

# beyond... the mbh newsletter



Nov 2003

## Editorial

Welcome to the November edition of beyond... This month we are tackling that most over-mentioned and under-utilised of processes - stakeholder management.

As humans nothing seems to scare us more than other humans. We will do our utmost to avoid contact with those we do not know or do not have something very obviously in common with. We use email to hold conversations wherever we can get away with it. Can you remember the last time you called someone up or paid a visit to invite them to a meeting? And yet we all love to socialize and being social is core to being human.

When we embark on a new change initiative or project we just want to get on with it and get to the solution, at the expense of spending some time thinking of those we will rely upon later to develop or implement, to embed or embrace the solution. So why does this happen? Do we merely hope that by some miracle these stakeholders are going to drop into line with a smile on their face when called upon? Or do we recognize the need to do "something" but we are not sure what and so we coyly place them into the too hard box, or the we're too busy and will get around to it at sometime box, never to be seen again. More often than not, one or both of these scenarios become a reality in projects or change initiatives.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Managing stakeholders effectively is in fact very easy with the right attitude and the right tools. This month's feature article demonstrates some of the tools that we use every day on projects. These tools have been developed in the knowledge that as humans we love to be informed, consulted and involved. We love to feel special or important to others. Sales strategy has as its core foundation the widely recognized maxim that as humans we love to talk about ourselves. Think about how good you felt the last time someone paid you the complement of seeking your help, expertise or involvement.

Communication and involvement is the most effective tool in our armoury, and the good news is it is something we all have access to. So drop us a line...or better still *give us a call !!* to let us know how you get on.

Its good to talk...

## Feature Article

### Lower your handicap with the power of Stakeholder Management

Here's the scenario:

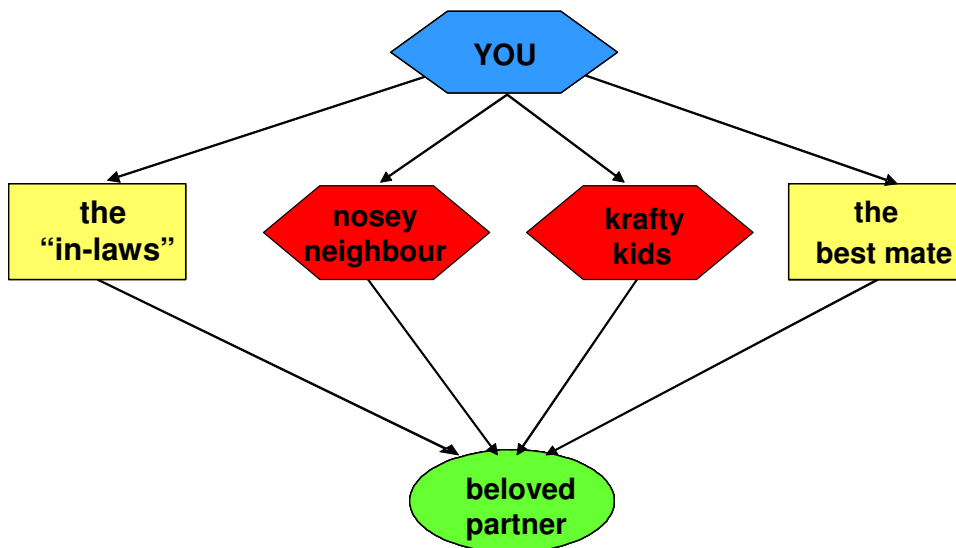
*You want to go away on a golfing long-weekend; it's going to be expensive, you'll be away from your partner and family for 3 days and 3 nights and you've already had a barney with your partner this week. On the face of it you've got no chance of getting a pass for the weekend so what are you going to do?*

Whenever we want to achieve or do something we are always reliant of the support or assistance of others. The better you manage these parties or stakeholders the better your chance of achieving what you want to achieve.

The first step in effective stakeholder management is to identify who these stakeholders are. Once you have done this try to recruit them into specific roles to help further your cause. So firstly brainstorm your stakeholder groups to create a stakeholder map to include the following 'change' roles:

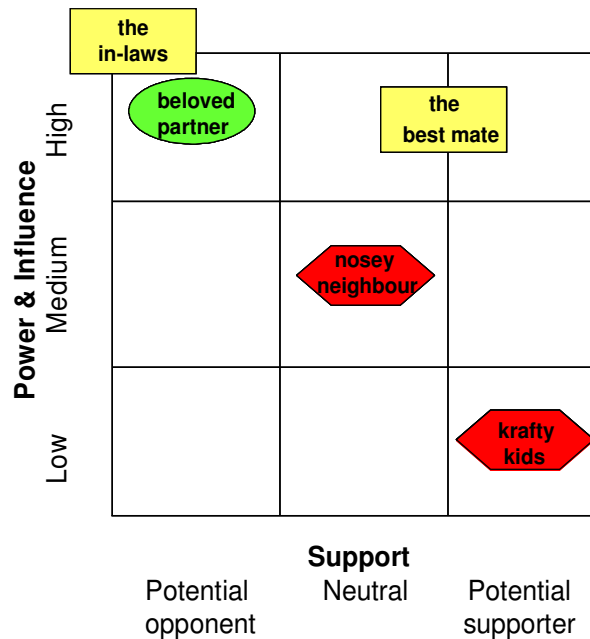
- **Targets** - those directly impacted by your weekend away, i.e. your partner
- **Influencers - advocates or change agents** who can directly influence your targets, for example, the neighbours and your kids could be potential advocates. The best mate and potentially the in-laws are likely to have more influence and therefore could potentially act as change agents for you
- **Sponsors** (those legitimising/funding the event) in this case probably yourself

In this very simple scenario you could end up with a stakeholder map like this with arrows indicating the lines of influence:



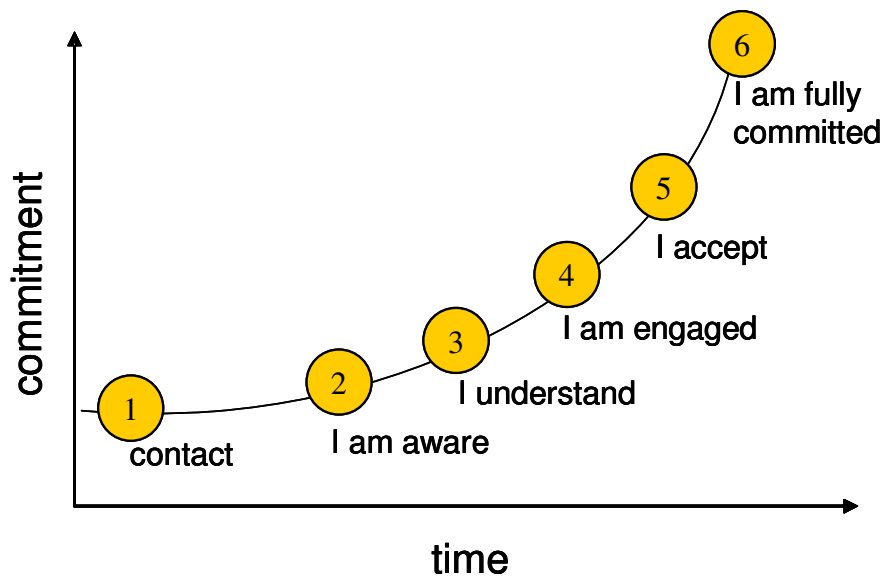
As with most activities or projects in this scenario you have limited time and so you will need to be smart to get the go ahead for the trip. Success will depend on how you target your influencing efforts and how effectively you utilise the influencing power of those you have identified as your key stakeholders.

Some analysis of your situation and of your stakeholders will help. You could, for example, use a matrix similar to the one below to help assess your situation better:



From this matrix your situation doesn't look great! Your most influential stakeholders, the dreaded in-laws, are your highest potential opponents; your highest potential supporters, your wonderful offspring, just don't have the pulling power to really help you out!!

So what are you going to do to drag your partner kicking and screaming up the **Commitment Curve** from position 1 all the way up to a reluctant 5 or 6?



The answer is **Stakeholder Action Planning**, where a plan is devised for each of your individual or groups of stakeholders to move them from their current position on the commitment curve, ascertained from your analysis, towards a desired position.

Here's a possible approach to influence the stakeholders in this scenario to get you successfully onto your weekend away:

### 1. The In-Laws

Some work really has to happen here to avoid sabotage of this and any future trips. Realistically they will not become supporters in the short-run but you may be able to neutralise their opposition. Take them out for the day or do their shopping to move them from

1 to a realistic 3 on the commitment curve to neutralise their opposition and therefore negative influence on your partner.

## **2. The Best Mate**

This is your potential trump card!! A big influence on your partner and after a brief heart-to-heart last week you should be able to move him or her from 3 to 6 where he or she will actively seek to help you move your other half up the commitment curve.

## **3. The Neighbours**

As advocates the neighbours have limited direct influence but offer a helpful comment here or there to support your cause. A little effort could score you an easy 5 or 6 on the commitment curve so keep them up to date with your efforts and let them know how important the trip is to you. It maybe a helpful comment from them that tips the balance in your favour.

## **4. The Kids**

The same goes for the kids. Try an incentive to really get them on-side to help soften the blow!!

Now, get ready, pack your bags and get out the sun-cream, I feel a golfing weekend coming on...