

Useful Links Update – May 2017

“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

Blogs

A humorous look at the [“absent sponsor”](#) – one of the Behaviour Patterns identified as a common stakeholder problem.

Books

[What got you here won't get you there – Marshall Goldsmith](#)

Marshall Goldsmith is an internationally recognised management expert and this book is in the genre of [“business habits you need to break”](#). The basic premise is that good business people nevertheless have faults that hinder them from being excellent. These are interpersonal skills which evidently apply to stakeholder engagement as much as interactions with colleagues. Goldsmith then develops the principle of “natural law” which is that motivated people want to perform better and will be willing to adjust their behaviour to get better outcomes. These adjustments are presented as 20 workplace habits that need to be broken.

The heart of the book is working through this list of 20, blow by blow, using examples and experience from the authors long career as a human performance coach. Humerous, witty and neatly put, each one is a master class in how NOT to do things and thereby to make things far better. It covers staff (both senior and junior) customers, clients, colleagues - in fact pretty much everyone who is likely to be a stakeholder in your project. The inverted approach of “not what to do” but “what to avoid” makes this a stand-out easy to read classic. Highly recommended.

Events

[Stakeholder management and how is it useful](#)

Date: Wednesday 31 May 2017 .

This session provides the tactics you need to identify, herd and lead stakeholders to ensure a successful project deliverable.

[APM Presents 2017 – Professional development](#)

Date: Friday 7 July 2017.

It will address the challenges, techniques and keys to success as well as the ways in which individuals and organisations can develop capability and improve project success.

With speakers drawn from **APM's respected Specific Interest Groups (SIGs)** alongside expert advisors and professional development specialists, APM Presents is a uniquely interactive event which will provide those across the profession with an unrivalled insight into real projects.

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Websites

Ensuring Effective Stakeholder Engagement

[This guide](#) will support your engagement with stakeholders and equip you with some helpful tools and advice to develop effective stakeholder communications plans within your own teams. It describes a robust model for running, managing and evaluating effective stakeholder campaigns.

Applications

IdeaCheck

This [new computer and smartphone online application](#) lets you check the appetite for your idea of a potential project, without holding yet more meetings. It also helps you seek stakeholder feedback and suggestions for building on your initial research, thereby gaining buy-in. It even creates a draft Project Brief you can edit and publish.

Tools

The Q-method

When it comes to involving stakeholders in project management, the nuclear sector has showcased some of the best and worst examples of engagement practice. Globally-documented accidents such as Chernobyl and Fukushima have meant that building and operating nuclear facilities is increasingly a challenge, in managing public risk perception and community trust in industry and regulatory authorities. High profile failures such as the failure of the former radioactive waste management organisation Nirex to secure planning permission for a nuclear waste facility near to Sellafield in West Cumbria 20 years ago, highlight how important it is to integrate public values and concerns into managing environmentally risky projects.

The problems of the past have occurred when project managers adopt “decide-announce-defend” tactics - coming up with a project site, using public relations to tell a community it’s happening and then trying to stop the plan from failing in the face of public opposition. Finding ways to successfully manage and integrate the opinions and values of different stakeholders has, therefore, become a high priority.

Academic research in the social sciences has been valuable in expanding the range of different ‘tools’ available to decision-makers and project managers for effectively understanding, firstly the underlying principles of engagement - the approach which developer organisation take to engaging with affected stakeholder; secondly, the means to evaluate different people’s perspectives, identify areas of commonality and conflict; and thirdly, how to integrate this knowledge of stakeholder perspectives into project management decisions. Dr Matthew Cotton of the University of York’s Environment Department is working on two such projects that cover these three issues in relation

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to the management of nuclear technologies. The first is the Decommissioning, Immobilisation and Storage Solutions for Nuclear Waste Inventories (DISTINCTIVE) project, funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, and the second is the Histories of Nuclear Energy and Society (HONEST) project, funded by the Euratom Horizon 2020 programme.

Dr Cotton states that when understanding the underlying principles of engagement, one of the first things to consider is how stakeholders are ‘imagined’ by project managers because this influences the ways in which subsequent communication strategies are designed. So for example, if we think about people affected by the development of a new facility or infrastructure as “Not in My Backyard (NIMBY)” protestors, concerned only with the negative effect on house prices, then our attitude will be different to if we think of them as neighbours, or partners in a local community development project. He says that understanding this difference then relates to the types of engagement tools and methods that are used to understand differences amongst stakeholder perspectives. One social research tool that he employs in the DISTINCTIVE project is called Q-methodology. Q-method was designed by a psychologist William Stephenson in the 1950s to be an “objective study of subjectivity”. In essence it’s a small-scale survey technique, where a researcher first collects a range of subjective statements about a topic, each representative of differing opinions in public debate. Then a range of stakeholders are tasked with ‘sorting’ the statements - rank ordering them into those most and least like their own perspective. By collecting the completed Q-sorts (as they are known) and subjecting them to statistical analysis, a range of aggregate ‘accounts’ or ‘common perspectives’ emerge. This is vitally important for stakeholder dialogue processes, as it can reveal areas of consensus and conflict amongst competing perspectives in an analytically robust manner. By understanding areas which are either more or less contentious amongst different stakeholders, this can then lead to the design of effective dialogue processes where such conflict can be resolved and areas of common agreement reinforced.

For discussion of ‘imagining’ stakeholders in dialogue processes, this research may be of use:

[Making electricity networks “visible”: Industry actor representations of “publics” and public engagement in infrastructure planning](#)

For an instructional guide for Q-method use see:

[Explore Q Resources and Get Started With Your Own Q Story](#)

[Using Q Method to Reveal Social Perspectives in Environmental Research](#)

For studies on Q-method in stakeholder dialogue see:

[Stakeholder perspectives on shale gas fracking: a Q-method study of environmental discourses](#)

If you would like to take part in a Q-method study to see how it works, please contact matthew.cotton@york.ac.uk

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Research

Staying with the nuclear theme, a couple of useful research papers on stakeholder engagement have come recently from the University of Leeds.

[Managing social challenges in the nuclear decommissioning industry: A responsible approach towards better performance](#) by D C Invernizzi, G Locatelli and N J Brookes – International Journal of Project Management, JPMA-01964, 2016.

[Driving forces and obstacles to nuclear cogeneration in Europe: Lessons learnt from Finland](#) by M Leurent, F Jasserand, G Locatelli, J Palm, M Rämä, and A Trianni

These research papers demonstrate the use of specific techniques in assessing some difficult-to-tackle areas where stakeholder perceptions form a significant part of the project dynamic.

The SEFG hopes to confirm a lecture on these topics, by Dr Locatelli, to be held in the Thames Valley branch area later in 2017.