

Stakeholder Matching

Purpose How to facilitate constructive conversations about the behavioural preferences of important stakeholders and match team behaviours to them (enabling stronger relationships and influence).

Note: Guidelines are indications for novice practitioners. Experienced facilitators can adjust the methods to achieve specific outcomes. Please ensure a confidential and safe-fail environment to ensure all participants feel comfortable and to ensure optimal involvement.

This exercise can be done in a variety of ways. It can stimulate conversations about the range of behaviours of a stakeholder group or an individual stakeholder (That is, someone who is highly adaptable and for whom you need to understand how to target and draw upon specific animals within their overall profile and ensure others are not drawn out).

Step 1: Take a deck of Zoo character cards and lay them on the table (or use downloaded images from the Organizational Zoo website)

Step 2: Decide if you are discussing an individual stakeholder or the stakeholder group as a whole

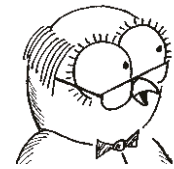
Step 3: Select the character cards which are most characteristic of the stakeholder (or group) and discuss the contexts in which the team members have seen that character displayed. Also select some characters which you consider the stakeholder does not display (this deepens the richness of your understanding of them). For an individual this might be four or five cards typical of them and one or two which is not normally characteristic of their behaviour (within the contexts you will be interacting with them).

Step 4: Once you have a range of cards displayed, discuss which are more typical and in what context this is normal for them. Consider which characters (behaviours) you should target to interact with them through and what behaviours you should display when doing so. For example, if they are normally in lion mode just after a senior management meeting, you should probably avoid interacting with them if you need support. However, if you are able to show them you have made significant gains which will support their pet projects this might be an ideal opportunity to engage (as a hyena to show appropriate aggression and get some respect and alignment).

Step 5: Discuss how the team can leverage these insights into the behaviours of the stakeholder groups. One key option is to match the right team member to the right stakeholder so there is a greater sense of identity between them and therefore a stronger chance of building a trusted relationship with them.

Organizational Zoo

Ambassadors Network



Step 6: Agree if there are any specific outcomes or outputs from the exercise and ensure any actions required from these are documented and allocated to the appropriate person. Be careful with documentation of such activities as profiling is a deeply personal activity. It is important to ensure the activity is maintained at a professional level and serves a constructive purpose. Making records of such conversations and the decisions contained therein can easily be taken out of context, so it is important to restrict conversations to the behaviours and not focus on the person themselves.

Practicalities and alternatives:

As with many of these exercises it is the interaction and sharing between those involved that generates the most significant outcomes. When facilitated well in an ethical and professional manner, people learn a lot about each other and the stakeholders they are interacting with. These insights, if accurate and used constructively and ethically can provide the team members with the foundations for productive relationships with their stakeholders. Of course, as with any powerful tool, if they are misused they can destroy relationships and value and severely negatively impact on performance of individuals, team and the organisation.

Outputs and Outcomes

There does not need to be specific (tangible) outputs from this exercise as it may be run just to test a situation. However, often notes are taken about alternatives and plans or communications can be adjusted as a result of the learnings from the role play.

The (intangible) outcomes of the exercise are normally represented in a greater behavioural awareness of the stakeholders being played and a greater sense of relationship between the players. Having “played” together they develop a stronger sense of common understanding and deeper insights in each other. This helps to build trust and relationships across the teams.

Tools

Tools are not necessary, but use of the **Organizational Zoo Character Cards** helps to develop a more rich exchange in the stakeholder matching interactions and also provide greater insights into the behavioural relationships. They also make the interaction more fun.

