Dar Al Riyadh Insight #28

Stakeholder Management in Large Complex Programs – Step 5 - Stakeholder Engagement

Dar Al Riyadh Insights reflect the knowledge and experience of our Board, executives and staff in leading and providing PMC, design and construction management services. Dar Al Riyadh believes in the importance of broadly sharing knowledge with our clients and staff to improve project outcomes for the benefit of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The key steps in the overall stakeholder management process are discussed in this series of Insights. These activities and their effectiveness can have as much to do with shaping overall program success as the "hard" engineering, procurement and construction activities undertaken.

In this Insight we describe the fifth of six steps for managing stakeholders in large complex programs.
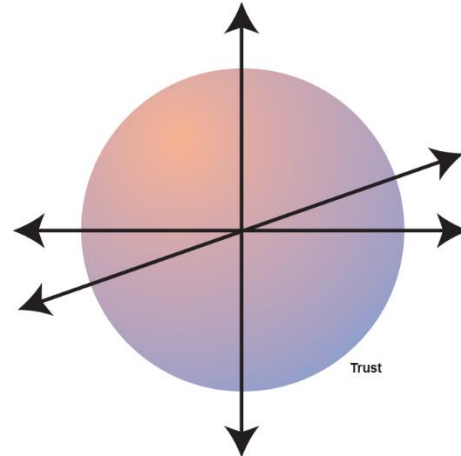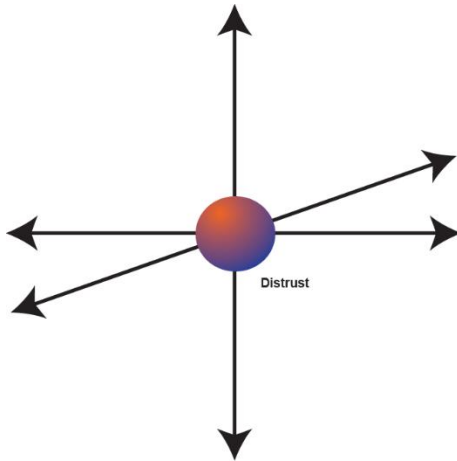
Step 5 - Stakeholder Engagement

Identification and confirmation of the level of effort to be assigned to each stakeholder group and the preferred form of engagement and associated frequency need to be established by the program manager.

Early engagement with stakeholders helps set the stage for a constructive process through out the entire program execution process. Stakeholder engagement can begin in the earliest stages of issue identification at the program level and then be built upon as the program is developed and ultimately implemented through a series of projects.

Proactive engagement allows surprises, issues and problems to be addressed within a framework in which a high level of trust exists. Contrast this with the reactive situation where first engagement takes place around a problem or crisis.

Program Execution Plan Options Constrained By Degree of Top Stakeholder Trust

Distrust

Trust

Programs should scale their stakeholder engagement strategies relative to the risks and impacts the program and its various projects are likely to create. There is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to engagement. Stakeholder mapping such as the Influence-Interest grid can provide guidance on selection of engagement strategies as reflected in the following table. But again caution is urged. Stakeholder aspirations and needs are not static and evolve throughout the program. Similarly stakeholder-stakeholder interrelationships change as project and broader environmental context change. Failing to recognize this evolving "territory" allows new "influencing flows" to arise which we have not prepared ourselves to respond to.

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Guidelines		
Influence	Interest	Strategy
High	High	**Manage Comprehensively and Continuously** Engage these stakeholders comprehensively and manage engagement and relationship continuously. Include in both general program communications sent to broad stakeholder constituencies. Complement with targeted communications focused on their individual issues.

		Meet with regularly.
High	Low	**Satisfy** Respect degree of influence these stakeholders can bring to bear. Engage and build relationship so they may assist in areas where the program manager's control or influence is not sufficient in and of themselves. Include in regular program communications Meet with periodically to establish relationship as an ally in case required in the future. Build trust and seek their counsel.
Low	High	**Keep Informed and Actively Listen** **These stakeholders have significant ability to influence program schedule (execution efficiency) and emphasis should be on motivation.** **Include in regular program communications** **Actively solicit program feedback, suggestions for improvement and areas of concern for the program**

		Survey and solicit feedback on communication approach and effectiveness and adjust communication methodology as appropriate based on feedback **Demonstrate you are listening to what they are saying**
Low	Low	**Status** Include in regular program communications

Like any program function, stakeholder engagement needs to be managed and driven by a well-defined strategy. Clear objectives must exist together with a timetable, budget, and allocation of responsibilities.