Stakeholder analysis

Overview of analysis methods: which one do you choose?

'Stakeholder analysis' is not one specific tool, but a family of methods. They differ mainly in the question they answer. There are a great many tools to be found online and in books on facilitation methods. Below you will find five common practical questions, with examples of suitable analysis methods. There are more useful methods that can lead to the same insight.

Tip: The terms 'stakeholder analysis' and 'stakeholder management' are often used interchangeably. Yet there is a fundamental difference. Stakeholder management is about dealing with the risks that arise from the interests of stakeholders. It is therefore a specific approach to risk management.

PLEASE NOTE

In practice, the stakeholder analysis is often carried out, but the step to conclusions and actions is missing. Then it is no longer 'management'. So agree on clear follow-up actions, with an action owner and a deadline.

1. WHO ACTUALLY ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS?

Identifying and delimiting

Stakeholder brainstorm or stakeholder register. Many analysis methods start with this first step: collecting and recording all the people involved in a structured way. After all, you cannot analyse what you have not mapped. For many project teams this is already a very helpful step: these are all the parties you are dealing with.

Onion model. When mapping stakeholders, it can be useful to place them in concentric rings. This lets you define who falls inside or outside a particular area, and then, in a next step, choose more specifically which stakeholders you want to examine further. Common rings are, from inside to outside: project team, (internal) organisation, external stakeholders and wider environment. In complex projects, you can further divide the project team into a core team and the wider project organisation.

2. HOW IMPORTANT IS WHO?

Prioritising

Power/interest grid (Mendelow). This analysis is usually shown as power (influence) versus interest and thus offers a quick prioritisation of stakeholders. It is a simple step that gives no insight into attitude or relationships. For a slightly different angle, you can also make a power/predictability matrix. This prioritises stakeholders based on their influence and on how predictable or desirable their behaviour is.

Stakeholder Salience Model. This prioritisation is somewhat more refined because it combines three attributes: power, urgency and legitimacy (the desirability of the stakeholder's actions). The model distinguishes seven types of stakeholders, with a clear order of priority among them.

3. WHAT DO THEY THINK OF IT, AND WHERE DO THEY NEED TO GO?

Attitude and engagement

Attitude analysis. This analysis step is useful when there are concerns about resistance or about the emotional charge of the change. You look at the stakeholder's degree of influence or power, and at whether the stakeholder is for, against or neutral towards the change. This produces four types, which to varying degrees can provide support for the intended course or pose risks to it.

Stakeholder Engagement Assessment Matrix. This instrument, a matrix in table form, shows for each stakeholder how engaged they currently are with the goal or result, and what the desired level of engagement is. This gives direction to the follow-up actions.

4. HOW DO THEY RELATE TO EACH OTHER?

Relationships and network

To answer this question properly, you map the mutual relationships and coalitions. There are several analysis tools that do this, but we are fans of the **PDC force field analysis**. This instrument places all actors in relation to the task (for example the project) and in relation to each other. Both the stakeholders and the relevant mutual relationships are weighted (positive, negative or neutral), so that you can also formulate follow-up strategies indirectly, via several stakeholders.

5. WHAT DO THEY CONTRIBUTE AND WHAT DO THEY GET OUT OF IT?

Value and mutual dependence

Most tools treat stakeholders as something you manage in relation to your own task. If ownership of the task becomes shared, we favour the **Ecosystem Pie Model**. This tool sees stakeholders as co-creators of a shared value proposition. It assumes mutual dependence and a fair share of the whole for every stakeholder, and examines each stakeholder's contribution, gain and risks. The model is less suitable for stakeholders who do have influence but do not actively contribute to the shared value proposition themselves. For those stakeholders, the tools mentioned earlier provide better insights.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT ANALYSIS TOOL?

The choice mainly depends on the type of task and the insight you need to determine the right follow-up actions. In practice, you usually choose several methods one after another:

- First **identify**: stakeholder register, onion model.
- Then **prioritise**: power/interest grid or, if needed, the salience model.
- After that, **go deeper**: into attitude, relationships or shared ownership.

SOURCES

- Onion model: businessanalystlearnings.com
- Power/interest grid: researchgate.net
- Stakeholder Salience Model: Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997), jstor.org/stable/259247
- PDC force field analysis: hartvoorprojecten.nl
- Ecosystem Pie Model: ecosystempie.com

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