Negotiation & stakeholders

A resource for researcher representatives

Resource 2 of 4

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Overview

When planning a project or taking on a new role, it is helpful to consider who else is involved, their role and how you intend to work with them. This document is the second of four resources that aims to assist researcher representatives in considering who their stakeholders are, their motivations and how to negotiate. The other resources focus on how to make the most of your position, communication and influencing. Each resource provides information, exercises, links and an opportunity to reflect on your own aims and experience.

Identifying stakeholders

The definition of a stakeholder is fairly broad: a stakeholder is someone who has an interest in the success of a particular project. They can be internal or external to the organisation that is undertaking the project and can be at either senior or junior level. They may be able to affect the outcome and/or progress of the project, or they may be affected by the project in some way. A stakeholder does not have to be just one individual, it can be an organisation, a department, a team, a community, a group or any entity with an interest in the success of the project.

A knowledge of who your stakeholders are is essential when managing a project or taking on a new role. When embarking upon a new role, you are a stakeholder and it can be helpful to consider who all of the other stakeholders will be so that you know who you should keep appraised of developments, who to communicate with regularly and who you can ask for input. For example, your researcher representative role will involve multiple stakeholders, in addition to yourself, and these may include:

- Other members of the committee
- The students or staff you are representing
- The university/ institution/ department
- Other researcher representatives

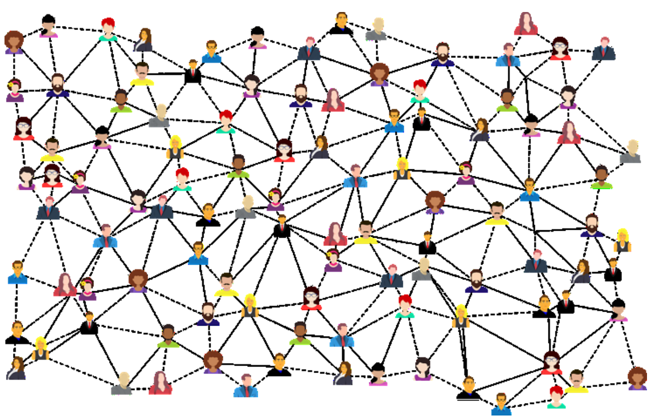
Exercise:

Write a list of stakeholders for your researcher representative role. A stakeholder can be either an organisation, a department or an individual. Try to include at least five stakeholders in your list.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Stakeholder analysis

Identifying the stakeholders and considering their motivations for a project is a useful exercise, not only so that you can clarify what each individual or group is looking to achieve from the project, but so that you can communicate and discuss these aims with other stakeholders to ensure that everyone agrees going forward. Different stakeholders will have competing demands on their time and resources and their motivations/objectives may be different; understanding and dealing with this is a key part of stakeholder management and can be important when managing a community.



The table below shows a hypothetical example of the stakeholders on a committee that a researcher representative might work with, this is an example of a stakeholder analysis.

	What is their role?	What is their desired outcome?	What are their responsibilities?	Unique facts
Researcher representative **(PhD student or postdoc)**	To represent the interests of the researchers in their cohort	To make sure researchers' voices are heard and decisions are made with their concerns in mind.	To attend regular meetings & feedback to the committee, to organise 4 events per year.	Good network of contacts in their cohort, strong technical and communication skills
Head of Department **(committee leader)**	To manage the committee meetings, share information with the committee & liaise with the Researcher representative	To ensure that meetings are managed efficiently, make sure that all relevant information is shared & ensure all actions are allocated to the relevant person.	To ensure that all voices in the committee are heard & to resolve any issues that arise.	Limited time available, expects autonomy
External partner from industry	To manage the collaboration between the university & industry (they fund some of the PhD projects in the department)	Successful PhD projects completed, happy partners in the research network & raising new initiatives such as internships	Shared knowledge & expertise, advising on engaging with industry.	Very professional, under pressure to succeed, keen to hire successful researchers and interns.

Table 1: An example stakeholder analysis.

Table 1 shows a basic stakeholder analysis including three key stakeholders, but it could be extended to include more if required. For each of the stakeholders, information is required for the following four areas:

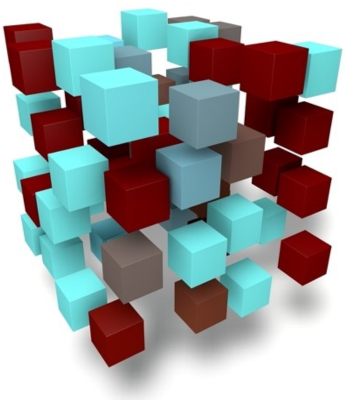
- What is their role on the committee?
- What is their desired outcome?
- What are their responsibilities while on the committee?
- Unique facts about the stakeholder that might be important to the researcher representative.

Exercise:

Using the empty table below, complete your own stakeholder analysis for your role. If you are not part of a committee or have not yet established one, then you can include hypothetical roles or names of people you would like to ask to join your committee.

	What is their role?	What is their desired outcome?	What are their responsibilities?	Unique facts
Researcher representative (PhD student or postdoc)				
Head of Department/ senior academic? (committee leader)				
?				

Once you have identified all the stakeholders, listed their roles and motivations and assessed their level of influence, the next stage is to map out a stakeholder analysis matrix. A stakeholder analysis matrix is a technique that can be used to map out the various stakeholders in a project in addition to their aims, objectives, contributions and influence as a quadrant; you can position each stakeholder in the quadrant depending on the level of influence and interest they have.



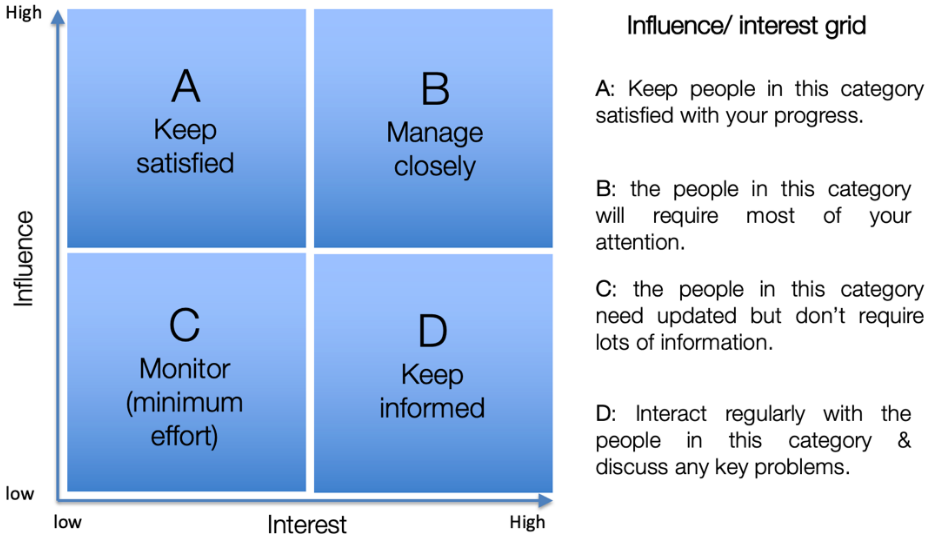


Figure 1: A stakeholder analysis grid.

Figure 1 illustrates a stakeholder analysis grid: each quadrant, labelled A-D, includes a suggestion on how to engage with that stakeholder based on their position:

A) High influence/ low interest: ensure that these people are satisfied with your progress.

B) High influence/ high interest: these stakeholders will require the most attention and interaction.

C) Low influence/ low interest: update these stakeholders but do not send them large volumes of information.

D) Low influence/ high interest: Ensure that you interact regularly with these stakeholders and discuss any problems that may arise. They may also be helpful when discussing details or technical information.

This can be a useful visualisation technique, especially if you have many stakeholders. You can also categorise the stakeholders using colour codes if you want to take the analysis further.

Exercise:

Draw your own stakeholder analysis matrix.

This section gave an overview of stakeholders, how to identify them, how to assess their influence and how to manage them. You should have a list of stakeholders for your own role and a simple stakeholder analysis matrix; this may change over time and you are encouraged to go back and review it regularly.

Negotiation

"Negotiation in the classic diplomatic sense assumes parties more anxious to agree than to disagree."

- Dean Acheson

In the previous section you considered the stakeholders in your community, culminating in how to engage with and manage particular stakeholders. Managing stakeholders and working with individuals and organisations with varying motivations can be challenging and often requires you to negotiate with and influence people in order to achieve your goals. This section will focus on negotiation and how to get the best results.

The essence of a negotiation

Why do we need to negotiate? There will be numerous occasions when the aims, objectives and needs between two parties are not aligned and therefore issues will have to be resolved through negotiation. Negotiations are a major part of life and they happen within and between universities, government, commerce and personal relationships all the time. They are required for various reasons that may be political, social, financial, personal and the objective is for two or more parties to come to a compromise or agreement. There may be several occasions when you are required to negotiate during your research or your representative role, e.g. for funding, for people's time, about a speaker for an event or over specific issues.

There are a number of myths surrounding negotiation:

Myth 1: Negotiation involves conflict.
Myth 2: Someone wins and someone loses.
Myth 3: Haggling is a mean, dirty thing to do.
Myth 4: Good negotiators are born, not made.

The first two of these myths, regarding conflict and winning/losing, are the wrong way to approach a negotiation. If two or more parties meet to discuss an area of disagreement then they are looking for the best possible outcome for both parties.

Having a toolkit of basic negotiation skills is important for anyone and these skills are not limited to a few lucky individuals who are born with them, anyone can learn these skills and develop them over time with practice. There are a range of skills that are involved in negotiation, for example:

communication, listening, thinking rapidly under pressure, good verbal articulation, determination, trustworthiness, persuasion, patience, decisiveness, analytical thinking, problem solving, empathy, controlling emotion, persistence, tolerance, competitive, debating, assertiveness

Exercise:

Circle the words/ phrases above that you think you are good at & underline the ones you would like to improve.

Process of negotiation

Once the decision has been made to enter a negotiation, both parties can enter the negotiation phase: this may be a formal structured approach or a more informal discussion depending on the situation. Even if your situation is fairly simple, it can be helpful to understand how more complex negotiations are carried out. Negotiation is a systematic process with multiple stages:

1. **Planning and preparation**
   Ensure that you have all of the information necessary for the negotiation. For example, have you looked in to the other party's background? Can you guess what their opening offer will be?
2. **Initial discussion & setting any rules**
   This is your opportunity to put your own case forward and for the other party to do the same. It is important to listen at this stage in case you miss anything important from the other side's case. This is also when rules of the negotiation are determined: are there any topics that are off limits for discussion? Are there any time constraints?

3. Clarify goals
   At this stage, the goals and viewpoints from each party are listed, often in order of priority, so that all areas of the disagreement/ issue are clear.
4. Problem solving and bargaining
   Now that each party has been through the planning, discussion, rules and goal clarification stages they can start to negotiate and try to achieve an outcome where both parties win. During this part of the process they may discover common ground and seek an agreement with this in mind.
5. Agreement
   Once all issues have been discussed and both parties are satisfied then they will hopefully reach an agreement. The agreement must be absolutely clear so that both sides understand it, if there is anything that is unclear then it must be resolved.
6. Implementation of agreement
   Once the agreement has been made/ signed then both parties can go ahead and implement the actions that were agreed upon.

When negotiations don’t go to plan

Occasionally, despite the best efforts of everyone involved in the negotiation process, negotiations do not result in an agreement. If this happens, each party should consider their BATNA, or their Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement. If they have planned appropriately, then they will have already have decided what their BATNA is prior to entering the initial negotiation.

Your BATNA is the absolute minimum or worst resolution you will accept if no agreement can be reached in negotiation, it is an alternative course of action. This could be walking away from the table altogether and not engaging with the other party at all (though this may not always be an option) or it could involve engaging with completely different parties.

Hypothetical scenario

Alison is the postdoc representative for her department and she is planning to organise a series of guest speaker seminars, running once per month over the course for a year, for a group of approximately 40 postdocs. She would like to provide lunch after each seminar so that the attendees have the opportunity to network and talk to the guest speaker and she is seeking funding from the Head of Department in order to do so. However, she knows that money is tight in the department and that there are several other projects competing for the small pot of funding available. Before attending the committee meeting where she will put forward her proposal and funding request, Alison takes the following steps:

1. She approaches two senior members of staff that she has worked with before and who are also on the committee and updates them on the request she is planning to make. Then she asks if they will support her in the meeting. They agree to do so and also tell her that the department has been looking to start such a seminar series recently but nobody has stepped forward to organise it.
2. Alison writes a one page proposal for the seminar series including potential guest speakers, expected attendees, costings and dates/ times. She also includes a section on how this seminar series will benefit the department.
3. Alison circulates her proposal to everyone on the committee one week in advance of the committee meeting and asks them to consider her proposal and for it to be added as a discussion item on the agenda. The committee chair adds it to the agenda and allocates 10 minutes for discussion at the meeting.
4. After presenting her request to the meeting in two minutes, the proposal is discussed and the committee recognise the benefit to the department but the amount of funding requested is deemed to be too high for the existing budget. Therefore, Alison suggests a lower amount (asking if they can change her request for lunch to a less expensive coffee reception) and again emphasises the benefits of the series to the department that they have already acknowledged.
5. The committee agrees to fund coffee receptions for the seminar series for the first six months and promises to review the funding four months from now when Alison will be invited to feedback on the progress and success of the project.

Questions:

a) What steps did Alison take prior to the meeting that helped her to achieve a successful outcome?
b) What did Alison concede during the meeting?
c) Would you do anything differently?

Further reading

- Carnegie, D. (2010) How to win friends and influence people. Ebury Digital; New Ed edition.
- Fisher and Ury (2011) Getting to yes. Penguin Books. pp. 1–170. ISBN 978-0-14-311875-6.