SERIOUS STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

When people are your product, making any level of change can become complex, pretty quickly. So if you work in an organisation that sells advice or services, you're going to need some serious stakeholder management skills. This guide talks you through what you need to know...

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INTRODUCTION

Wordtree has been rolling out comms and cultural change programmes in people-powered corporations for nearly 20 years. In this time, we've chalked up scores of company-wide initiatives – and many more discrete projects at business unit level.

Our work is about cultural and communications alignment and re-alignment. This can mean articulating a fresh vision for an entire organisation – and creating tools, resources and training to unite teams behind it. Or it can mean articulating a fresh vision for a business unit – getting buy-in for this new story and creating collateral and systems to make sure it's told consistently.

Whether we're delivering a company-wide culture transformation, or repositioning an offer in its marketplace, the process can be complex, nuanced and involve multiple moving parts.

The technical side of the work can be a real workout for the brain – and it takes time.

But what our clients often find surprising is that this technical aspect of a piece of work takes – at most – 50% of the effort of the whole programme or project. The rest is made up of stakeholder engagement and management – explaining, re-explaining, listening, being open, nudging, managing expectations and setting up, implementing and maintaining shared processes.

And all this is necessary because we work uniquely with people-powered businesses – where people are the product.
So if you're approaching your first change project – or the last programme you were involved in still gives you anxiety dreams – read this guide before you attempt to introduce change in your organisation.

It'll save you time. It will help you to raise your profile and build solid relationships across your organisation. And it may well save you stress and sleepless nights.

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WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

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WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

Is the value of your company or business unit delivered almost entirely through your colleagues, rather than through products? Are you a marketer, a HR colleague, a business unit owner, senior leader – or any other kind of professional who wants to introduce some kind of change in these kinds of organisations?

If the answer to both these questions is "yes", this guide is for you. Because in organisations where the core product is human expertise, service or interaction, it's impossible to get change across the line without intense, considered stakeholder engagement.

Businesses driven by human expertise, service or interaction...	Their offer is made up of...
• Professional services • Private banking, investment and wealth management • Customer services • Education and training • And more...	• Strategic advice • Strategic planning • Expertise • Insight and analysis • Expert support • Customised experiences/deliverables

WHY IS STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT MORE INTENSE IN PEOPLE-POWERED ORGANISATIONS?

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WHY IS STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT MORE INTENSE IN PEOPLE-POWERED ORGANISATIONS?

Let's consider for a moment that there are businesses that provide tangible products like bottles of shampoo, cars or furniture. These companies have great people in them. But their customers aren't choosing the brand because of these individuals. They're buying into it for their products.

There are also businesses that deliver tangible-ish products, like software and apps. Again, there will be some very talented people working behind the scenes. But the customers of businesses like these aren't buying the people – they're buying the software.

These types of companies aren't – for the sake of this guide – what we'd call "people powered". They are product-driven. This is because customers are interested in these companies because of the products they make.

Stakeholder engagement and management is important in product-driven companies, of course. However, if you work in one of them, you may find the approaches described in this guide are only relevant to very large, company-wide changes.

But if your clients are buying direct contact with your experts, then you'll need intense stakeholder management skills, even for relatively small projects.

This is because when your key product is knowledge and advice, your people are your product. So you can either harness their energy with expert stakeholder engagement and management... or you can let it run in different directions – and potentially derail the change you want to introduce.

When you're trying to introduce change in a people-powered business, you need the skills, approach and bandwidth to engage, inspire, motivate and manage all your colleagues.

What is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is a person or organisation affected by a project. They can be colleagues, clients, suppliers, investors, local residents – anyone, in fact, who could be impacted by what you're planning to do.

Stakeholders have different needs, levels of project involvement – and influence. Engaging and managing stakeholders means getting key people who'll be affected by your project involved in it.

Some stakeholders will need to make decisions in your project. Others will need to share their perspectives and experiences – or simply be kept up to date with what you're doing. How well you manage stakeholders can make or break a project.

WHAT CONSTITUTES CHANGE?

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WHAT CONSTITUTES CHANGE?

Not all projects involve change. Some can be a continuation of the status quo. For example, organising an event for your company, using existing branding and messaging, can be a big undertaking. But it doesn't necessarily involve change.

However, if you're looking to rebrand your whole organisation, or create a new value proposition, tone of voice, sub-brand or something similar, then you'll be introducing change.

Change is anything that shifts your organisation or business unit's strategic direction of travel.

And when this happens in a people-powered business, you are always going to need sophisticated stakeholder management to achieve it.

TIP: Beware change projects that masquerade as tactical outputs projects

Imagine a scenario where a company needs to get its clients to understand how transformative its services are. This business is struggling to get its clients to understand its value – and, as a consequence, is getting constant push-back on pricing.

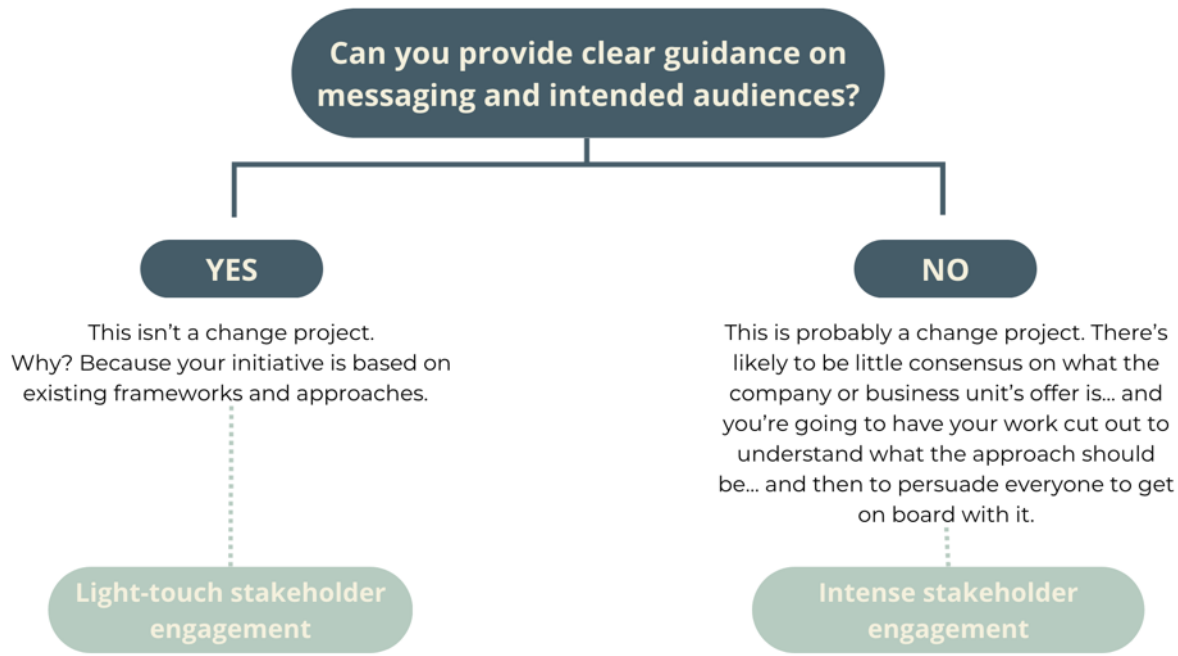
There's little consensus internally on what the company's key benefits are and no real understanding of the competitive landscape – or audience needs.

The company decides that what it really needs is a brochure. This piece of literature will transform understanding internally and externally – and will result in an uptick in leads and business.

Of course, it's easy to focus on outputs. A brochure is a nice, tangible thing. But don't be fooled. A project like this involves serious change. It requires stakeholders to align on fundamentals like audiences, key competitors, value proposition, key messaging and tone.

If the company frames this project in terms of an output like a brochure, it's unlikely to achieve anything more than disgruntlement, multiple rounds of amends – and a brochure that's more muddled than anything currently in use.

If you're not sure if a project involves change – and therefore needs the kind of stakeholder management set out in this guide – just ask yourself this question...



BRILLIANT STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT = SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE

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BRILLIANT STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT = SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE

Perceived wisdom is that no-one likes change, and that it's nigh-on impossible to do. And certainly, when it comes to getting corporate organisations to do things differently, the statistics seem to support these perceptions as facts.

Over the past 25 years, success rates for change programmes have remained stubbornly around the 30% mark.

	1995	2008	2020
Average failure rate of change programmes	70%	70%	~50% With only 34% being clearly successful
Source	John Kotter	McKinsey	Gartner

TIP: Don't fall into the trap of thinking there will be zero resistance to your project

If you find yourself thinking: "We're all really keen for this, everyone is completely on board..." you're likely to be setting yourself up for a fall. Everyone may well be super keen. But you'll quickly discover that some of your colleagues are keen on their *own* version of what any change should look like. So follow the advice in this guide to get everyone pulling in the same direction.

However, change can be exciting...

If you consider change in a different context – like upgrading a phone, getting a new car or going somewhere different on holiday – most people are thrilled by it. And if you're going to make a success of engaging and managing stakeholders, you need to remember this.

Change doesn't have to be impossible. Hard work – definitely – you can't get out of that. But it's entirely doable, and it can be an extremely positive experience. You just need to remember three key things that have huge implications for the way you manage stakeholders...

People don't dislike change. They dislike change they have no say in.

Change won't happen by itself – no matter how good the reasons for it are.

Change without disruption doesn't exist.

REMEMBER, YOU HAVE A KEY ROLE TO PLAY

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REMEMBER, YOU HAVE A KEY ROLE TO PLAY

If you're ushering change into your organisation, you cannot do it passively. If you stand back from your project and hope people will like and adopt it, it won't work.

Fundamentally, if you don't believe in the change you're trying to make - whether it's a rebrand, a repositioning or any other kind of pivot – why should anyone else?

You need to be a cheerleader

Your role is to be the #1 cheerleader and champion of the change you want to make happen.

Imagine a politician hoping to get elected. This person is going to knock on doors, they're going to have a smile ready. They'll listen to the concerns of their constituents. They'll be interested in issues – and they'll know off by heart why their approach is going to make life better for the people who vote for them.

Radiate positivity

You wouldn't vote for a politician who seemed uncommitted and unconvinced about their own platform. And in the same way, your colleagues won't be convinced by the change you want to introduce unless they see you campaigning for it.

So know what the benefits of the change will be. Radiate positivity. Be contactable. Listen – and remember that your stakeholders will reflect your energy levels. If you seem unsure and unenthusiastic, they will too.

Remember, change doesn't happen by itself. It needs to be driven with careful planning and stakeholder management.

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

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IDENTIFY POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

Before you kick your project off, think carefully about who your stakeholders should be. And don't think too narrowly.

Who is going to be involved in developing your new approach? Whose insight are you going to need? Who will sign off the approach – and who will you need to implement it?

In people-powered businesses, everyone could be a stakeholder. Which means you could have a lot of people to engage and manage. So it's imperative that you get organised from the very beginning.

At Wordtree, we often use a DACI matrix to define the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in a project. There are other stakeholder management frameworks out there – so find the one that works for you.

At the beginning of your initiative, create a long list of potential stakeholders – and then narrow down.

You'll find an outline DACI matrix on the next page

Why don't we use a RACI matrix?

If your organisation is familiar with RACI – organising stakeholders into *Responsible, Accountable, Contributing, Informed* – then by all means use it. It's longer established and is pretty much the same as the DACI matrix. However, we find that there can be confusion between "responsible" and "accountable". So we use "driver", which we find to be clearer.

OUTLINE DACI MATRIX

	DRIVER	APPROVERS	CONTRIBUTORS	INFORMED
Role description	This person is responsible for coordinating stakeholders. They keep the project moving forward. In complex projects, the driver is likely to be a third-party consultant – or someone internally who has a high level of support from consultants, and will be supported by project managers. **This person is probably you – or a consultant hired by you.**	Approvers are the people who have the final say in any project. They are likely to be headed up by an ultimate decision-maker – the project sponsor. This person should be a senior leader.	Contributors are the colleagues and third parties who have the insight into your clients, products and market that you'll need to gain a full understanding of what needs to happen, and how it needs to be delivered.	Informed stakeholders are kept in the loop for transparency. You should also make sure you have a mechanism in place to allow informed stakeholders to input suggestions and ideas – with the understanding that while you'll listen, you won't necessarily action everything that's put forward.
Decision-making	The driver is empowered to make many operational decisions – but final decisions will be made by the approvers.	Approvers make the decisions – and are often guided to do so by consultants.	Contributors have a voice, but not a vote.	These colleagues are kept informed of project status, but do not take part in it directly.
Characteristics	The driver needs to be an expert who has experience of leading complex projects. They also need to be cool-headed diplomats who are great at communicating and persuading – and who know how to engage stakeholders positively to keep the project moving.	Approvers need strategic vision to cut through conflicting insights. They also need the confidence and seniority to make sure other stakeholders prioritise the project and participate in it as required.	Contributors should be experts in their fields.	Informed stakeholders are likely to be leaders, middle managers and gatekeepers.

What is a gatekeeper?

A gatekeeper is a colleague who controls access to processes, resources and approvals.

An example of a gatekeeper is a compliance colleague in a regulated industry. All product development, processes and marketing communications must be approved by the compliance colleague before they can be used. They're responsible for opening and shutting the gate on multiple workstreams.

It's therefore really important to include gatekeepers in the core stakeholder group. If you don't, you may find that they shut the gate on your new initiative – causing unnecessary delays.

TIP: Don't keep the finalised stakeholder framework to yourself

Make sure everyone involved in your project or programme of work knows:

- What their role is
- What will happen to their input
- The amount of time they will have to dedicate to the project – and when
- Who else is involved – and in which roles (a high-profile project sponsor can help to motivate participation, for example)

INTERVIEW POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

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INTERVIEW POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

When you're keen to get a project off the ground, this can feel an easy step to skip. You may think you already know your colleagues well enough. Worse, you could be making assumptions about their motivations and experiences.

However, it is always, always, worth spending time talking to key stakeholders on a one-to-one basis – particularly in the approvers group.

Being a productive stakeholder isn't just a case of having the right level of seniority. Stakeholders also need the characteristics outlined in the table on page 19.

So talk to potential stakeholders and find out all of the following:

How keen are they to be involved in the project?

If they're super keen, find out why. What do they hope to get out of it? What do they want to change, how do they want it to change, and why? If they're not

keen, they may not be a great approver – but they may be useful in a different stakeholder category.

How persuaded by the project are they?

Find out early on if your stakeholders think the project is a good idea. If they don't, listen – they may have a point. And even if they don't have a point, you need to know what they object to, and how their objections are going to manifest themselves. If a potential stakeholder is likely to delay, deprioritise or sabotage your project, you need to know.

What's their style?

Are they people pleasers? Do they want to dominate the room? Are they analytical consumers of detail, or do they need brief and broad brushstrokes? Getting a feel for this early on will help you to structure engagement and meetings so that everyone is heard and gets a say.

What are their expectations?

What do your potential stakeholders think they'll get from being involved in the project? How do they think it will be run?

Do they know how much time they'll have to dedicate to the project? If you don't understand what stakeholder expectations are, you won't be able to manage them.

What are their motivations?

Everyone will have different reasons and agendas for participating in your project.

Some won't care that much about it – but will have been told to participate by their line manager. Some will see it as an opportunity for profile raising and career advancement. Others will be keen to make key improvements. If you understand stakeholder motivations, you can address these directly in your communications - which will help you to maintain momentum and buy-in.

How suitable are they?

There are a number of models and frameworks available for deciding stakeholder suitability. Generally, we prefer a quadrant of high to low influence and interest. You need your "approvers" to have high interest in the project – and a high level of influence.

Who is your project sponsor?

Your project sponsor could be an approver – or someone who isn't actively taking part in the project. But they're someone who cares about it and who has the seniority to intervene if you have to escalate.

TIP: Don’t be afraid of having challenging conversations

In every large project – and in some smaller ones – you will encounter stakeholders who have great knowledge you want to tap into… but who you sense may not have the time or will to contribute productively.

Don’t ignore your gut on this. There are many, completely professional, ways of airing concerns with a potential stakeholder before the project starts.

These can be useful conversation openers:

“Bob, I’m really keen to tap into your experience and expertise – but I sense you may not have the time to devote to this project. Is that a correct understanding of the situation?”

“Meena, I’m really keen to involve you in this project – but I sense that you’re not completely on board with the direction of travel. Can we talk about that?”

Give your potential stakeholders opportunities to air concerns, and give yourself the opportunity to decide which category to place each stakeholder in.

This isn’t to say that you should only select key stakeholders who agree with you on everything. A productive stakeholder group will be able to challenge professionally to hone and perfect the outcomes of the project.

But also remember that occasionally you will encounter individuals who do not want the project to succeed, and who will actively seek to sabotage it. You will save yourself a whole world of hurt – and potentially the project itself – by making sure that any potential disruptors are consulted or informed stakeholders only.

TIP: If you think talking to potential stakeholders before the project starts sounds like a giant waste of time, imagine this scenario...

At the start of your change project, you decide who your stakeholders were going to be. Three are senior leaders who are all likely to be interested in the project (or miffed if you didn't include them) – and because of their seniority, you made them approvers. Another five stakeholders are subject matter experts. You don't know them terribly well, but their expertise is going to be important, so you make them contributors.

You email all your stakeholders and let them know you'd like them to be involved in your project. You copy in the external consultancy you've engaged to carry out the work, so that they know who your stakeholders are too.

You have a phenomenal amount of work on your plate, so you tick off a job from your list – and let the external consultants get on with the job of engaging your internal stakeholders.

None of your eight stakeholders responds to your email. And perhaps you're too busy to respond to theirs in the days and weeks that follow.

Time slips by. Some of your stakeholders eventually respond to the consultancy and do their best and take part. But they weren't aware how much of their time would be needed, so they get their teams involved. Your group of eight stakeholders has now multiplied – and you're getting feedback from people who don't know what the project is about. Your external consultants don't know whose input to prioritise. Budget is being swallowed up by unscoped work and milestones are being missed. Meantime, some of your other stakeholders still haven't responded to your initial email. Weeks pass.

Then in an unrelated meeting, someone mentions your project. Your absentee stakeholders' ears prick up. Their plates are a little clearer now, so they ask you for an update, and you introduce them to your consultancy. The once-dormant stakeholders now provide very full input. This would have been useful from the outset – but your project has already clicked past a couple of milestones.

You could call your external consultants and say: "I'm sorry, let's press pause and work out what we're going to do." Or you could put pressure on them to just get on with it and swallow the additional work and costs and fund your project themselves.

Either way, by skipping the up-front engagement, there is always a heightened risk of having your project overrun.

On the other hand, investing a few hours in stakeholder engagement and onboarding at the beginning could save you an awful amount of stress further down the line.

ESTABLISH RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

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ESTABLISH RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Once you've decided who your stakeholders are, you need to make sure that everyone who's involved in your project or programme knows what's expected of them. And this must include there being a shared understanding of what the impact of them not being able to participate as agreed will be. Every project and situation is different, but generally, it can be helpful to:

Set up a working party

This group should be chaired by the driver – and it should be attended regularly by approvers and consultants. Invite contributors as and when their input is useful. Hold meetings at agreed times, set an agenda, and make sure it's high on everyone's list of priorities.

Manage timelines

Block time in stakeholders' diaries for them to carry out any tasks – such as reviewing progress and providing input. Nudge and remind stakeholders. Know when stakeholders are taking annual leave or are out of the business. Have rules in place for when stakeholders miss deadlines – which could involve them being reclassified as a different type of stakeholder.

TIP: Be prepared to repeat yourself often

If this is your first rodeo, you may be surprised by how frequently the project driver is asked the same questions. So be prepared to share information. Set up a shared resource with FAQs and project documentation – but don't be surprised if people don't use it. Keep smiling as you respond to emails, calls and face-to-face questions. Your job is to keep people on board, so keep any frustration to yourself. Remember, if you're getting lots of questions, the great news is that people are engaged.

Establish escalation processes

From the very start of your project, all stakeholders need to know what will happen if they are unable to meet deadlines or reach agreement. In the first instance, you may want your approvers to make a decision on behalf of an absent stakeholder. Where there is fundamental disagreement amongst approvers, you will need to involve the project sponsor as the person who makes the final decision.

Automate project communications

If your systems allow it, set up automated reminders and nudges – and back this up with calls and check-ins with your stakeholders. A key part of your role is keeping this project at the top of your stakeholders' list of priorities. So help them to plan their time – and be there to remind and support.

TIP: Know what you'll do if stakeholders don't play ball or can't be available

Without escalation processes, there is the potential for your timelines to stretch – and ultimately, for the whole project to derail.

Imagine a situation where one of your approvers doesn't input when you want them to, early in the process. Instead, she waits until you think you are almost finished – and then objects to almost everything. Or maybe one of your key stakeholders goes on leave for a few weeks.

If you don't have processes in place, you may have to start again. Similarly, if you don't have the ability to change the status of a stakeholder, you may spend hours chasing people whose heart isn't really in it – or who simply have too much on their plate.

And remember, the longer that timelines stretch, the more expensive your project becomes... and the harder it is to keep all stakeholders engaged.

Establish processes for mid-flight stakeholder changes

Especially in longer, more complex projects, there are going to be changes in your stakeholder group – so prepare for them. What will be the process for when a key stakeholder leaves your organisation or goes on extended leave? How will you onboard a new stakeholder and introduce them to the group?

If the new stakeholder is particularly senior, their participation may spark fundamental change – so document how you'll handle this.

TIP: Introduce mid-flight stakeholder changes with care

Introducing new stakeholders mid-flight needs to be managed with real care. Take time to onboard them to the project and its rules of engagement. And make sure that they're clear on what you're asking of them. Without preparation and thought, bringing new stakeholders into a project part-way through can create real disruption. For example:

- New stakeholders can believe their brief includes fundamental critique of the project's purpose (ie, they may think they're being asked to evaluate the project as a whole, rather than to give focussed input)
- They may not realise how much of their time will be required
- If they're approvers, they may see that their role is to argue passionately, when what you really need is a considered conversation

Fundamentally, you need rules in place so that a new stakeholder doesn't force a restart of key project stages because they're inputting on work that has already been approved.

Create a shared understanding of how you'll work together

A working group is typically made up of professionals from different disciplines and teams – and this can be both a strength and a weakness. The strength comes from a diversity of thinking and perspectives. The weakness comes from different colleagues not necessarily knowing how to communicate with one another – and bringing several styles and approaches to the table. So make it clear how you need people to input. This is particularly important when you're working across international teams – but it also applies in smaller organisations where everyone knows each other. Fundamental rules could include turning up to meetings on time and respecting the agenda and each other – with no shouting or talking over others. There should also be a commitment to timelines.

Know how you're going to make the best use of third-party support

If you've engaged an external consultancy to support you, make their roles and responsibilities clear. You're likely to find that they are more than willing to assume the "driver" role in the project – but be aware that to do this, you will have to give them authority to engage with your stakeholders according to the needs of the project.

If you are assigning the role of driver to an external consultancy, they will need to be involved in the selection of stakeholders – and will need to have free rein to communicate with everyone involved in the project. Your escalation processes will also need to be watertight.

COMMUNICATE FREQUENTLY

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COMMUNICATE FREQUENTLY

Engaging and managing stakeholders successfully is entirely dependent on you being able to communicate. If you're the driver of the project, you need the time, confidence and skills to communicate with key stakeholders effectively and often.

Communicating with different stakeholder groups	
Approvers	Plan to spend a decent amount of time with approvers outside of official working party meetings. Schedule quick calls, lunches and catch-ups. This will help to keep the project at the top of their priorities list. It will also give you opportunities to address concerns quickly – and alert you to circumstances that may impact the project. Most of all, you should use these catch-ups as opportunities to listen and absorb as much information and insight as possible.
Contributors	A contributor might only be involved in a small section of the project. So you must make sure you onboard contributors properly – so they know exactly what's required of them, and what the broader aims of the project are. Once a contributor has added their insight to the project, move them to the "informed" list so that they get regular updates about project progress.
Informed	Remember that once your project is complete, you're going to need to roll it out and get your colleagues to adopt it. So it's really important that you bring your colleagues along on the journey with you. What you don't want is for your project to come as a complete surprise to all the people whose help you'll need to make it part of business as usual. This means you're likely to have a large group of people that you need to keep informed. Keep reminding them what the project aims are. Give them updates about progress. And take the opportunity to market this new initiative. Tell your colleagues how this new initiative is going to benefit them. The communications channels you use will depend on your organisation. If you have a well-used intranet, for example, then posting regular updates on it will be helpful. If you have a regular management meeting, make sure you secure a spot to share programme updates. If your teams spend time in crew rooms, use posters in these spaces. Schedule time to create and share theses updates – even if there isn't a lot of news to share. Remember, you need to keep this project front of mind. If you won't have time to do this, ask your consultancy to include communications in the project scope.

TIP: Market the socks off your new initiative

Don't just communicate functionally about your initiative. Remember you're the #1 cheerleader for your project. So campaign about what the benefits of it will be for your colleagues – and why they should care about what you're doing.

When you're communicating with the wider stakeholder group, you need to do more than inform. You need to sell.

So don't just relay project status reports and findings. Instead, you need to translate what you're doing into the positive impact it will have in your organisation.

If you've got to know your stakeholders well enough, you'll know what's important to them, and you'll also be communicating regularly about how each step forward is moving your organisation to a state that will make working life easier, better and more profitable for them.

When you do this well, you'll make people excited and eager to adopt.

And again, if you don't have time to do this, make sure it's in scope for your consultancy.

LAUNCH YOUR NEW APPROACH

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LAUNCH YOUR NEW APPROACH

You've reached the end of your change project and you have a strategy and tools in place to make it reality. Now comes the roll out.

If you've been working skilfully to manage stakeholder input, engagement and expectations, your new approach shouldn't come as a surprise to your colleagues. But don't assume that everyone is up-to-speed, excited and ready to adopt.

You need to keep marketing the new approach to your colleagues – and treat the launch as an internal marketing campaign.

Market the approach

This project is likely to have consumed your working life for some time – so you understand it and you know why it's so important for your organisation. But your colleagues are likely to have other priorities. If you've been engaging your stakeholders throughout, you'll be pushing against an open door with your launch campaign. Even so, you need to make efforts to engage people and get them excited about all the positive things the change will mean for them – and lining up to take part in launch training and events.

Schedule awareness sessions and training

For your new approach to work, you need to get colleagues across your organisation or business unit to adopt it. So think ahead and schedule awareness and training sessions.

Empower people to make your approach their own. The formats you use will depend on your organisation – but try not to make everything online self-service. To really engage people, nothing beats face-to-face, in the same room.

Launch incrementally

When you're rolling out your initiative, start in small, targeted bursts – and learn from them. Choose an initial area of the business to pilot the new approach in, and be careful to select a first use case that can

generate quick wins. These will help to motivate stakeholders. It will also give you proofs that the approach works – which will help you to gain buy-in across the business. Importantly, piloting the approach will also help you to learn and refine – so that your ultimate project deliverables are completely robust.

Keep communicating

Use existing platforms – like newsletters or your intranet – to share and celebrate examples of best practice. Also, set up a dedicated email address to allow people across your organisation to ask questions and make suggestions.

Embedding your approach is much easier if you allow colleagues to ask you how to overcome challenges – or get clarification on how the new approach should be applied to their area of the business.

TIP: Include external consultants in all working group activities

Give your strategic partners key roles in your working party – and introduce them to all wider stakeholders. Be enthusiastic about their skills and the benefits they bring to the project. Remember, your colleagues will pick up on your energy and amplify it.

GET EXPERT SUPPORT

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GET EXPERT SUPPORT

Managing and engaging stakeholders is a great way of raising your profile across an organisation – and it gives you clear visibility of the dynamics of the whole business. It can also be time consuming and complex. It's a huge commitment – and it can involve challenging conversations, and occasional confrontations.

For all these reasons, it's critical to get external support. Look for expert partners who have long experience of complex stakeholder engagement and management – and understand that your relationship with them is going to be a strategic partnership. In addition to the technical side of the work they'll deliver for you, they should be able to support you with:

Stakeholder expertise

Beyond their technical expertise, your partner should be able to take on most of the heavy lifting of stakeholder management. Collaborate with them to work through the steps in this guide.

Perspective

External partners offer a different perspective – and the insight of working with other organisations in your sector and beyond.

Project management

An external partner is likely to have project management resources that will help to keep you on track, remind all stakeholders when and how they need to participate – and flag if a situation needs to be escalated.

Neutral engagement

Maybe you relish challenging conversations with your colleagues. However, most professionals don't – and prefer to delegate these interactions to a third party. Remember you have to keep working with everyone when this project is delivered. So where there are difficult dynamics, a third party often has the objectivity and skills to maintain relationships and momentum.

RAISE YOUR PROFILE – AND GAIN A REPUTATION FOR GETTING IMPORTANT WORK DONE

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RAISE YOUR PROFILE – AND GAIN A REPUTATION FOR GETTING IMPORTANT WORK DONE

There's no doubt that engaging and managing stakeholders in people-powered organisations can be complex – and can involve careful navigation of corporate dynamics.

But it can also be a brilliant way to find out a lot about the organisation you work for, meet colleagues from different disciplines – and raise your own profile.

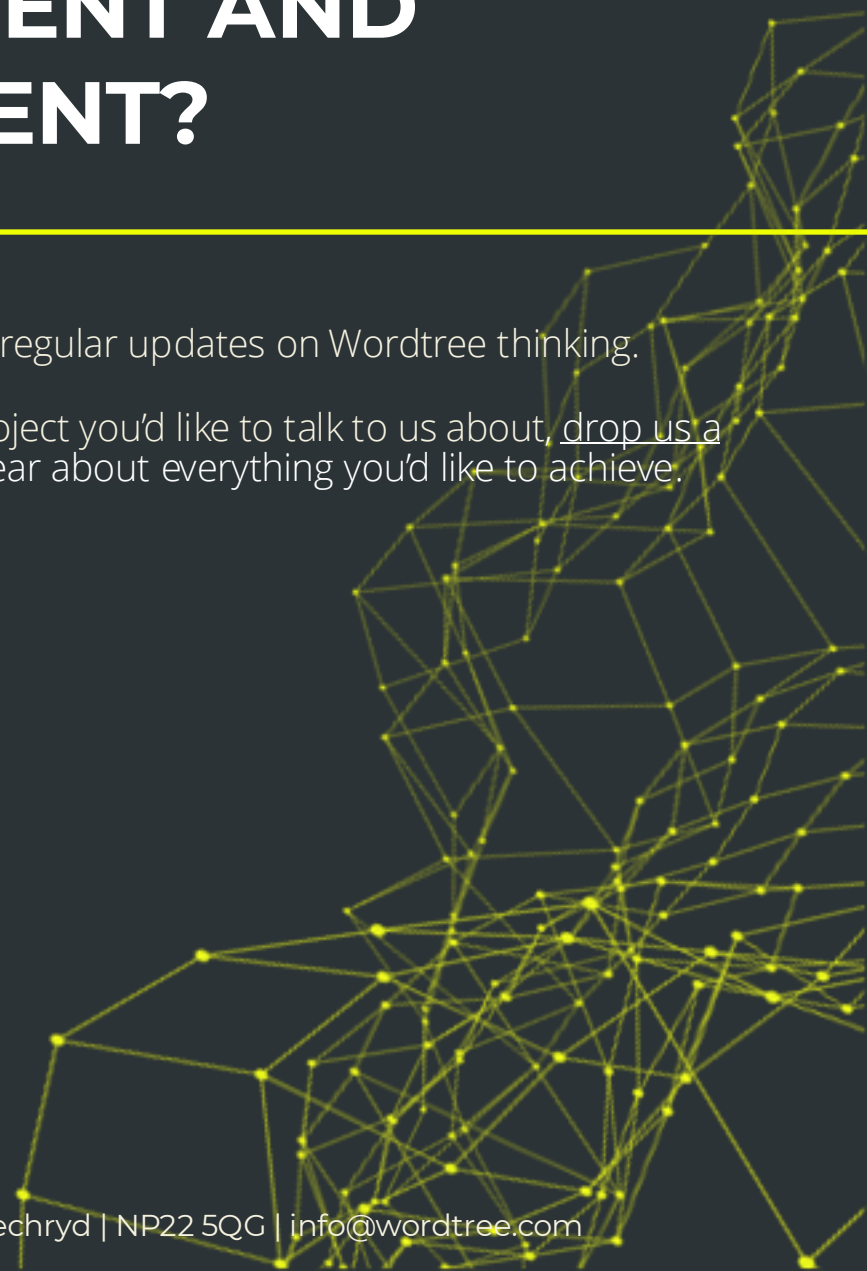
So don't be daunted. Give yourself enough time, and get stuck in. Before you know it, you'll develop a reputation for getting things done. You'll expand your network in your organisation and beyond – and you'll get immense satisfaction out of making positive change happen.

Remember we're here to support you. Good luck!

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT?

Follow us on LinkedIn to get regular updates on Wordtree thinking.

And if you have a specific project you'd like to talk to us about, drop us a line. We'll be fascinated to hear about everything you'd like to achieve.



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