

## Commentary January 2007 - Issue 12

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### When stakeholders won't participate

#### Who is a Stakeholder?

One or more of the following statements could describe who or what a project stakeholder is:

1. A person, group or business unit that has a stake or interest in an activity.
2. A person or group who can affect or is affected by an action.
3. An individual or group with an interest in the success of an organisation in delivering intended results.

#### Essential Actions

We often talk about "best practice". One of the key principles of managing any project, i.e. "essential actions", is to ensure:

- you know who the project stakeholders are,
- stakeholders are advised of the project objectives, deliverables and scope.
- stakeholders are in agreement with the purpose, scope, objectives and deliverables of the project.

#### Stakeholder Participation is Key

What if the people or organisations identified as key stakeholders (e.g., users, customers, process owners) have no interest in or appetite for the project or its deliverables? If a key stakeholder is reluctant to participate, contribute or feedback on the project, stop and check your position.

#### Check Your Position

Confirm or validate your understanding of the purpose of the project with the project sponsor(s).

If there isn't a signed off management plan (which should outline the scope of the project, its purpose, objectives, deliverables, approach and proposed timeline) you should ensure that one is drafted and distributed to all stakeholders now. This gives them the opportunity to check that the project understands what they require and to correct any misconceptions. It also gives those stakeholders who have not had detailed exposure to the project to date a chance to understand its scope, deliverables, etc.

If someone refuses to sign-off or otherwise approve the plan, then clearly there is an issue.

Talk to the sponsor. Ensure that they read and endorse the management plan. If the sponsor does not endorse the plan this confirms there is a serious issue and the project should not proceed any further until this has been resolved.

#### Resolve Engagement Issues

To identify the issue, which **may** just be miscommunication, arrange and hold discussions with the sponsor and other project signatories. Walk through the draft management plan using this as a basis to determine why sign off has not been achieved.

Once agreement has been reached with the project sponsor and signatories confirm with them who the project stakeholders are.

#### Rebuild Stakeholder Relationships

Arrange meetings with stakeholders to discuss the project objectives and to confirm what their priorities, dependencies and constraints are. This may be difficult as they may have lost some confidence in the project's ability to deliver what they need.

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Often the best course of action in these circumstances is to change the “brand” of the project, (e.g., with newly identified deliverables or requirements or a revised scope) or change the project leader. The latter should be done as a **very last resort** as this can be damaging to the individual concerned, particularly if they are permanent members of staff.

If the project has been on the right track all along but the stakeholders have conflicting priorities or requirements, reassess either the timing or deliverables of the project or challenge the objectives with the sponsor.

Strong negotiation, people and diplomatic skills are needed to manage issues such as these. If you have a project manager with these qualities,

### How to Manage Business Processes

Do you run an HR or Finance function? Are you an IT Service Delivery Manager?

Do you own or have ultimate responsibility for critical business processes and want understandable guidelines and tools to help you and your teams to manage them successfully?

You don't necessarily need ongoing intervention from external Consultants to manage business processes successfully. If you would like to enable your employees to do this at a fraction of the cost of hiring external Consultants you will be interested in our 1 day Business Process Management Essentials workshop.

The purpose of the workshop is to provide practical guidelines, instructions and exercises to support those wanting to manage or establish long-term process improvement programmes within their organisation. Using case studies and

the project should progress beyond the initiation stage under their continued and expert stakeholder management.

If you would like more advice or guidance on managing stakeholders or conflicting business priorities, please e-mail [info@amosbutler.com](mailto:info@amosbutler.com) or telephone 0845 125 9612 to speak to a Senior Business Analysts.

#### Disclaimer

The information provided above is not comprehensive and should, therefore, only be used as a guide. If you would like more detailed guidance or an initial talk with one of our analyst, please call +44(0) 7960 588 834 or e-mail [info@amosbutler.com](mailto:info@amosbutler.com).

exercises, the workshop provides delegates with a framework for managing their processes and carrying out and implementing improvements.

The key topics are:

- Identifying when a process needs improvement
- Managing a process improvement programme
- How to document business processes
- Implementing new or revised business processes

The workshop can be delivered off or on site. Click [here](#) to find out more. Alternatively, click here for a [booking form](#), telephone one of our Business Analysts on 0845 125 9612 or e-mail [info@amosbutler.com](mailto:info@amosbutler.com)