment.

Take a look at what the tried-and-true DoD Integrated Product and Process Development Handbook (from 1998 and still chugging along!) has to say about team charters:

*The best way to minimize team misunderstandings is to document the team dynamics in a team charter for each IPT. An IPT charter should include the following items:*

- The mission and objectives of the team (including top-level schedule if applicable)
- The metrics by which the team’s progress will be evaluated
- The scope of the team’s responsibilities
- The relationship of the team with other teams (reporting structure, interfaces)
- The authority and accountability of the team (empowerment)
- The resources available for the team
- A team membership list (by function/organization)
All affected stakeholders and their management should help develop the charter, and the Program Manager/Director approves it. This participation, or buy-in to establish the IPT and document the roles and responsibilities of the IPT, helps cultivate a cooperative and collaborative working environment and eliminates or at least mitigates many of the problems that could be encountered when operating in an IPPD environment. Examples of such problems are as follows:

- Lack of direction or vision that causes an IPT to constantly try to define its objectives
- Power struggles between the IPTs and management or organizations outside the IPT
- Infighting among IPTs because of ill-defined roles and responsibilities

The team goals should be written to minimize conflicts resulting from misunderstandings or hidden agendas. Conflicts of interest and goals among the team members should be resolved early in the development of team charters. Examples of conflicts include the natural conflicts between customers and contractors or among multiple contractors with conflicting business interests. Once established, IPT charters need to be frequently reviewed as an acquisition to ensure that they remain in line with changing program goals.

Exploring Team Dynamics

In our business we have to work with other people. Play nicely in the sandbox. It certainly helps to understand that sandbox and how other people play in it. The name of the game is superior acquisition outcomes and, to borrow a past phrase, it takes a village to make that happen. DoD Acquisition Programs operate in Integrated Product Teams, or IPTs.

According to the Defense Acquisition Guidebook (DAG): “Within the PMO under the PM leadership the IPPD integrates all acquisition activities starting with requirements definition through production, fielding/deployment, and operational support in order to optimize the design, manufacturing, business, and supportability processes. One of the key IPPD tenets is multidisciplinary teamwork through Integrated Product Teams (IPTs).” These words are located in the DAG chapter 1 Section 3.3.5.1. Click HERE to get to Chapter 1 and scroll down to this section.

Want to learn even more about IPPD and IPTs? Go to the original source! The DoD has a guide for all that; it has been around a long time!

Download the Guide here!

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) also has things to say about IPTs.

Download their report here

IPTs are the critical linchpin connecting YOU to your program’s success. Here are some things to consider:

Forming your IPTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic IPPD Step</th>
<th>What it Means</th>
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</table>
### Identify activities and stakeholders
Activities stem from the WBS and include the specific tasks that must be performed in order to deliver the product to customer. Stakeholders can come from a variety of sources and warrant robust effort to determine who they are.

### Determine range of contractor involvement
Every member of the program team (government and industry) needs to work from the same information and toward the same overall program goals. The degree to which this open communication can occur depends on several factors like the competitive nature of a particular program and it must be within the statutory boundaries of acquisition laws. As long as these criteria are met, the amount of integration across the government/industry boundary is unlimited.

### Define the program/team structure
IPTs are usually formed around the key products and processes associated with the program. If the program has created a WBS, it is a useful tool for identifying how the IPTs should be structured. It makes sense to concentrate control and responsibility at the most important levels of the WBS, particularly around high-risk tasks or those tasks on the critical path. One can look to the WBS levels in forming the IPTs, making sure, however, that all life-cycle concerns are addressed in the IPTs.

### Define team goals, responsibilities and relationships
Goals must align with program goals. Other key considerations include reporting structure, working relationship with other IPTs, level of empowerment and relationship between government and contractor personnel.

### Train participants in IPPD principles
Participants must have a clear understanding of the DoD philosophy of IPPD, the tools available for its implementation, and the skills, such as team building, required for its success. Different levels of management need different types of training, focused on their part of the approach, e.g., top-level management needs to be trained on methods of empowerment.

### Determine co-location and integration requirements
Co-location is the ideal case and should be sought. However, in practice, most programs have found that integrating all stakeholders into a cohesive unit is neither simple nor inexpensive. An adequate budget must be available from the start of the program for personnel relocation or for investment in communication assets if collocation is determined to be impracticable.

### Provide for communication
In an IPPD environment, all stakeholders need to have access to the most current information on the program. Therefore, planning related to information management, communication networks, and methods of formal communications should take place at the beginning of all acquisition/development programs.

### Define program/team metrics
When properly defined and used, metrics can permit timely assessments predictive of ongoing processes and the monitoring of resource consumption. Metrics should be easily measured, exportable, simple to use, support the program processes, and be cost effective.

### Record processes, activities and decisions
Recording IPPD-related processes, activities, and decisions is essential for program stability and communication integrity. It provides a historical record of activities and decisions; Documents tradeoff studies, cause-and-effect analyses, and similar activities; Promotes team-oriented information and communication; Facilitates evaluation of metrics and lessons learned.

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How is your team doing? How might you want to assess yourself. Here are some salient features of teams based on a review of a variety of team-based guidance documents ranging from DoD to INCOSE to Agile.
Checking your IPTs Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Things in IPTs</th>
<th>What it Means</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chartering with Goal alignment</td>
<td>Getting teams off to a good start is critical. Key activities include charter preparation, conducting IPT training, and preparing a Plan of Action and Milestones (POA&amp;M). Since team composition is often matrixed, the team should ensure the goals and objectives of team members are consistent with project goals and objectives. The team must also accept that new goals can emerge, old goals might become irrelevant, new team organizations might be required and adapt to those changed conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Discussion with No Secrets</td>
<td>Be willing to be vulnerable. Each member brings to the team unique expertise that needs to be recognized by all. Because of that expertise, each person's views are important in developing a successful program, and these views need to be heard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowered Team Members</td>
<td>All representatives assigned to IPTs at all levels must be empowered by their leadership. They must be able to speak for their superiors, the &quot;principals,&quot; in the decision-making process. Team members must also be willing to &quot;call out&quot; other team members on behaviors and hold all members accountable for actions and tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified Team Members</td>
<td>Qualified members must be professionals who are current in their functional area. They also must be knowledgeable in the mission and organization they are representing. Required training for any aspect of expertise in functional or process areas critical to team success must be provided in timely fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient Participation</td>
<td>Accept the fact that consensus is not always the best solution. IPTs should be organized to allow all stakeholders to participate yet be rightsized to the issue. Membership should be limited to the minimum essential to enhance communication and trust. Be willing to support the notion that collective team needs will sometimes trump organizational needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Raised and Resolved Early</td>
<td>The IPT should try to resolve issues within the team, seeking additional functional expertise or higher leadership intervention only when necessary. In the spirit of teaming and cooperation, issues should not be worked &quot;off-line&quot; beyond the purview of the IPT.</td>
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But there’s more!

In the simplest sense, the difference between a “team” and a “group” is that teams are characterized by accountability and groups are not. With that in mind, here are even more tools and charts that you might want to look at to help explore the dynamics of how teams operate.

Pick any one of these based on what you want to accomplish.

**DIMENSIONS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS**

Edgar Schein, one of the most eminent researchers in the field of organizational psychology, offers a model of how groups can work together better to become successful teams. The model is known as the “Dimensions of Effective Groups.” We prefer to replace “groups” with “teams” (see above), but the model applies in either capacity. The dimensions, and the way they are positively expressed, include:
- **Goals**: Team goals are clear and shared by all. People feel involved through their contributions to defining our desired outcomes.
- **Participation**: Everyone is enthusiastically involved in team activities. Team member ideas and contributions are honored. People feel heard and included.
- **Feelings**: People are able to express feelings freely and openly. We listen empathically and respond from a creative orientation.
- **Diagnosis of team issues**: When problems arise, careful diagnoses is made before action is proposed. All aspects of an issue are canvassed and the best working solution is devised based on desired outcomes.
- **Conflict**: We approach conflict creatively as an opportunity to learn about ourselves and our team.
- **Decisions**: Consensus is sought and tested. Diverse ideas are welcome and judged on their merit.
- **Leadership**: As need arises, different members of our team step up. We lead from our strengths and support others in doing the same.
- **Trust**: We trust ourselves and each other. We hold a posture of trust toward our colleagues and also support each other in being trustworthy in our thinking and action.
- **Creativity and growth**: We are flexible and creative. We try out new things. We learn from each other and from our mistakes.

Use the survey to diagnose behaviors that limit your capacity to operate as a high performing team.

**Instructions**
1. Print and supply a copy of the survey for each team member
2. At a team meeting, ask team members to assess the team's performance in each of the dimensions. Circle a number from 1 to 10 for each dimension.
3. Collect the group’s scores on a single sheet of this survey (or flip chart) or project an image from your computer onto a shared screen
4. Calculate averages for each dimension and the range.

[Download the form HERE](#)

**Interpreting the results/next steps**
Sit down with your team and discuss the results (the consolidated scores, averages, and range) of the team performance survey. Seriously. Take the time to do it, and in that process you will discover:
- Where the team believes it is performing well (a score of 4-5)
- Where improvement is required (a score of 1-3), which opens the door for you to generate ideas for improvement.
- Where there is disagreement (a wide range of scores) about the team assessment on any dimension, which, in turn, allows you to seek to understand what the members of the team are feeling or sensing.
- If the team has difficulty discussing any aspect of improving team performance. This invites all members of the team to contribute to the creation of a team charter and/or set of rules of engagement to keep future team discussions on track

**BELBIN TEAM ROLES ASSESSMENT**
Dr. Meredith Belbin, a British researcher and management expert, conducted groundbreaking research into team effectiveness and found the most effective teams tend to be composed of a balanced mix of people. He theorized that when groups come together for some kind of joint activity, some groups have an over-abundance of skills necessary for peak team performance, and a shortage of skills in other critical areas.

Belbin identified nine key skills in three categories – people skills, action-task related skills, and thinking skills - that each project or work group needs in the mix to be able to operate at peak team performance. Some people are good all-rounders and are able to operate flexibly; but most of us have a dominant skill, and a secondary skill, which we can contribute to the group.
1. **Resource Investigator**: Extroverted, enthusiastic, and communicative. Explores opportunities and develops contacts who can help the project.

4. **Shaper**: Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Drive and courage to overcome obstacles.

7. **Plant**: Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Able to solve difficult problems.

2. **Team Worker**: Cooperative, mild, perceptive, and diplomatic. Listens, builds, averts friction, and calms the waters.

5. **Implementer**: Disciplined, reliable, conservative, and efficient. Turns ideas into practical actions.

8. **Specialist**: Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.

3. **Coordinator**: Mature, confident, and a good team leader. Clarifies goals, promotes decision-making, and delegates well.

6. **Completer-Finisher**: Painstaking, conscientious. Seeks and fixes errors and omissions. Delivers on time.


Some of us play more than one role on a team. But teams that are missing critical skills can run into trouble. For example, if everyone plays a Plant role the team may focus on generating ideas and implementing little. If the team is mostly Completer Finishers or Implementers, they just want to get on with the job, and will settle for anything. The table below provides an example of a team that is missing several critical skills. This team is missing the plant, coordinator, and shaper roles, and has an abundance of specialists.
### Table 2: Sample Team Roles Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Role</th>
<th>TOM</th>
<th>JANE</th>
<th>BILL</th>
<th>SARAH</th>
<th>HARRY</th>
<th>JESSICA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plant</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resource-Investigator</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coordinator</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shaper</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Team Worker</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementer</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monitor-Evaluator</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Specialist</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completer</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finisher</strong></td>
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</table>

Your team can use this worksheet to identify the primary and secondary roles that members bring to your team. What roles are in abundance or missing altogether? Become a better-rounded team by encouraging members to learn how to adopt missing roles, or recruit to the team, people with required skills.

**Instructions**

1. Print and handout to team members the 9 x team roles table and a copy of the worksheet.
2. On a master sheet (projected on a screen) or transcribed onto a flip chart, record the names of the group members, one in each cell of the top row.
3. Ask team members to review the 9 x team roles table and identify their PRIMARY and SECONDARY role choices.
4. Ask team members in turn what their PRIMARY and SECONDARY team roles are, and record these in the relevant cell for each team member.

![Download the form HERE](#)

**Interpreting the results/next steps**

1. Review the team’s composition and discuss what team roles you have in abundance (everyone trying to do the same thing) and which are absent?
2. Ask team members to a) identify the roles they are willing to develop to fill in the gaps or b) suggest additional team members who may have the necessary skills.
5 DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM

Many groups are unable to perform well as a team, having neither the courage, nor the discipline to overcome the cause of politicking and dysfunctional behavior. Patrick Lencioni identified the following five dysfunctions of a team that barriers to success:

1. **Absence of Trust**: Fearful of being open and vulnerable with others.
2. **Fear of Conflict**: Can’t get to discuss critical issues; trying too hard to keep the peace.
3. **Lack of Commitment**: Uncertain about the decisions they make; not committed to what is decided.
4. **Avoidance of Accountability**: Avoidance of interpersonal discomfort stops people from holding each other accountable.
5. **Inattention to Results**: Seeking personal goals and status at the expenses of team success.

Teams that successfully deal with the five dysfunctions can become high performing, cohesive teams that:

- Are able to admit mistakes, take risks by giving feedback, and willing to ask for help
- Tap into one another's skills and experiences
- Are focused on and deal well with the issues
- Avoid wasting time on the same old issues
- Do more in less time using fewer resources
- Deal with critical issues creatively
- Are aligned around common objectives

We have a downloadable worksheet below to help you diagnose dysfunctional behavior of a team and make changes so the team becomes high performing.

**Instructions**
1. Print out the worksheet for each member of the team.
2. Ask members of to think about the first dysfunction – absence of trust – and make notes about what they observe, and what strategies they would suggest for dealing with the situation.
3. Ask members to share their thinking, and record ideas on a flip chart, or on a master electronic version projected onto a large screen from a personal computer.
4. Discuss and make a short list of corrective actions.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 for all other dysfunctions.

[Download the form HERE](#)

**Interpreting the results/next steps**
1. Publish a document listing the agreed to new practices as part of a “team charter”
2. Encourage all members to hold each other accountable for sticking to the agreed practices.
3. From time-to-time, conduct further assessments, or when the group performance is less than optimal.

**GROUP FLOW ASSESSMENT**

This assessment helps groups recognize when they have achieved a state of optimal performance. Flow is often considered a personal peak experience, but it often occurs in groups when they become high performing teams, where every action seems perfectly orchestrated.
Flow was first recognized and named by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. It is a psychological state that occurs midway between boredom and anxiety. Flow is an almost effortless yet highly focused state of consciousness, and the descriptions do not vary much by culture, gender, or age. The close match between the challenge and the skill generates rapid feedback that engenders the flow state where the participant becomes deeply absorbed, and oblivious to the world around them. Flow experiences are so rewarding in terms of fun and enjoyment they become self-justifying.

A special case of Flow is Group Flow. Members of a group experience Flow when they make the transition to the team state. We see this particularly on the sports field, with high performing teamwork and in collaborative gaming. Flow occurs in children's group play, when they learn without the support of a teacher. Flow is least likely to occur when a teacher is lecturing or when we watch TV.

The principles of Flow are also used to influence learning and game design. Games/learning activities are designed to start the player with a modest challenge, so that the game/learning activity is neither boring, nor too big a challenge.

Flow occurs most often when people are engaged in their favorite activities — playing sports, working, playing games, or socializing, under the following conditions:

1. There are clear goals every step of the way
2. There is immediate feedback to one’s actions
3. There is a balance between challenges and skills
4. Action and awareness merge*
5. Distractions are excluded from consciousness
6. There is no worry of failure
7. Self-consciousness disappears
8. The sense of time becomes distorted
9. The activity becomes an end in itself

* There is one major difference between the Personal and Group Flow experience which is reflected in the design of assessment. During personal Flow experiences, people become less aware of their surroundings. In Group Flow, people become highly aware of each other, and their ability to more perfectly coordinate.

You can use the Flow survey immediately after (or during) a meeting or other team activity to ascertain whether the group has achieved a state of peak team performance. Use with the appropriate team meeting protocol and question sequence to help the team achieve most of the dimensions of Flow.

**Instructions**
1. Print and supply a copy of the survey for each team member.
2. At or after a team activity, ask team members to assess the team's performance on each of the dimensions of Flow. Circle a number from 1 to 5 for each dimension.
3. Collect the group’s scores on a single sheet of this survey (or flip chart) or project an image from your computer onto a shared screen.

**Interpreting the results/next steps**
Take the following action:

1. High scores: If most of the average group scores are in the 4-5 range, then it is likely the team is experiencing collective Flow.
2. Other scores: If the average of some or all of the scores are in the lower range, set aside the time for an improvement session to develop ideas for improving the team performance.
3. Some team members not experiencing Flow: If one or two members of the team are rating the Flow scores low and the rest of the team are reporting high scores, have a conversation to explore what the team can do to help them have a more enjoyable experience.

Consider the following further improvements to the group activity:

- If you have not been using a structured meeting process to guide your meetings/workshops, do so now, and expect a significant improvement in team performance and satisfactions.
- Make sure the purpose of the meeting is made clear at the start of the session, and that each question is adequately announced and explained.
- Adjust the meeting protocol so the meeting is more efficient and productive.
- Revise the meeting process: clear and easy-to-respond-to questions, no redundant questions, include word prompts to scaffold/stimulate thinking and the questions are in the correct sequences, the first question is relatively easy to discuss/respond to, the last question generates a clear outcome.
- Ensure the participants have adequate information to respond to questions.

Defining yourself is important, and as part of that process you must also define who else is out there. Consequently, it would appear that the first order of business is to find out exactly who your stakeholders might be. Have we got a tool for you!

**Proximity Tool**
The proximity tool (also called a proximity diagram) is a very simple approach that used within DAU stakeholder seminars and executive coaching for a long time. Extremely simple in construct, it helps in brainstorming a big list of your potential stakeholders and then doing an initial sorting (categorizing) of that list for your project.

One way to figure this out is to start with your own team and look outwards, first internally to your organization then externally outside it.
Exploring stakeholder “proximity” is best achieved on a separate piece of paper or white board. In the video below, Pat Barker walks you through how to use the tool.

**Stakeholder Stuff: Using the Proximity Tool**

So how has this proximity tool been used in practice? In the video below, DSMC instructors Pat Barker and Dave Miskimens share what they have to say.

**Stakeholder Stuff Applied: The Proximity Tool**

The proximity tool noted above used one framework starting from your team and looking outwards. That is not the only way to do it. You could use the different types of boundaries noted earlier as a way to sort your stakeholders, too. A common example would be to list those within your boundary of control (or authority), influence (those whom you might be able to shape or nudge) and concern (those whom you likely cannot do anything about but nonetheless might impact your outcomes).

### 6. Reflecting

Most traditional stakeholder analysis tools used by DAU fall under the tactic of reflecting.
The Power Grid
The power grid takes the results from your proximity tool (or diagram) effort, and helps you prioritize your stakeholders.

In the video below, Pat Barker walks you through how to use this tool.

Stakeholder Stuff: Using the Power Grid

How has the power grid been used by executive coaches? In the video below, DSMC instructors Pat Barker and Dave Miskimins share what they have to say.

Stakeholder Stuff Applied: The Power Grid

Interests, Expectations, Requirements, and Avenues (I-E-R-A)
Now it’s time to look deeper at your highest-priority stakeholders identified in the power grid. A sample chart is provided below. The column headers on the chart are defined as follows:

- **Stakeholder**: the stakeholder in question.
- **Interests**: As a general rule - what are the stakeholder’s interests exclusive of your project?
- **Expectations**: What do you believe to be this stakeholder’s expectations to be regarding YOUR project?
- **Requirements**: What have you and this stakeholder actually agreed to, on paper?
- **Avenues**: How can you clarify/expand/discover the IERs of this stakeholder? What key venues and/or intermediaries might enable you to gain insight on Stakeholder IER (example: a stakeholder’s deputy, executive assistant, a quarterly conference, et al)?
The video below shows you how you might explore stakeholder interests, expectations, requirements and avenues.

The Ladder of Inference

Some of your stakeholders, the ones you engage with (or want to engage with) the most, deserve a little extra preparation. You will want to be at the top of your game when engaging in conversations with them. An important enabler in reflecting is taking extra care to come to grips with what you choose to see, what conclusions you draw and, based on that, what actions you take. Both parties need to pay attention to this. What follows is a simple yet effective tool to help you in this arena.

The Ladder of Inference describes the thinking process that we go through, usually without realizing it, to get from data or fact to a decision or action. Each rung or step of the ladder might and often does take us further away from data.
This subtle (or not so subtle) pattern of reasoning influences our selections, additions, assumptions, conclusions, adoptions, and actions. The goal is to step ourselves or in this case, step your coachee back down the ladder to original data.

Watch the short animation below (based on a TED Talk) that explains the Ladder of Inference quite well!

7. Connecting
Now that you have figured out who your stakeholders are and what they are all about, you need to begin to think about taking positive steps to connect with them.

There comes a point where you have to be willing to step outside your own boundary and engage others. Sometimes doing so requires meeting in “neutral zone,” be it an offsite location or local coffee shop. Regardless of the “how,” the desired outcome will be a real-time opportunity for different groups to learn perceptions of the other groups, see the world through their eyes, and realize that “they” are not so different from “us”
From “Buy-In” to “Join-in”
We aim to have strong relationships with our stakeholders. Strong relationships with stakeholders are those based on opportunities to connect, solid first impressions, your approach, your messages, and overall effective communications. The stronger your relationships are with your stakeholders, the easier it will be to meet your objectives.

Sometimes a key to stakeholder relationships is a simple mindset shift from “buy-in” to “join-in.” A buy-in approach is taken after the fact when we have already established something, designed something, or created something, we wanted to sell it to a stakeholder.

In other words, we must convince them of the goodness of what we have already established and get them to buy into what we have done. The buy-in approach has these features:

- Created by the project owner
- "Marketed/sold" to stakeholders
- Project owner does the implementation
- Potential for high level of distrust and politicking especially by those who are excluded
- Project owner takes the blame for failures of the system to meet expectations

Hear a little about how “buy-in” contrasts with “join-in”:

Stakeholder - The importance of “join-in”
Join-in takes a different tack to an issue. An alternative approach, which can be slower to implement, but is designed to mobilize the stakeholders and generally has greater success. The join-in approach has these features:

- Jointly create the solution
- Owned by stakeholders
- Each stakeholder has some role in the design and execution of the project/program
- Potential for high levels of trust and integration
- Stakeholders take some responsibility for fine-tuning the solution

Join-in means your language ought to change to include “we” more often. Watch below to hear a little about that.

Stakeholder – The “we” of Join-in
When we talk about join-in, we talk about integrating interests. The integrating interests approach to strategic planning regards all stakeholders as important to a project. It seeks to synergistically serve their interests and the project’s interests at the same time. To do this, we want to involve the stakeholders in the very early stages of the project, or related parts of the project, so they develop a sense of ownership, and are therefore less likely to undermine or oppose the project.

The integrating interests approach adopts a systemic vice a zero-sum view of a project. A zero-sum views of project is all about scarcity. There is only so much to go around. With scarcity in mind, there are three possible project outcomes:

- Win-Win: Accommodation, share the spoils
- Win-Lose: One party wins at the expense of the others
- Lose-Lose: Failure to reach agreement about what each gets

Watch below to hear a little more about moving away from the “zero-sum game”.

Stakeholder – Win-Win-Win
A systemic view, on the other hand, takes into account a wider perspective where two additional outcomes are possible:

- **Win-Win-Win**: The parties collaborate, achieve the outcomes they expected, but there are added benefits for the whole system, for example a joint venture that brings new jobs and business to a community.
- **Lose-Lose-Lose**: When the parties compete to the death. For example when one union goes on strike, but other unions that voted to keep working are laid off because the on-strike union are critical to the plant staying open.

It takes work to get join-in. Sometimes you just have to suck it up and DO it. Watch below to hear a little about that.

Stakeholder Join-in: Just do it

Stakeholder Pre-Mortem

Why just have a meeting with your stakeholders when instead you could collaborate to create something? Here is a unique forum in which to bring your stakeholder groups together in a collaborative, spirited discovery process. Not just any boring stuff, though: Let's talk about a disaster!

Try an approach called a pre-mortem, which comes from a cognitive psychologist named Gary Klein, who has accomplished some ground-breaking research over the past few decades and has written a number of books on decision-making and intuition.

Unlike a typical critiquing session in which project team members are asked what might go wrong, the pre-mortem operates on the assumption that the “patient” has died, and so asks what did go wrong. Pre-mortem is a strategy where a project team imagines that a project has failed, and then works backward to determine what caused the failure. The technique facilitates a positive discussion on threats, increasing the likelihood the main threats are identified.

What is the worst fiasco you could imagine that could happen in your project? A complete, comprehensive and all-encompassing failure. A disaster. The kind that gets people fired. The kind of stuff that ruins organizational and stakeholder relationships.

The link below takes you to a cool website on innovation and includes a look at the Pre-Mortem tool

Click here to see a great Pre-Mortem worksheet

In this video, Pat Barker explains what a pre-mortem is all about and includes a stakeholder twist to it as food for thought.

Stakeholder Stuff: Pre-Mortem

8. Strategizing

You have taken time to figure out who you stakeholders are, what makes them tick, and why you would (or would not) want to pay attention to them. Now comes the time to map them onto a behavioral & perceptual playing field since stakeholder engagement is all about shaping behaviors and perceptions. We do this through the “involvement” diagram

The Involvement Diagram

Below is a simple mapping used to represent current stakeholder perceptions and behavior, which becomes the starting point for developing your stakeholder strategy.
Exploring a stakeholder involvement (influence) diagram is best achieved on a separate piece of paper or white board. In the video below, Pat Barker shows you how to create an involvement diagram.

**Stakeholder Stuff: Involvement (Influence) Diagram**

How has the involvement (influence) diagram been used in practice? In the video below, DSMC instructors Pat Barker and Dave Miskimens share what they have to say.

**Stakeholder Stuff Applied: Involvement**

Now it is time to build a basic stakeholder engagement strategy. You have enough information so far to build any sort of strategy you wish. What we provide is a simple approach that pulls the “involvement” matrix into the center of the conversation, because in the end this is all about spending energy to shape perceptions and nudge behavior.

**Stakeholder Stuff: Strategy**

When thinking of a strategy, consider the following:

- Which stakeholders receive the highest priority?
- Go back to the involvement grid and ask yourself, which stakeholders should be moved from one region to the next? Or kept in one region?
- For each stakeholder, ask:
  - What outcome do you want with the stakeholder? (What do you want to improve or do differently?)
  - Is there a behavior that you or they need to adopt? (What vital behaviors need to be changed/adopted that support achievement of the outcome above?)
  - Are there specific ways you can influence that behavior?
  - How do you know you are done or achieved your desired state?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Involvement (From / To)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Strategy</td>
<td>Action (the “what”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How activity to be taken?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When it needs to be done?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POC Responsible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>What does done look like?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How will you find out?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Download Template**

What are some considerations for stakeholder engagement strategies? Below, DSMC instructors Pat Barker and Dave Miskimens share what they have to say about that.

**Stakeholder Engagement Techniques**

1. **Inform to Increase Involvement**

- Determine how stakeholders prefer to receive information (format, frequency)
- Determine how best to provide information
- Provide the information
- Promote communication
- Invite your stakeholder specifically to participate
2. Consult to Increase Commitment

3. Partner with Advocates

- Partner for long-term relationship
- Work towards collaboration
- Identify common objectives
- Satisfy each other's concerns
- Emphasize problem solving
  - Where do differences lie?
  - Generate new alternatives
  - Select solutions that meet both concerns
4. Monitor the Apathetic (Neutral)

- Monitor IERs for changes
- Detect changes in commitment or involvement
- As IERs evolve, promote positive influence and consider, inform, and/or consult strategies
- Do not ignore

In the video below, Pat Barker provides a summary of key points to think about in terms of these engagement strategies.

Play Video

**Stakeholder Engagement Techniques - Thoughts**

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**The Crowd-Sourced Stakeholder Tool**

Tools explained here and in the DAU classroom are not the only way to plan stakeholder engagement. In the real world, while some tools are used “as is” there are other way to approach things, other tools to use and, in the following case, ways to combine tools to create a concise and practical reference.

We encourage you to mix and match and combine models of stakeholder engagement to create what fits for you. Remember that NO model is perfect. NO set of questions “does it all.” At best you will derive an 80% solution to fit the condition. Yet that level of “incompleteness” should not prevent you from figuring out how to engage your stakeholders en route to achieving successful acquisition outcomes.

Recently, approximately 50 students in a PMT-401 course reviewed the tools (much like the ones we have shown on this site) and together derived a condensed version that they felt was of most practical value to them as program managers.

Will these work for you too? Take a closer look at the “Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement” process below.

**Step 1: List your stakeholders**

List all your stakeholders – one big list – and make sure you update the list periodically.

Stakeholder List
Step 2: Prioritize your stakeholders
Ask a simple question of each stakeholder, which boils down to determining whether or not you truly need the stakeholder to be successful, and if the answer is "yes", determine what kind of energy you wish to spend on the engagement.

Step 3: Articulate the action strategy
Do this in a practical way.
Step 4: Pay attention to how things transpire
Update your strategy accordingly.

You ought to repeat steps 1-4 until you have achieved successful outcomes in your particular endeavor.

What are you waiting for? Go forth and do great things in engaging stakeholders!