

HOW TO GUIDE

*A stakeholder  
engagement  
plan is essential  
to any large  
or small  
organisation*

# A stakeholder, in business terms, is anyone who has an interest in or is affected by an organisation or company's actions, decisions, or success.

Think of them as people or groups connected to the business in meaningful ways - like employees who bring their energy and ideas, customers who rely on the products or services, investors who support growth, or even communities impacted by what the business does.

It's about recognising that a business doesn't operate in a vacuum - it's part of a more significant web of people and relationships that shape its journey and outcomes.

Understanding and engaging with stakeholders is a necessary business part of any organisational process, regardless of size. Every organisation should dedicate time to understanding and listening to all of the individuals and groups that it interacts with or impacts.

Communicating and working with your stakeholders is about figuring out who's connected to your project or organisation, understanding what they need or expect, and keeping them in the loop. It's about having open, proactive conversations to build trust, foster good relationships, and encourage collaboration.

**To create a stakeholder engagement plan that helps you work with stakeholders in a way they can appreciate, you'll first need to understand their needs and how they influence your project. Use the steps below to get started.**

## 1 Identify your stakeholders

*Some stakeholders will be more engaged in your project from the start. This level of engagement often comes from their motives.*

For example, an internal executive overseeing the project may be more engaged because their job depends on it.

Alternatively, an external partner with a small financial stake might have less engagement and not want every detail of what's happening.

### ***The five levels of stakeholder engagement are:***

- **Leading:** A leading stakeholder is aware of the project's impact and is actively involved.
- **Supporting:** A supporting stakeholder is aware of the project's impact and supports the project.
- **Neutral:** A neutral stakeholder is aware of the project's impact, but neither resists nor supports the project.
- **Resistant:** A resistant stakeholder knows the project's impact but resists change.
- **Unaware:** An unaware stakeholder doesn't know about the project or its impact.

Once you know your stakeholders' engagement level, you'll identify their level of influence on the project.

### ***The scale of stakeholder influence is categorised as follows:***

- **Very high:** A stakeholder with very high influence has significant control over crucial project decisions.
- **High:** A stakeholder with high influence can cause others to take action.
- **Medium:** A stakeholder with medium influence is often part of the decision-making process.
- **Low:** A stakeholder with low influence can offer opinions on decisions and express their concerns, but you may not always consider their ideas.
- **Very low:** A stakeholder with very low influence can engage in the project when desired, but they won't have control over any decisions.

## 2 **Map stakeholders** on the influence/interest grid

*Now that you know your stakeholders' influence and interest level, you'll map each one on the influence/interest grid.*

You won't want to share this information with your stakeholders, but it can help you determine your communication style.

**The four main stakeholder groups are:**

- **High interest and high influence.** These are your stakeholders from your "leading" or "supporting" category. They are your key players and the most important on your stakeholder list. Ensure you regularly check in with these stakeholders and thoroughly educate them about the project. These are the stakeholders that are most important to have on board.
- **High interest and low influence.** These stakeholders also likely come from your "leading" or "supporting" categories. While they don't have as much influence, they should still be kept in the loop on all significant communication and encouraged to participate in other ways, depending on the situation.
- **High influence and low interest.** These stakeholders can come from your "neutral" or "resistant" categories; education is critical to keep them on board. They can become more resistant if they're surprised by a project change, so ensure they have access to information when needed and inform them of any work that might impact their project workflows.
- **Low influence and low interest.** These are stakeholders from your "unaware" category. You don't need to contact these people often, but you should use your project management tool to send monthly updates. That way, you can provide key project details, and they know they have the opportunity to get more involved.

By following these steps, you can create clear, impactful messages that help your audience understand what your organisation does. Strong messaging is crucial for building trust, connecting with customers, and driving your business forward.

If you would like to know more about how we can help you with your strategic communication objectives, don't hesitate to get in touch with [michael.gregory@limitlesspr.co.uk](mailto:michael.gregory@limitlesspr.co.uk)

### 3 Build a **communication plan**

*Stakeholder mapping offers guidance on communicating with stakeholders based on their level of influence and interest.*

Using these grid points, your next step is to create a custom communication plan.

A communication plan is critical because it informs how you'll educate and update your stakeholders. Regardless of their quadrant, ensure stakeholders can access relevant project information. The best way to do this is by keeping all your project information in one place.

***There are two steps to creating a communication plan:***

- Identify your different communication channels. Which communication channels does your team regularly use?
- What is each communication channel for?
- Identify what type of communication each stakeholder quadrant needs. Communication isn't one-size-fits-all.
- Figure out how you'll communicate and educate stakeholders during the project lifecycle.
- Once you create your communication plan, share it with your project team. If you change your communication plan, update it and communicate those changes. That way, team members always have access to the most up-to-date information.
- Monitor, evaluate and get feedback.

Stakeholders often change behaviour throughout a project, so remember that the points you've mapped on the interest/influence grid aren't set in stone.

You can revise your plan based on behaviour changes you observe, share it with stakeholders, and ask for their feedback. The best way to get feedback from stakeholders is to be clear about what you're asking for.

For example, provide stakeholders with your communication plan and ask them, "Does this communication plan work for you? Are there any areas you'd like to change?"

A successful plan will often be revised and interrogated, and it should be a 'live' document that helps you respond to changes in the campaign or project.

If you want to know more about how our team can help you engage with your stakeholders, contact [michael.gregory@limitlesspr.co.uk](mailto:michael.gregory@limitlesspr.co.uk)