

PARTNERS WITH STAKEHOLDERS (PWS)

Partners with Stakeholders is the desire to work co-operatively with all stakeholders to meet mutual goals. It involves an awareness that a relationship based on trust is the foundation for success in delivering results.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintaining a clear and in-depth understanding of the direction and intent of the stakeholder's mandate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being caught off guard of a changing need or focus or understanding the mandate at a "superficial" level only
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking a real interest in sharing information with the client in areas of personal expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only providing information when asked
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing a trusting and productive relationships with partners to secure and build on future opportunities for the organization/government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limiting your involvement to updates and receipt of additional work assignments relative to your department's mandate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> seeking the ideas, concerns and needs of your multiple stakeholders for mutual benefit on an ongoing basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ignoring the ideas of your multiple stakeholders and showing little flexibility to changing needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> working hard at establishing a long-term partnership with internal and external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focusing on the short-term with a stakeholder to build immediate project support without considering the long-term implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contributing to shaping the mandate for future governmental initiatives with your stakeholders; having them come to you for further insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> telling your stakeholders that your opinion and ideas are always the best ones and the only ones to consider

**Developmental
Activities**

Level 1 Activities

Ask your peers for feedback on how you partner with stakeholders.

- Tell you peers what you've done with key individuals, how it's worked, and how you felt about it.
- Ask for their input, and ongoing feedback.

Reflection Tip:

- * Choose peers that you feel are particularly well connected, and politically astute.

Identify someone who is known as having strong partnership skills so that you can learn from them.

- Once you have identified a person who has strong relationship building skills observe them in an interaction with a key stakeholder.
- Take notes on what you see and after the interaction ask them questions to understand their thinking behind the actions they took.
 - ⇒ What did they say to the individual?
 - ⇒ What did they do?
 - ⇒ How did the individual react?
 - ⇒ How did they anticipate the individual's needs?
 - ⇒ How were the individual's expectations met?
- Discuss with the person the techniques and approaches they used to ensure you understand how the individual's needs were met.
- Discuss how to look for opportunities and anticipate the issues or concerns your stakeholders are facing.

Reflection Tip:

- * What outcomes do you see this individual benefiting from because of certain relationships? Be sure to understand how the individual decided they wanted to build this relationship in the first place.

Spend time talking with your peers about individuals who are good at partnering with stakeholders.

- Use real life examples of excellence, describing the skills and behaviours the person demonstrated.
- Talk about the value of partnering with stakeholders for your Organization.
- Identify and discuss the consequences of not anticipating stakeholder needs and issues and having good stakeholder relationships.

Reflection Tip:

- * The key to this exercise is to figure out what motivates individuals to initiate and develop their relationships and partnerships.

Learn as much as you can about your stakeholders' needs

- Research prior mandates that are related to your current mandate and uncover the similarities/differences
- Share your findings with your stakeholders in an effort to build a meaningful exchanges and grow or enhance your partnership
- Learn as much as you can about your contacts within specific stakeholder organizations. Interact with them professionally and socially as appropriate.

Be visible, accessible and stay in contact with your stakeholders

- Find ways to keep in regular contact with your stakeholders or their contacts, even when you are not directly servicing them on a current mandate. (i.e., your deliverable may have been met but you've come across some information that would be useful for them, share it)

Work to develop interactions/relationships that are "win-win".

- Come to agreements that work for both your department and the broader stakeholder needs.
- Don't sacrifice long-term success for short-term gain.

Offer a broader perspective.

- Give your stakeholder the benefit of your knowledge, and your expertise, to help them sort out their issues, concerns, challenges.
- Be an informal source of benchmark information for your stakeholder.
- Let them know about organizational trends without betraying any confidential information.

Improve your relationship with your stakeholder.

- Set a goal to have at least one conversation each week with the person - not including business discussion.
- The conversation can include outside interests, family, sports, whatever interests you.
- Focus on learning more about the person, not their job.

Initiate informal contacts. Join an association or charitable group or become involved in a community activity.

- Initiate informal contacts outside of the office (e.g., home, out-door activities, clubs), with individuals from the department or other organizations on at least a monthly basis.
- Introduce yourself to at least one new person each time you meet.
- Set goals for yourself to establish good levels of trust and rapport, and at the same time, learn more about your own or other organizations. Keep a written record of what you learn.

Serve as an ongoing resource for your stakeholders.

- Every time you read an article or book, or come into contact with information you find interesting or useful, ask yourself if any of your stakeholders might be interested in the same information.
- Make copies of the information and pass it along with a short note to those who might be interested.
- Use following up on the information as an opportunity to chat with these stakeholders and get information about what is going on with them.

Reflection Tip:

- * Take note of the reactions these actions generate. Some individuals will be more responsive than others.

Level 2-3 Activities

Represent your stakeholder and position yourself as a resource for them.

- Be your stakeholders' voice in the government. Represent your stakeholder's issues, concerns, and needs within your own organization, and take rapid action to resolve them.
- See yourself as someone who can help your stakeholders' businesses or service mandates better. Looking at your job this way will change your interactions from transactions to partnerships.
- Be a resource for your stakeholders. Provide them with useful information and recommendations that help them understand what it all means for them.

Take an inventory of your multiple stakeholders, groups, associations and any other business contacts that you have, and consider how frequently you contact them to keep informed about issues of mutual interest.

- Set up a schedule to maintain regular contact with those who are key influencers.
- Regularly attend networking luncheons, dinners, seminars, discussion forums, etc., at least once a quarter.
- Regularly ask yourself "who did I see today that gave me some useful information about what is going on in the organization?" Stay in touch with that person on a regular basis.
- Regularly meet with colleagues in other ministries and identify opportunities or projects that will be of value for you both to work on together.

Reflection Tip:

- * Spend time thinking about current business needs, then reflect on which of your contacts might be most suited to help you deal with the most critical issues.

Try to understand your stakeholder's point of view.

- After an interaction with a stakeholder, put yourself in their shoes and try to imagine what they were feeling or thinking during your interaction with them.
- Think about how what you did influenced that person in either a positive or negative fashion.
- Write down what you would do differently next time to make the interaction more positive.
- Use that information to develop a call plan for the next time you interact with that stakeholder.

Conduct client conferences.

- Sponsor a seminar or client conference that addresses topics and issues that concern multiple stakeholders across ministries.
- Spend time with each stakeholder to identify the issues and concerns, and then design and coordinate appropriate activities to address those concerns.
- Consider researching and presenting one topic yourself.

Assess the quality of your knowledge of the stakeholder's organization.

- Over a one-month period, keep a log of the frequency and type (formal or informal) of contacts you make with your stakeholders.
- Review the log and assess whether there are opportunities to increase your availability and the frequency or level of stakeholder contact. In particular, take note if you are making the kind of informal contact that lets your stakeholders know you are thinking of them, have familiarity with their broader needs, and are available to help meet those needs and are 'on top of things'.
- Set a goal for yourself to increase the amount of time you spend in stakeholder-related activities that increase your knowledge of their broader mandate. Monitor your progress and set new goals each month.

Use following up on information as an excuse to chat with your stakeholders and get information about what's going on with them.

- Know your stakeholder's broader issues.
- Talk to them about their business, not just the services or projects you currently have mandate to deliver against.
- Keep up-to-date with what's happening in the broader public sector by talking to your stakeholders regularly, reading business magazines and publications, and other colleagues, and talking to your stakeholders about the critical short and long-term issues facing them.
- Summarize and share this information with your customers; act as a sounding board for your customers.

Improve the quality and depth of the relationships you have with your stakeholders. The skills you will gain in this exercise will also help to build your personal and working relationships.

- List the stakeholders with whom you have regular contact.
- Use the scale below to evaluate the quality of your relationship with each stakeholder on the list:
 - ⇒ 1 = Poor relationship (i.e., there is a current serious problem which has not been resolved)
 - ⇒ 2 = Adequate relationship (i.e., strictly business/transaction oriented)
 - ⇒ 3 = Reasonably good relationship (some successes but room for improvement)
 - ⇒ 4 = Extremely good relationship (many successes, some social contact).
- Identify any barriers that get in the way of your stakeholder relationships and identify specific actions you can take to remove the barriers.
- Set a date for improving the relationship with each stakeholder on your list.
- Monitor your progress against your goals; re-evaluate each of your stakeholder relationships.

List all the individuals who currently exist in your work related network - people you interact with on a regular basis. Use these contacts to broaden your perspective.

- Identify the kind of role each person occupies in your network. For example, information sources, coach or mentor, expert advisor, supporter, and performance feedback advisor.
- Ask yourself if there are any roles you would like to see expanded or added to your network.
- Make a conscious effort to identify and get to know people who can fill those roles.
- Try to approach these people in a social or non-threatening situation.
- Ask their opinion about the kind of work you do and if they could help you achieve some of your job-related objectives.

- Try to return the favour by offering your assistance or identifying areas where you may help the individual achieve some of his/her goals.
- Review your formal (work-related) networks on a regular basis, and apply the techniques noted above to consciously solidify and expand your network.

Reflection Tip:

- * Speak with your peers about their networks. Do they have any advice about who else should be in your network? Do they have any specific recommendations for expanding your network?

Level 4 Activities

Build new partnerships to improve the quality of your service mandate within the community.

- Set up a network of associates to gain support for new projects within the community based on your stakeholder's needs.
- Use your expertise and contacts to approach others and help in the delivery of the services your organization provides. (e.g., involvement in community/regional/provincial volunteer groups)
- Take the time to select a new partnership where you feel there will be the biggest payback. Both parties need to gain so that the overall mandate is best served and mutual goals achieved.

Reflection Tip:

- * Go beyond "traditional" boundaries.

Identify your key stakeholders' critical issues and assumptions about the future.

- Talk to stakeholders on a regular basis about issues facing them, trends affecting them, and concerns they have about the future.
- Ask them to share their strategic plans, and the assumptions their plans are based upon.
- Summarize common themes you hear and report these back to your colleagues and supervisor.

- Discuss your findings with your colleagues and supervisor to incorporate their impressions into the critical issues facing the stakeholder.
- Work with your colleagues and supervisor to discuss what, if anything, you can do to help your stakeholders address these issues.
- Communicate your ideas to your stakeholders for their feedback.

Reflection Tip:

- * Use your information seeking skills to find out more about your stakeholder issues.

Analyze your stakeholder's situation and develop strategies they can use to be successful.

- Help key stakeholders to be more effective in their organization messages by offering the benefit of your insights and experience.
- Conduct an independent analysis of the stakeholder's situation. For example, identify what is happening versus what should be happening.
- Identify options the stakeholder could employ to be successful going forward.
- Weigh the value of each (for example, potential outcomes, cost of implementation, resources required, time to implement, etc.)
- Identify the pros and cons of each option and identify potential contingency plans to address potential obstacles in implementation. Determine whether it is better to do this analysis independently or in partnership with the stakeholders.

Reflection Tip:

- * Bring a new perspective to strategy development.

Work to become a trusted advisor to your stakeholders.

- Discuss the options you've identified with the stakeholder(s).
- Offer the perspective of your thinking and share your experiences around situations you have faced in the past.
- Offer to coach the stakeholder in how to implement their chosen option successfully.
- Maintain the relationship by conducting ongoing coaching and serving as a sounding board for the stakeholder(s).