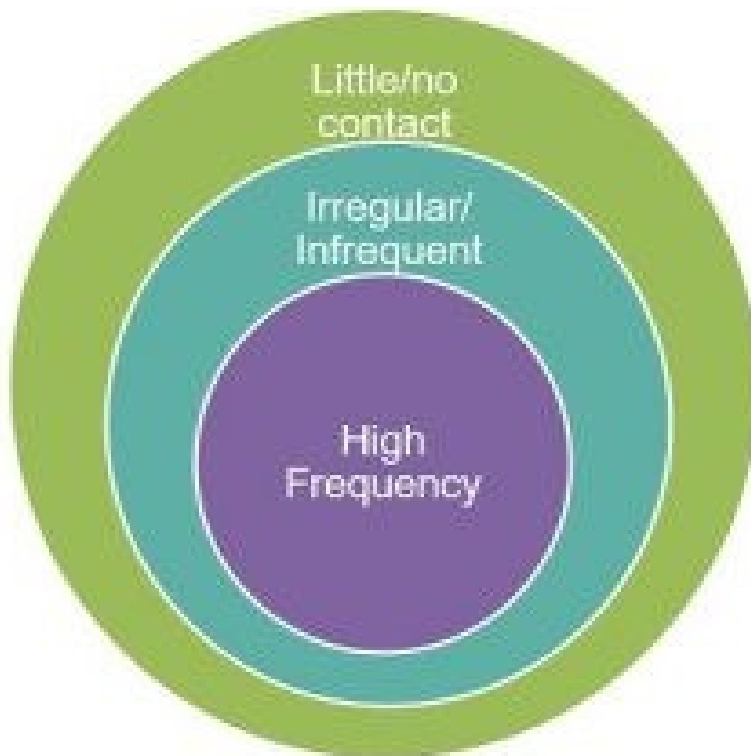# How to map key stakeholders and engage them effectively

Outward focus is critical. High performing teams know how important it is to gather external information and use it well to ensure informed direction and they also have the savvy to change course when needed.

Yet I often work with senior teams who get caught in these traps:

- They communicate in the same old way with the same old list of stakeholders
- They expend huge effort engaging some stakeholders with little return while virtually ignoring others
- They get caught up in the political complexities of their internal stakeholders and ignore their external stakeholders
- They say they 'man-mark' stakeholders but fritter time and effort operating from silos with no effective team focus

So how do you really know who your team's key stakeholders are and how do you engage them effectively?

This exercise takes around an hour. It's simple but results in increased team focus and more productive relationships with stakeholders. Run it every six months to stay current, strategic, and flexible.

Catalysts for change

www.eye2eyedev.com

Name of Exercise: Engaging Stakeholders

Size of Team: 4 – 10

Summary of Exercise: Team members map their stakeholders in frequency and quality of contact. They work out who they must engage, how they must engage them and their individual responsibilities.

Key Message/Outcome of Exercise: "I have a clear map of all our stakeholders and how we engage them effectively."

Facilitation: Step by Step

1. Ask the team members each to **list their stakeholders (internal and external),** the team leader compiles the list to ensure that it's comprehensive.

2. Draw three circles on a flip chart.
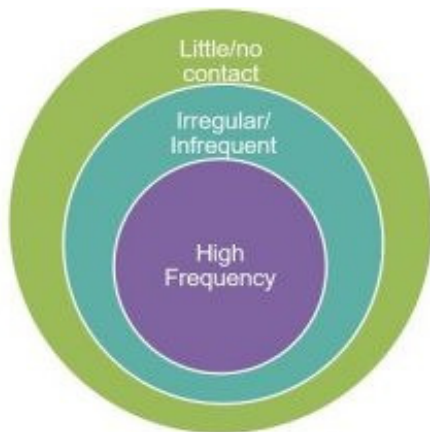
Explain that the inner circle represents **high frequency contact**, the middle **circle irregular/ infrequent contact**, the outer circle **little or no contact**.

3. Ask the team to work together to mark and identify each of their stakeholders in the relevant circle of the map according to their overall **frequency** of contact with that stakeholder.

4. Now ask them to consider the **quality** of contact with those same stakeholders, marking on each stakeholder a value between zero and five where zero represents completely **unproductive contact** with the stakeholder and five represents **highly productive contact**.

5. Ask them to consider what **frequency and quality of contact** they need to have with each of their stakeholders, then to work as a team on these two questions:

To achieve what you want to achieve as a team:

- *Who must you engage?*
- *How will you engage them?*

To check your prioritisation, approach and the time that needs to be spent with each stakeholder you might also ask:

- What formal or informal power/ influence does this stakeholder hold that is relevant to us?
- How important, therefore, is their buy-in and commitment to the team?

6. First, **collect the ideas** that emerge on a flip chart, then ask the team to **prioritise** what they need to do (e.g. 'three ticks each, placed wherever you like on the ideas list, no more than one tick for   one idea').

7. Finally, ask the team to consider and review which team members need to take responsibility for tracking the relationship with particular stakeholders and stakeholder groups? Identify how that will be done and agree accountability.

8. Set a date to rerun and review this process

An additional bonus of this exercise is that teams often realise both that they need to change the frequency and quality of contact and that they are engaging their stakeholders too late to get buy-in to projects and decisions.

If this point doesn't arise, question them on the timeliness of their interactions with their stakeholders. How effective are they being here?

Richard Spence

References:

For more fresh thinking, resources and practical tools visit https://eye2eyedev.com/resources/

Alyse Ashton and Richard Spence are the co-authors of the Team Health Check and draw on over 50 years' combined experience as team coaches and facilitators working with global organisations.

alyse@eye2eyedev.com
uk.linkedin.com/in/alyseashtoneye2eye

richard.spence@clearpictures.org.uk
https://www.linkedin.com/in/clearpictures/

Feel free to print or forward this resource in its entirety, but please ensure you include the logos and authorship when doing so. Thank you!

Catalysts for change
www.eye2eyedev.com