



Stakeholder Engagement – by Simon Kennish

Stakeholders have the key to project success so what is the best way to engage them with your programme or project. There seems to be a few ways that people handle them:

- Ignore them
- Consult them, then ignore what they say
- Consult them, then include some of what they say
- Engage them properly and get them to become your advocates to others.

In my view the latter one is the best way to go, but rarely do I see project and programme managers do this, so I started to wonder why. I reckon that the project or programme managers level of experience has a lot to do with it, at the basic level they can, on occasion, just ignore the stakeholders – a short sighted method and questions should surely be asked of the supervision. Consulting then ignoring tends to happen where there are a few options and stakeholders are asked which they prefer, I have seen the ‘wrong answer’ come back in some organisations and instead of re-evaluating the options they just crack on and then get accused of not listening to the feedback from stakeholders. The third way, consult and include some feedback tends to be the most common approach – and does have its merits, as the old saying goes ‘you can’t please all the people all of the time’, but for me the final way is the best.

To really engage with stakeholders and turn them into advocates requires effort, it needs a relationship and a conversation where the benefits of the scheme can be sold to the stakeholder. Getting them so keen on the benefits to them, that they can see how the scheme will help not hinder them personally. Of course if it does hinder them, then you really need to see if there is another way or some sensible concession that will help. This is where the Stakeholder Engagement tools within MSP really help out. I would encourage you to use them whenever possible, it really will help you achieve the fourth way. Getting a key stakeholder on-board can help you spread the word as they influence directly or indirectly other stakeholders, of course annoy a key stakeholder and the reverse is true.

Using stakeholder identification, assessment and mapping is the first step in forming a plan to engage and communicate with them, but doing this and thinking of the fourth way is the best way to turn them into advocates for your project or programme.

Bio Notes - Simon Kennish FRICS, MAPM, MCMI is a Chartered Surveyor, Project and Programme Manager with a passion for delivering major projects and programmes in both the public and private sectors. www.simonkennish.com



**Projects, Programmes,
Property, Leadership**

