What Are the Important Stakeholder Management Skills You Need to Build?

Handling stakeholders often becomes a crucial challenge for project managers while trying to proceed with the tasks. Although stakeholders may not be the direct players of a project, they work as important changing agents on the way to outcome of a project. So, here is our take on essential stakeholder management skills for project managers. The article covers:

- *Breaking down what stakeholders are and how to manage them*
- *Significance of stakeholder management in project management*
- *Necessary stakeholder management skills for project managers of various industries*
- *Strategies and tools that assists in effective stakeholder management your project*

While carrying out a project, managers put a lot of focus on procurement and goal attainment. However, the effective execution of plans in a project requires a combination of strategic planning, sticking to schedule, proper allotment of task, and tactful stakeholder management.

No matter how experienced and qualified project manager someone is, the individual cannot ignore the direct and indirect involvement of people in a project, be it small or large. Even if the results cannot be measured definitely, stakeholders can expose project to chances that cause potential damage or elevated success. Now, the question remains, how to figure out a way to effective stakeholder management? The answer is presented in a couple of steps in this article.

What are stakeholders?

Simply put, stakeholders are anyone, individuals or group of people or even organizations who are related or impacted by the project's process and results. So, whoever has a stake in the project is a stakeholder.

Though defining stakeholders is quite easy, identifying stakeholders and their influence in the project you are managing can be quite difficult. Usually, a large number of people are involved in different stages of a project. They can have positive, negative or neutral influence on your project even if they are not directly working with or under you. At times their impact can change your plans, decisions and at large the outcomes of your project!

What is the importance of stakeholders in project management?

In every project, no matter small or big, involves some internal and external group of people who can have negative or positive impact in the process or outcome. For this, it is essential to identify all the stakeholders and manage them effectively. Failing to manage stakeholders can lead to unwanted delay in schedule, added work for miscommunication, missed opportunities, increased costs, extra obstacles and overall damage in the outcomes of a project.

As a project manager, these are the things you would never want. Hence, a smart and skilled project managers will always prioritize having a stakeholder management plan that enables the stakeholder management process with ease. To bolster this, a survey conducted by GirlsGuideToPM on 115 project managers also show that stakeholder management helps around 71% of the managers to secure their projects.

Stakeholder management does not only come to the aid of avoiding obstacles, but also adds some benefits that every project manager desires. What are the added perks? Strategic and improvised stakeholder management ensures-

- Resources and tools needed for the project
- Risk reduction, calculated and decisive moves
- Positive impression due their involvement in the procedure
- Easy delivery and understanding upon completion

10 major stakeholder management skills for project managers

By now, all of us know why people related to the project are important while handling one. But if we do not know what is needed to keep them managed, the balance will not magically happen as we proceed with a project.

To address that, here are 10 immensely important stakeholder management skills for the project managers to apply in managing stakeholders:

1. **Effective Communication skills**
   Stakeholder management is mainly managing people in different layers of the project and transparent communication is the most essential element to that. Project manager needs to know convincing and clear written and verbal communication techniques. Another thing that needs to be addressed particularly is listening skills. To make your stakeholders feel prioritized, you have to make them feel listened to.
   Different group or individual will consume the same message differently. It is important to keep this in mind while delivering. Managers should communicate the background and the purpose of the project as early as possible.

2. **Building and retaining strong relationships**
   If you are people-oriented, managing stakeholders will become easy for you. It is humans we are talking about, not machines. So, extra care should be given in listening to their needs and opinions.
   If the manager is good at keeping strong relationships, most of the stakeholders will be a great help in need. Manager has to figure out appropriate channels to keep the bonding consistent with the stakeholders. So, should the managers contact each of the stakeholders individually? The answer is smart use of technology. (More on this in the OneThread section!)

3. **High emotional intelligence**
   In apt stakeholder management, the manager has to have a good level of emotional understanding. This helps in identifying the involvement of stakeholders, their impacts, and potential encounters with them during the project.
   For instance, if a stakeholder is likely to have a negative impact on a decision or a process of the project, you will be able to identify it beforehand if you have high emotional intelligence. And so, it will be easier to take a step, say, take defensive methods in handling such stakeholders.

4. **Ability to deliver message simply and concisely**
   In this era of technology, everyone has plethora of information within their accessibility. Given that, if information regarding a project is not sorted and presented concisely with important portions highlighted, it is very easy for anyone to lose track.

That's why, delivering message concisely, whenever needed, is crucial to managers wanting to manage the stakeholders.

This ability does not require to miraculously keep everything sorted, because a bit of smart thinking and the use of right technology like OneThread can take you ahead!

5. **Dispute resolving and negotiating**

   A study of CPP Inc. showed that in the U.S., due to workplace conflict 385 million working days are wasted every year. Needless to say, conflict management through resolving disputes and negotiation is a must for the managers who want a seamless journey through their projects.

   When probable conflict areas are identified beforehand and negotiated wisely, the room for dispute goes away. Keeping clarity and accountability intact from the very beginning of the project is also helpful.

6. **Instant information retaining capacity**

   A lot of stakeholders, a lot of inputs from all of them. Hence, the manager has to process a lot of information and prioritize them as needed. Now, you do not necessarily need a very sharp memory to retain all the information. Using a platform that helps in categorizing tasks, important notes with the option of sharing it with others can solve the issue.

7. **Repetitive trust building ability**

   Be it an IT, marketing, production unit or financial unit project, there might be mistakes at any point of a task no matter how tactfully it is handled. Moreover, sometimes confusions arise from misinterpretation. In such cases, building trust and gaining that trust again and again in tough situations can help the manager produce outcomes beyond expectations. Which is why it is important to provide the stakeholders some solid evidences of integrity in order to gain trust.

8. **Critical thinking and decision-making skills**

   Critical thinking is needed in every step of a project as well as in managing stakeholders. Even in small projects, there are a couple of stakeholders who are likely to have different inputs and opinions regarding the same thing.

   Here, a manager has to develop instant decision-making capability to avoid confusion and to refrain from missing opportunities. Also, a manager has to have firm decisions about the tasks and relations with a stakeholder as well.

9. **Influencing and motivating**

   Again, working with people does not work out just by implementing plans and strategies. Managers motivating with different incentives, giving idea about the goal, the greater purpose and self-interests of the stakeholders can maximize their positive inputs leading to greater outcomes.

   Project managers need to keep in mind that they have to keep a healthy relation with the stakeholders, instill all the important values and aspects of a project or an organization to everyone involved to make sure that every stakeholder comprehends their task significance.

10. **Patience and emotional stability**

    Lastly, managing internal and external stakeholders will always require a lot of patience. No matter how the management process is sorted out, managers need their own emotional stability to handle that of others. Emotional stability can be developed by giving time to oneself and assessing every decision taken.

In fact, this patience and stability throughout any project actually binds all the other skills and enhances the expected results.

Smart and effective strategies for successful stakeholder management

Of course, managers need the required skills to manage stakeholders, assign them duties, and make the most out of all of their inputs in a project. Nonetheless, without a primary structure of delivery strategy, the managing can get difficult. To address that, here are 5 effective steps of taking stakeholder management to a different level. It can also be called our rule of thumb!

- ***Identifying and prioritizing stakeholders***
- ***Creating clear communication channels***
- ***Assigning duties to stakeholders and monitor them regularly***
- ***Planning distinct stakeholder management strategies***
- ***Taking feedbacks and analyzing improvement areas***

How does OneThread help with stakeholder management for your project?

As much as managers need adequate skills to manage the stakeholders of an organization or a project, they need tools and technologies to make the skills easier to implement. All the skills discussed above may seem intimidating and hard to navigate, but around 50% of the skills required can be made easy through the one-stop solution *OneThread*. The question arises, how?

- OneThread is the ultimate software for professional collaboration. It has options for keeping separate messaging channels with stakeholders and even easier way to avoid lengthy email loops. This way, effective communication, relationship building, and concise delivery of information are ensured.
- Managers do not have to retain instant updates and report information in their mind because a click can take them to updated progress information and report summaries.
- Stakeholders are not going to curse you for messing with their social media with another WhatsApp or Messenger group. Because OneThread has instant messaging that can allow any stakeholder to view and sort their messages according to priority.
- Another new project, another batch of information dump. No sir! You can deliver important updates with real-time charts and tables to align everything. All the stakeholders are going to be blessed by the ease of retaining information this way.
- A new software, *OneThread,* does not mean you have to let go of the popular tools like Zoom, Meet, Sheets, Teams, Docs etc. Because *OneThread* lets you integrate with 500+ tools from within the software.

Ending notes

Stakeholder management will not require you to be a connoisseur of management. Having the basic knowledge about the skills required and bringing them to the right use will keep any project manager away from all the worries. And to make the entire process of stakeholder management and engagement painless, *OneThread* can be the best wingman. Develop a sense of community among the stakeholders through effective online collaboration and let that synergy bring outstanding results from your project.