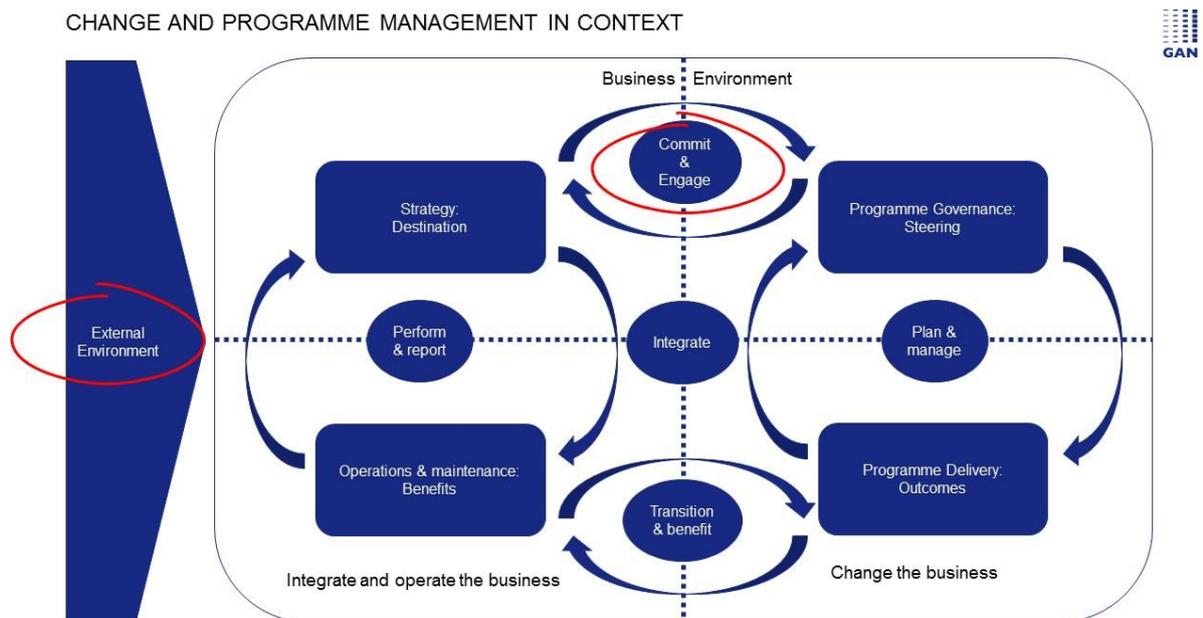


Mapping the landscape: engaging with your stakeholder environment and communicating effectively

This is the fourth post on the Change and Programme Management series.

Today, we are looking at stakeholder and communication management – addressing the right audiences with the right messages and signals for successful change and programme delivery, and for integration in business-as-usual operations. In our model for programme management – we are at the borders between strategy, programme and external environment.



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Two things to remember before launching in this activity:

Any programme affects the environment in which it operates and at the same time, is affected by its external environment.

Any successful programme has a “cycle of productive excitement” which can vary from three to four years, to as much as a decade; depending on the scale of the enterprise, and the pace of change in its environment. When the excitement or buzz begins to fade, it’s time for a fresh thrust.



It is therefore essential not only to identify external and internal drivers in order to shape a strategic change programme (see also article 2 in the Change and Programme management Series - Setting the direction and defining the destination) but also to map and track stakeholder positioning, as this will help to develop, support and manage effective programme communications.

How would you go about this?

A stakeholder management plan can be designed in 5 steps in order to engage and gain support along the way based on the strategic change objectives set for the programme:

- I. Identify stakeholders; internally and externally
- II. Analyse and map stakeholders by proximity into top tiers, second tiers, etc;
- III. Plan Manage stakeholder communications and reporting;
- IV. Identify the right channels to effectively engage with your stakeholders.
- V. Monitor progress in stakeholder engagement, persuasion and advocacy levels against a programme timeline.

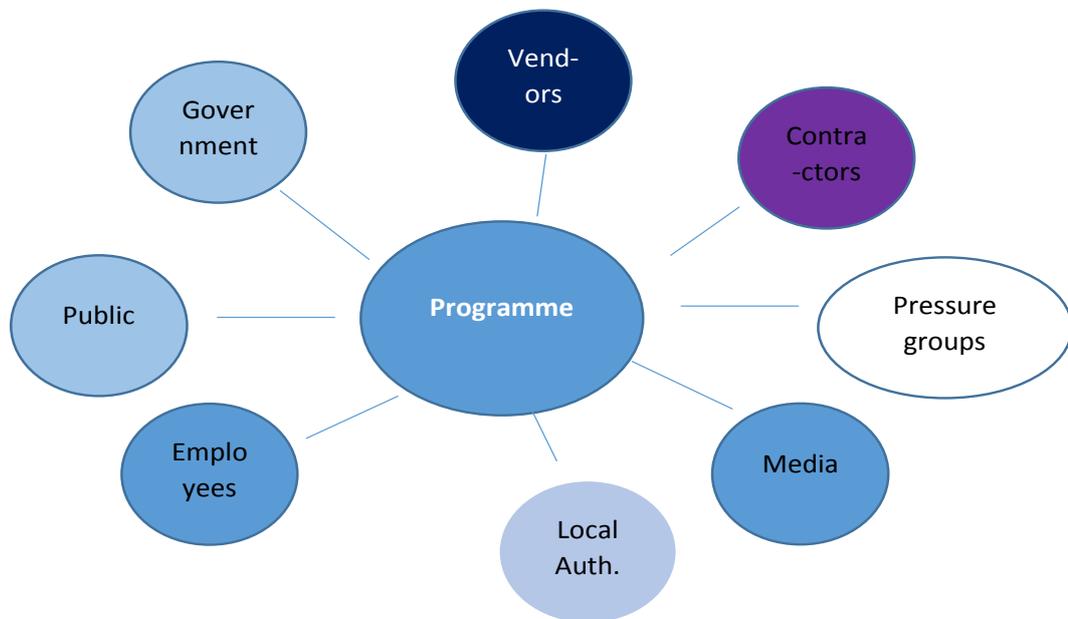
Defining Stakeholder segments starts during the strategy and programme definition phases.

Programmes and organisations need to be able to identify their stakeholders and assess the level of engagement and impact they will have in meeting the objectives of the programme. A first stage for this process will be to create a stakeholder proximity map. This map will lay out different tiers of stakeholders according to their potential to affect the reputation or the progress of the project or organisation, with the programme at the centre.

Stakeholders include persons and organisations that have an interest in the strategy of the organisation and programme and/or have an impact or are impacted by a programme. There are two obvious groups: internal and external.

Internal Stakeholders: these are all the internal business partners, programme and project teams with which engagement will be necessary, and those with an economic or contractual relationship such as shareholders and suppliers.

External Stakeholders: External stakeholders normally include media channels, public authorities, customers, business and industry partners, the local community and/or general public.



Stakeholders will be identified, captured and mapped for proximity to the programme in terms of direct impact or interest, influence and control in the programme landscape, based on the following questions.

- Who are the most important tiers of stakeholders for this programme?
- How great is their impact on the programme progress or reputation?
- How great is their influence on other important stakeholders, for example those who control resources?



- What is their level of engagement in the present time, are they in favour, against, or indecisive?
- How easily can they be influenced, persuaded and brought on board as long-term advocates and supporters especially in times of issues and crises?

Once the stakeholder map and landscape understood, a tracking tool articulating what engagement activities are required for each stakeholder, will allow to track progress. The tracker will identify the stakeholder relationship owner in the programme – a person accountable for managing and directing the stakeholder relationship towards the “to be” status and record and update interventions on a regular basis. Making the link with the communication team.

Have you had at any time in your professional life experienced the urge to communicate a message you think is right, without delay, to a group of colleagues and line managers? Think about an email you have sent and you should not have... Now scale this up to a very large organisation and programme and the way it would communicate....

In simple terms, communication is the process of transferring information and knowledge from one source to another.

Effective communication of the relevant information is a two-way process in which data, evidence, analysis, commentary and feedback are conveyed through reports, speeches and other media to a targeted audience to perform an action or reach a decision based on this information.

Once the stakeholder audiences are defined, it is paramount to define a set of key messages and positioning statements to address these audiences in their questions, concerns, and other key requirements. A series of pre-defined lines to adopt should also be prepared and ready to use specially in cases of crises or issues. It is important that messages are continuously updated, and aligned with the programmes variables or changing milestones.

A good communication strategy and plan will ensure that the programme audiences are informed in a targeted and timely manner. Timing is key here.



Based on the stakeholder segmentation, the communication plan will list the messages and interventions to be communicated to which audience group, when, how (medium), why and from whom.

Communication media channels can be categorized as high or low-impact and commitment-building (or buy-in), and will include:

- One-to-one coaching, small group workshops,
- Intranet, social network (SharePoint), knowledge transfer
- Seminars, conferences
- User guides, Reminders, online help
- Publications and collaterals
- Website, social media
- Third-party networks

Somme key communication principles to keep in mind:

- Benefit-led
- Messages will need to pinpoint the benefits to stakeholders groups
- Timely, accurate, up-to-date, regular and consistent
- Appropriate in language and medium for stakeholders and staff
- Cost-effective; optimizing the use of existing channels
- Encourage two way flow and feedback

Now take 5 seconds to think of a programme and the messages and information you can remember – what were the most memorable and why?



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- Gildas founded GAN Advisory Services in 2013. He has 15+ years of extensive international experience across central Europe, Africa, South America and the UK in all phases of major projects and programmes with leading construction and management consulting organisations (Kier Group / Buro Four) and in performance improvement advisory for Ernst & Young.
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