Useful Links – January 2019

"Useful Links" 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

Introduction

This month we have a variety of stakeholder relation topics – covering the unconventional, the wider project team, difficult stakeholder relationships and the difficult sponsor (again!) Usually taken for granted, the project team is the one stakeholder subset you cannot afford to ignore, if you haven't got a fully engaged team, from top to bottom, your project is headed for problems! So how do you get the best out of this group of stakeholders? Read on …

APM evening lecture

Going beyond conventional stakeholder engagement

Claire Smith is a former senior diplomat with a unique CV; Claire has recently completed a Masters qualification with Oxford University for which she investigated stakeholder engagement aspects of the Crossrail Archaeology project. You may have missed Claire's talk at Reading University back in November, but she will be delivering the talk again at the University of Bedfordshire, Luton, on Tuesday 29 January, 6 to 8 pm. This talk comes highly recommended, the Reading edition of the talk was so fascinating it generated over an hour of Q&A once the talk was over.

Book Review
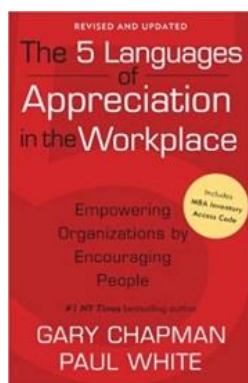
The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace
by Gary Chapman and Paul White

This may offer a new way of thinking about team dynamics; but we are all aware that individual people appear to feel appreciated in different ways. According to Chapman and White, in a nutshell, these are "Words of affirmation", "Quality time", "Acts of service", "Tangible gifts" and "Physical touch". You have to read the book to unpack the detail but it's an obvious statement that to get the best out of your team, they each need to feel appreciated in the way that's appropriate to that individual.

The implementation of these principles is described, and made easy by inclusion (with the book) of a passcode to access online resources – called the MBA Inventory - (so beware buying a second-hand copy as the code should be single-user-specific). Plus there is a whole facilitation organisation behind the scenes at appreciationatwork.com.

The whole work also raises the question of how much this could be extrapolated to external stakeholders who are engaged with regularly. This is a new dimension to project management soft skills, and particularly stakeholder engagement.

Research Paper

Project governance and stakeholders: a literature review

The International Journal of Project Management have a new paper out this January covering the body of literature behind governance and stakeholders, written expertly by Roya Derakhshan, Rodney Turner and Mauro Mancini. Take a look and read it – it's openly available for download. Particularly insightful is a compendium of "knowledge gaps", where the relationship is there on the organogram but not well covered in terms of research literature. This is a really useful paper which adds to the SEFG Bibliography.

Did you see …?

Board Games

An excellent article in Project Magazine (Autumn 2018, page 28) by Martin Samphire in the <<INSIGHT>> series of articles. The problem of the absent or disengaged sponsor (a key stakeholder) has been recognised for some time as a bugbear of good project management, and the SEFG resource pages list it as one of the "patterns" of behaviour that typify stakeholder problem issues. In his article, Martin takes the discussion a step deeper, beginning with the distinction between highly trained project managers, but poorly trained project sponsors (in the sense that they may not understand their ongoing sponsorship responsibilities, or don't have the required competences in relation to the role). So Martin goes on to present a discussion on the nature and scope of the role, development of the right culture, and its subsequent upkeep. In Martin's assessment the company Board has responsibility, as overseer of the project sponsors. And from the Board flows down the right culture for appropriate levels of engagement between project sponsor and project manager. Wise words ….