



# EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

## maximising relationships

If a team is to make the most of its place in the world, it must understand how it interacts with its stakeholders. Reviewing its existing relationships may reveal ways to transform them into more mutually beneficial associations.

### What are Stakeholders?

Your stakeholders are any individual or group:

- with an interest in the outcome of your objectives
- upon whom the short and/or long-term success of your objectives depends
- who can have an impact on the success of your team

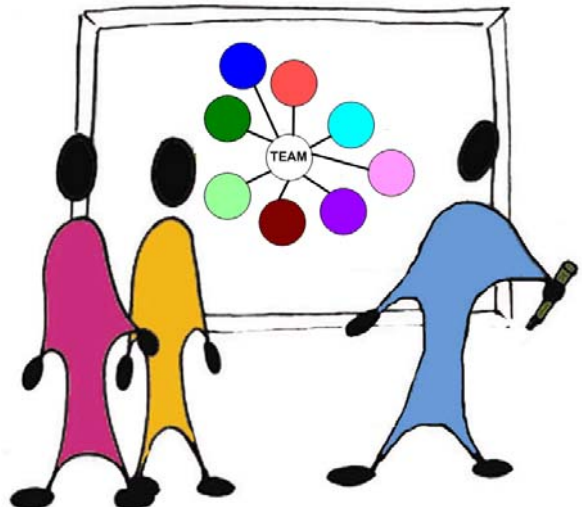
**Internal Stakeholders** operate within the team's immediate but wider department or programme. **External Stakeholders** sit outside the team and may be internal or external to the company.

### Mapping Your External Stakeholders

Creating a visual map can help you see the relationships between your team and all its External Stakeholders more clearly. Here's how you run a Mapping Session:

#### You will need:

- Black felt tip pens, chisel tip marker pen
- Large roll of white or brown paper, flip charts, large post-its, square post-its
- Flip chart page prepared for action capture





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### Step 1 – List the External Stakeholders

- Ask everyone to write down, on individual post-its, all the External Stakeholders they can think of. Use either specific job titles (e.g. Functional Manager) or role descriptions (e.g. Business Unit Manager).
- Put a large piece of paper up on the wall and ask everyone in turn to stick a post-it onto the paper, saying the name of the stakeholder. Get the individuals to discard any duplicates.

### Step 2 – Choose the Top 15

While all stakeholders are important, you need to identify those with the most influence. Typically, 15 is a good number to aim for.

- Remove the post-its of any obvious candidates who may provide a service but do not often significantly affect day-to-day delivery (e.g. HR).
- Work through the other post-its, asking everyone to decide which to retain and which to discard. Mark them with either a tick or a cross.
- Copy the names of the Top 15 stakeholders onto the large post-its using a thick pen (14 or 16 stakeholders is fine!).

### During Step 3, consider the following

For each External Stakeholder relationship, you need to determine the type of relationship and the type of transaction(s) that occur between the team and the stakeholders. These relationships are then captured in a visual way.

- Relationships can be considered to be:
  - Distant/Minimal (e.g. monthly)
  - Frequent (e.g. weekly)
  - Close/Continuous (e.g. daily)

Where they are somewhere in between, a judgement should be made to align them with one of the above. These are illustrated by different line strengths on the map.



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- Relationships also have direction:
  - One way
  - Two way
  - Two way (with one way stronger)

This is shown by arrows at either end of the lines.

- The type of transaction occurring with stakeholders should be identified and allocated a code word. Some examples of transaction types are:
  - Strategic (S)
  - Day to Day Operations (O)
  - Technical (T)
  - Contractual (C)
  - Reporting (R)
  - Service Provision (V)

Make sure your transaction types fit your situation. More details about individual transactions can be captured on a flip chart for future reference, as required.

### Step 3 – Map the External Stakeholders

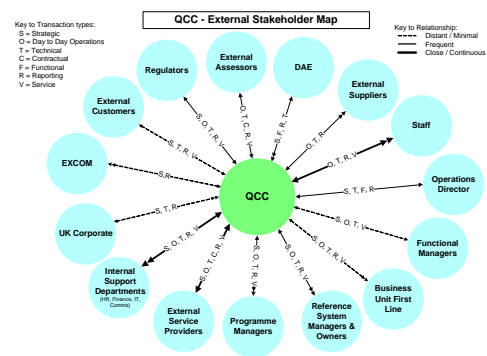
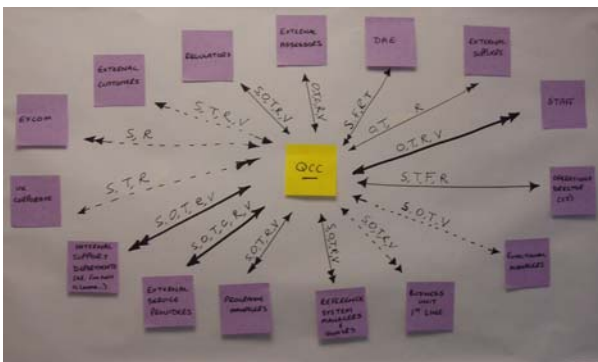
- On the large piece of paper, arrange the Top 15 post-its in a circle around the edge. Put the team name in the centre of the circle.
- Discuss the current relationship for each of the Top 15 stakeholders, covering
  - The type of transaction(s) that make up that relationship
  - The type of relationship
  - The direction of the flow within that relationship
- Taking each stakeholder in turn, capture this information by drawing the appropriate line from the post-it of each External Stakeholder into the team name. Write the code for the transaction(s) next to that line. (Using a chisel tip pen to draw the lines makes it easier to achieve the different thicknesses.)



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- Then, for each External Stakeholder in turn, make a note on the flip chart of:
  - The key points of the rationale behind the relationship
  - Whether the current relationship is 'fit for purpose' and if not, what action should be taken for improvement (with an owner and completion date)
- You may find some current relationships that are not 'fit for purpose' are outside of your team's control to change – make a note and move on....



*External Stakeholder Map created during workshop – and clean copy for posterity*

### Step 4 – Act on Your Findings

- Record all the outputs of the mapping session.
- Review what the map means for your team, and share your findings with others, as appropriate.
- Monitor the agreed actions and ensure that they are carried out.