

## The distant sponsor

**Links to RICS/APM principles:** Remember they are only human; Take responsibility

**Stakeholder terms:** Sponsorship, communication

### Context

The project (or programme) sponsor is found to be either too stretched or incompetent, to be sufficiently engaged with the project manager. This poses serious risks to both delivery and outcomes. This behaviour can be witnessed in most sectors and applies to all phases of the project lifecycle with the possible exception of concept/initiation.

### Problem

Lack of contact between the sponsor and the project or programme results in increased risk, time or cost of delivery, or the reduced quality of expected outputs and outcomes. The sponsor is merely a 'figurehead', unengaged with the delivery team and unable to wield appropriate influence in support and direction.

Intervention(s)

1. Early and appropriate discussion between the project sponsor and project manager which addresses the specifics of their working relationship. This disciplined approach clarifies: individual responsibilities, strategy and tactics for communication, reporting, tolerances, escalation, review points, etc.
2. The appointment by the sponsor of a 'business representative' to whom selected sponsor responsibilities are delegated.

### Outcome

From the above interventions, respectively:

1. This is a successful solution if there are no hierarchical barriers. This discipline ideally needs to be led by the sponsor. Effective sponsorship can result if the agreed actions and standards are upheld and are reviewed at regular stages in the life cycle.
2. This can relieve the project sponsor of many of the more transactional aspects of the role. However this additional role presents another 'layer' which needs to be carefully managed.

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This pattern was written by the APM Stakeholder Engagement Focus Group.

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