Useful Links Update – May 2018

"Useful Links Update" is a regular update produced by the Stakeholder Engagement Focus Group, part of the APM People SIG. The aim is to share links to tools, developments and forthcoming events that may be of interest or help to address your stakeholder engagement questions. If you have a stakeholder related event or publication that you would like to share, please contact us: SEFG@apm.org.uk

Upcoming events:

Are sponsors 'for Christmas' or 'for life'? Have your say
Tuesday 15 May 2018
Location: RSM, 25 Farringdon Street, London. EC4A 4AB
Timings: 18:00-20:00

Every year lots of surveys tell us the same things, some of us have been reading for the last 40 years, that more projects fail than succeed. Research has shown that failure is often not down to the programme or project manager performance, instead it is often poor sponsor performance. Actively engaged and effective sponsors is the top driver of project success. This is the first of a series of events and publications by the APM Governance SIG in 2018, where we will focus on sponsorship. Too few senior managers and executives in organisations do enough to change the culture of project sponsorship and delivery in their organisation, and fail to see that project success starts and ends with them:

> •As members of a Board effectively leading and sponsoring change (the enterprise portfolio) and creating the right enterprise culture and capability.
> •Effectively undertaking the role of the sponsor of a programme or project to ensure a successful outcome, benefits realisation and value add to the organisation.

This series of events will share how organisations are making effective sponsorship mainstream. At this event, we will hear speakers from Royal Mail and Thames Tideway, followed by a group discussion**.**

Did you see..?:

At a SEFG workshop held in London last November, one of the feedback comments was along the lines of "Why do all the case studies have good outcomes? What about projects that didn't end well?" Did you see the article in Project issue 293 (Winter 2017) page 22, by Martin Paver? This is an insightful piece about some reasons for project failure. And guess what, stakeholders are part of the reason. Boardroom lack of commitment and failure to communicate learning within the team were two examples. Martin ends his article with the challenging thought that in maybe a decade or so from now, Project Managers will have enough data to predict likely project outcomes, and will be judged on how well they manage events before they unfold. I was left thinking "influencing skills", "getting the stakeholders onside", "shaping the outcome". All good reason for stakeholder engagement.

And more on the same theme – did you see Project issue 294 (Spring 2018) page 22, presenting insight from Danny Trup and Ian Heptinstall on how project stakeholders have shaped their careers. Danny recalls how some of the project team took a shortcut, with tragic consequences. Ian always reviews stakeholder position (for or against the project) and his registers have new fields for stakeholder personality and inclination, as well as the more conventional considerations. These are very useful ideas to extend our toolkit.

Books:

The Balanced Scorecard by Robert S Kaplan and David P Norton
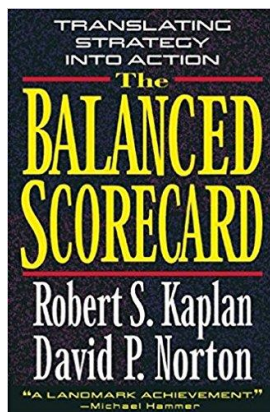
This is a very well regarded book, but how many of us have actually read it? A Balanced ScoreCard (BSC) approach is used by many businesses as a way of redefining strategy and measuring how its implementation is progressing. Based on the maxim "you've got to be able to measure it before you can manage it" the concept is to move away from past financial data as the predictor of future performance. Instead, organisations should define targets under four perspectives.1) Financial, 2) Customer, 3) Internal business Process and 4) Learning and Growth.

Within this framework, the idea is to define strategy in terms of measurable targets and to record the success (balance) between target and achieved values. Stakeholders are confined to two perspectives, (a) customers and (b) "the business" – i.e. organisation employees and shareholders. However there are mentions of a wider stakeholder world and therein lies the challenge – define the strategy for your stakeholders in measurable terms, then follow it through in terms the organisation as a whole can identify with.

The BSC book is full of examples of how leading organisations have first devised their own BSC (there is no right or wrong – every organisation will be different). The impact is that organisations striving for change may be deceiving themselves unless they have a well- constructed and monitored BSC. Measures include staff perceptions, morale, enthusiasm, change ownership. This is a tool for changing perceptions and forward-influencing of next year's performance. Make sure it is part of your tool-box.

Websites & Webinars:

4 things you need to know about soft skills
Online content from MIT Management Sloan School to improve the understanding of critical skills and collaboration, particularly; well worth a read.

Stepping up to stakeholder engagement
A good piece on the challenges of the subject, by Sarah Walker, Head of Communications at Highways England's Complex Infrastructure Program.

Research Papers:

1. Some new thought on integrating new members into a project team.
Toward a model of socializing project team members: An integrative approach, by Saša Batistič and Renata Kenda. International Journal of Project Management, Volume 36, Issue 5, July 2018, Pages 687–700.

2. External stakeholders and really big projects.
Why do individuals engage in collective actions against major construction projects? —An empirical analysis based on Chinese data, by Bingsheng Liu, Yan Li, Bin Xue, Qian Li, Patrick X.W. Zou and Ling Li. International Journal of Project Management Volume 36, Issue 4, May 2018, Pages 612-626.

3. More on Stakeholder engagement in Mega-projects, from Giorgio Locatelli and his team.
"A methodology based on benchmarking to learn across megaprojects: the case of nuclear decommissioning". By Diletta C Invernizzi, Giorgio Locatelli and Naomi J Brookes, International Journal of Managing Projects in Business, Volume 11, Issue 1, pages 1-18 (2018). Alternatively contact Dr Locatelli directly g.locatelli@leeds.ac.uk