

Global teams and stakeholder engagement

Project type: Training

Location: Global

RICS/APM stakeholder principles: Communicate, Remember, They're only human, Plan it!, Relationships are key

Stakeholder terms: Global stakeholders, global team

Abstract

An international project to deliver specialised training was experiencing difficulties from both internal and external stakeholders. A rigorous approach to stakeholder engagement and communications planning turned the situation around and resulted in a successful project outcome.

Background

Training programme following a major equipment upgrade with a wide range of stakeholders, both internal and external.

- Globally based training team – on site as and when required to deliver ‘just in time training’.
- Globally based stakeholders.

The issues

- Communications between the stakeholders was not conducive to the smooth running of the project
- Customer stakeholders had their own agenda – not always in keeping with project goals/scope
- External stakeholders (customer/client based) constantly engaged in ‘one up-man ship’
- Time zone and working week differences
- Language barriers

The challenges

- Prove to all stakeholders that the project manager/team wanted a successful conclusion to the project.
- Re-iterate the project Scope and align it with the expectations of the stakeholders.
- Methods of communication needed ratifying to ensure that the same message was being passed to all stakeholders at the same time.
- In order to eliminate (where possible) the ‘one up-man ship’ issues.
- Many of the external stakeholders (customer/client) didn’t want to meet together to discuss the project.
- Each wanted/insisted upon ‘private’ meetings with the project manager.

Ensure that internal stakeholders were not making unrealistic promises to external stakeholders.

Ensure that European stakeholders fully understood the issues face by the customer/client when delays occurred.

The solution

Stakeholder expectations were re-assessed and agreed by:

Compile an in-depth stakeholder map and engagement strategy.

- Included a robust communication plan.
- Series of face-to-face meetings with each element of the customer/client stakeholder group to discuss expectations and agree a way forward.
- Customer/client not impressed by attempts to communicate by telephone/email etc.
- Don't meet with one group and not the others.
- Weekly conference call to oversee stakeholders to discuss issues and resolutions.
- Based on a weekly project tracking document.
- RAG system used to identify progress/issues.
- Issues identified as red on the weekly project tracking document highlighted to senior management.

Issues associated with global teams were addressed as follows:

- Weekly conference call was conducted on a Wednesday afternoon (last working day in location of the project) giving the UK/European based teams two working days to provide answers as required in time for beginning of working week (Saturday).
- Project manager chaired a project integration meeting in the UK every six weeks where all UK based project leads attended.
- Video conference calls were tried but proved to be less successful than face-to-face meetings.
- The fact that the project manager made the effort to travel back to the UK for these meetings was a clear indication to the customer/client of the importance the project manager placed on a successful completion of the project.

The benefits

- Communications improved to the point that all were on the same page.
- Project timescales were met which pleased the customer/client.
- A degree of trust was developed between the project team and the various stakeholder communities.

The learning points

Projects that have a range of stakeholders based globally need careful communication plans and methodology to succeed. Regular and accurate communication is the key and whilst technology has its part to play in the management of projects, face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders are paramount in ensuring success.

A weekly project tracker document, primarily for use with internal stakeholders, is a very useful tool in monitoring progress within the project, particularly with global teams.

This case study was written by the APM Stakeholder Engagement Focus Group.

- *For more information on the group or stakeholder engagement, [click here](#).*