

Navigating Project Politics

Jeff Oltmann
Synergy Professional Services
(503) 644-6433
jeff@spspro.com

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Politics attempts to :



Achieve Goals through
Accommodation and the
exercise of Influence.



“Projects are excellent breeding grounds for rampant politics” – J. Davidson Frame

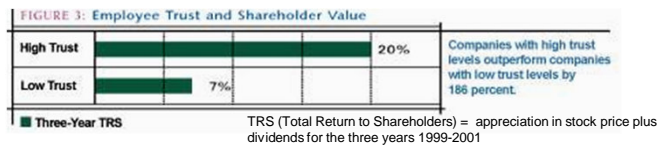
What are your sources of politics?

- Diffuse authority
- Borrowed staff
- Weak management support
- Matrix organizations
- Ambiguous roles (up, down, sideways)
- “Co-opetition” for resources and recognition
- Power, stature, and egos

Business Value of Trust

“One myth, for example, is that trust is “soft” ... Trust is hard. It's real. It's quantifiable. It's measurable. In every instance, it affects both speed and cost, and speed and cost can be measured and quantified.”
[Covey, 24]

“Companies cannot afford to ignore their trust problems — the association between trust and shareholder value creation is simply too strong.” [Watson]



“Therefore relations that generate trust create a ‘trust dividend’ that offers an important competitive advantage over those that do not. And this means moving to more open and collaborative communications, resolving conflicts constructively, and seeing the arrangement as a co-dependent long-term investment designed to benefit both parties.”
Leslie Willcocks and Sara Cullen, [Willcocks, 2]

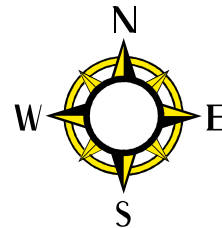
Political Action Process

- 1** Understand reality of politics
 - What's your compass?
- 2** Build a personal foundation
 - Authority and persuasion
- 3** Identify key elements of your environment
 - Who are the players?
 - What are their goals?
 - Who am I?
- 4** Make and implement course of action
 - Build commitment
 - Act on your political awareness!



1 Understand

- Politics arises from people interactions
 - Influence and accommodation
 - Conflict and cooperation
- Good use of politics ...
 - Lubricant
- Abusive use of politics ...
 - Corrosive



What Compass
Will You Use?

Intends to Damage Promotes Self Interest Ineffective at influencing Promotes Team Interest Promotes Greater Good

1

Understand . . . Your Response

Naive

- Unpleasant
- Avoid at all costs
- Tell it like it is
- Truth always wins out

Sensible

- Necessary
- Further project goals
- Network
- Negotiate
- Bargain

Shark

- Opportunity
- Predatory
- Manipulate
- Fraud, deceit



Exercise: Your Political Approach

- Think of a person you know who deals with politics effectively. List 3 - 5 skills and attributes that make that person effective in political environments.

2

Foundation . . . Develop Your Authority

Sources of Authority

- Formal
- Reward
- Penalty
- Expert
- Referent



(PMBOK® 2000)

2

Foundation . . . Build **Multiple** Sources of Influence

Other Sources of Influence

- Recognition
- Competence
- Follow-Through
- Charisma
- Trust
- Networks

What creative forms of influence have you seen?

Exercise: Influence

- What source of influence would give you the best return if you invested in developing it further? List steps you will take to develop that source.

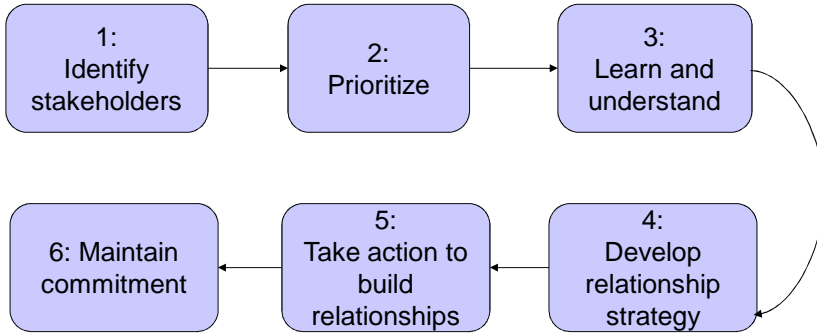
The Political Environment

“ **Stakeholder management** is one of three major themes that permeate all activities of a program. It is a key to the success of a program.
(para. from sect 2.2, sect 1.7 of *The Standard for Program Management*)

1. Successfully compete for resources and priority
2. Generate support and commitment
3. Head off obstacles that can kill your project
4. Create a better working environment
5. Advance your career



3 Stakeholder Management Process

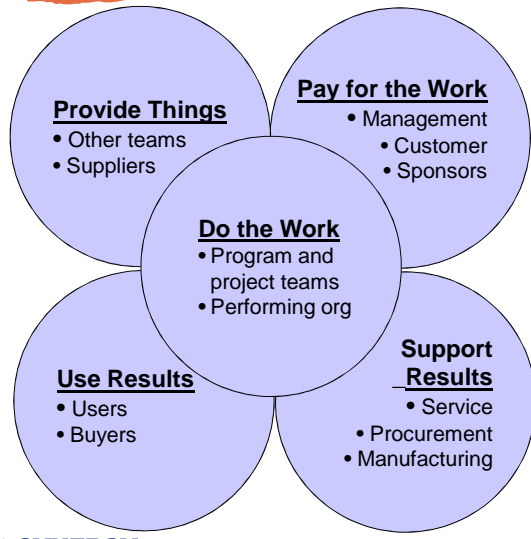


Stakeholder: an individual or organization who can make or break the program

- Anthony Mersino



3 Identify Key Stakeholders



Look For Hidden Stakeholders

Overlooked Stakeholders Can Become Resisters

Healthcare Project Examples

- Facilities
- Organization finance
- Patient financial services
- Patient access services
- Materiel management
- IT Documentation services

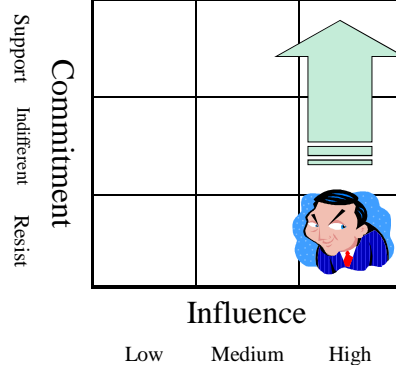
Denise Hoover, Project Manager, Salem Hospital



Exercise: Identify Your Project Community

- List the individuals and groups in your project community.
- Make sure that you can identify at least one real person in each group.

3 Prioritize Stakeholders



Big fish ?

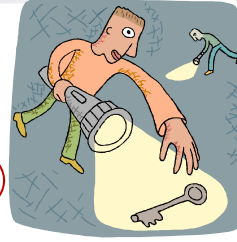


Or little fish ?

3 Learn and Understand

From prioritization

1. Influence relative to project
2. Current commitment to project
3. Role
4. Stakeholder objectives
5. Facts, passions, and areas of interest
6. Preferred communication style
7. Sources of power
8. Methods of exerting influence



WiiFM:
What's in it for me?



3 Develop Relationship Strategy

What actions will increase stakeholder's commitment?

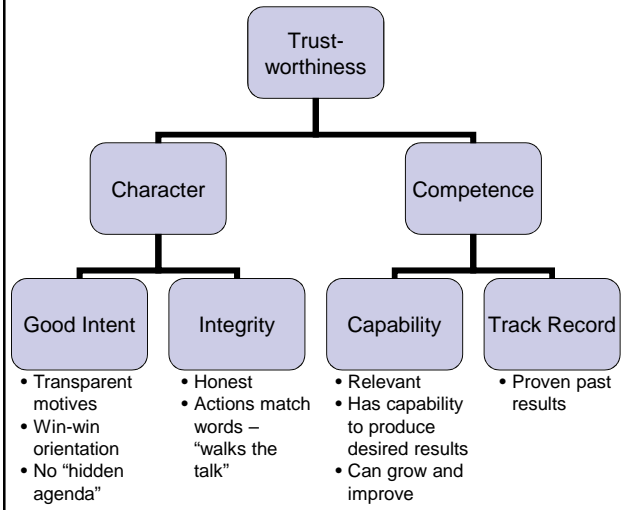
	Approve	Indifferent	Disapprove
Initiate	Commit	Indifferent	Sabotage
Tell	Support		Resist
Respond	Comply		Object

1. Aligned vision
2. Relation to concrete, personal objectives (WIFM)
3. Trust
4. Frequent communication
5. Recognition of value



Tip: Do They Trust You?

“Character is constant ... competence is situational” [Covey, 31]



Photos: stock



Tip: Don't Shoot the Messenger

“ **When problems occur, shoot the one most visible.** Project managers who are constantly looking over their shoulders out of paranoia and fear of retribution are not capable of taking necessary risks and actions in ways to further project success.

How to Fail in Project Management (Without Really Trying),
 Jeffrey Pinto and Om Kharbanda,
 Business Horizons, July-Aug 1996, p. 48-49



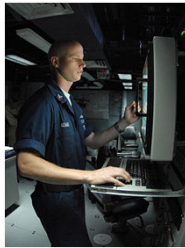
3 Example

The players

- Provider: Marine electronic system integrator
- Customer: Naval fleet
- Project: Replace end of life shipboard communications system

The challenge

- Customer's technical staff preferred competitor and did not like provider's new system that was slated to replace it
- Provider had to establish credibility with technical staff and avoid resistance that would mar its reputation



Response

- Avoided discrediting competitor's products with technical people
- Found and opened discussions on areas of common interest with customer personnel
- Didn't oversell performance of new product to technical staff

Result

- Technical staff eventually trusted provider and accepted the new equipment

Exercise: Motivations

- List 10 things that are powerful motivators and de-motivators for people in your organization
- List 5 ideas on how you can use these motivators to increase commitment on your project

4 Act to Build Relationships

Stakeholder name:
Comments:

Action	Owner	Due Date

“Something akin to marketing is often needed.

- *The Standard for Program Management 1.7.2*

Example Action Steps

- 1:1's
- Customized briefing
- Off-hours events
- Action log
- Lunch meetings

Mersino, p. 125 - 127



4 Maintain Commitment

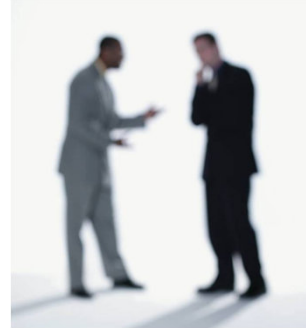
1. Create simple commitment strategies for key stakeholders
2. Hold a commitment conversation
 - a. Vision, alignment, feedback, agreement, and follow-up
3. Communicate with them frequently
4. Renew commitment periodically



Tip: "Truth Telling" and Stakeholder Expectations

“Remember your “sacred responsibility to disappoint.”

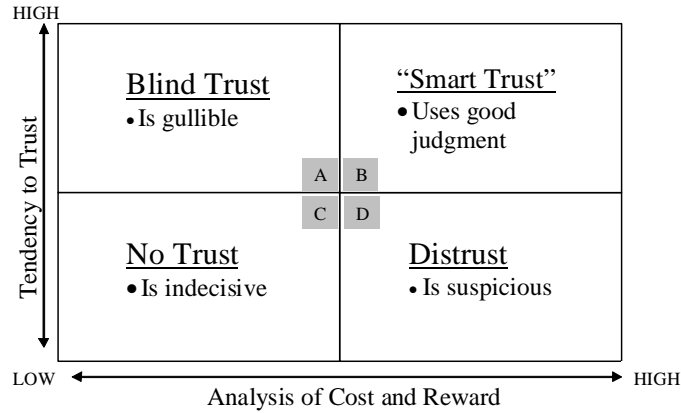
- David Schmaltz



4 Commitment Exercise

- Pick a key stakeholder from whom you need more commitment.
- Map that person's commitment and influence.
- Write a strategy for how you will get and maintain that person's commitment. Make sure you consider:
 - What are the stakeholder's needs?
 - How will you meet his needs?
 - What does the project need from the stakeholder?
 - How will you obtain it?
- Discuss.

Tip: "Smart Trust"



Modified from [Covey, 290]

“It is equally an error to trust all men or no man.”
- attr. to Latin Proverb

Political Pitfalls

- Political skills are not natural for most of us
- Learn to ...
 - Penetrate the superficial to identify the real issues
 - Do the spadework
 - Avoid gossip and manipulation
 - Appreciate what others need, want, and feel
 - Earn trust
 - Talk to people – even introverts can do it!

It is up to you to use these skills for good

Further Reading

1. *The New Project Management*, 2nd ed., J. Davidson Frame (chapter on politics)
2. *Business at the Speed of Trust*, Stephen M.R. Covey
3. *The Handbook of Program Management*, James T. Brown

Project resources:

www.spspro.com/resources.htm