

Leading for Know and



By Kevin E. Yousie

Three Steps to Success...

"The very best strategies and ideas count for nothing if they are never successfully implemented."

Today with few exceptions, success generally requires the involvement and/or support of others. Few people are in a position to successfully implement new ideas, working in isolation. To be successful, leaders must be able to rally support for what they are trying to achieve while developing and preserving key relationships important to future initiatives. This process involves three steps which, if given due consideration, can lead to more timely, better supported, and effective implementation:

- 1. Identification of key influential stakeholders.**
- 2. Analysis of relevant needs, wants, and vested interests.**
- 3. Persuasion tailored in an appropriate fashion.**

results engage YOUR stakeholders

Identification: Who can help? Who can hinder?

Strategic Stakeholders

To achieve successful implementation, it is not enough for leaders to be able to anticipate who could potentially be impacted by a particular change or event taking place. Knowing who counts and how to engage these people is what really matters. This means being able to identify "people or groups of people who may or may not have something directly or indirectly at stake in a specific situation, but are in a position to influence the outcome."² We call these individuals or groups "strategic stakeholders."³

The primary distinction between stakeholders in general, and strategic stakeholders, is whether or not they are in a position to help or hinder with respect to what is being proposed. Whether or not they may be impacted themselves, if they can influence the outcome, they are strategic and count. These are the people that really matter if implementation is to be successfully executed.

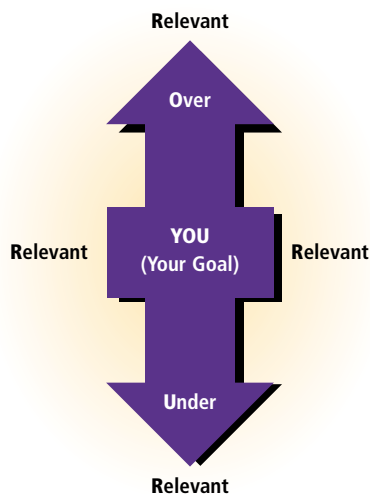


Diagram 1: YOUR Stakeholder Analysis Model ©2000 Crosswater Partners

It starts with YOU...

The process of identifying key strategic stakeholders always begins with YOU and what you are striving to achieve. The specific goal needs to be clearly and concisely articulated. This is important as the mix of strategic stakeholders will vary depending on the issue. Using the YOUR Stakeholder Analysis Model (Diagram #1) is helpful for identifying key strategic stakeholders who may otherwise be overlooked. Start by considering the Over, Under, and Relevant stakeholders and asking who can help or hinder with respect to the stated goal.

Over...

"Over" strategic stakeholders are people or groups of people above you (e.g. manager, directors) in the reporting structure of your organization who are in a position to help or hinder with respect to what you want to achieve.

Under...

"Under" strategic stakeholders are people or groups of people below you (e.g. employees, union) in the reporting structure who are in a position to help or hinder with respect to what you want to achieve.

Relevant...

"Relevant" Strategic Stakeholders are people or groups of people outside of your direct reporting structure and / or outside of your organization (e.g. your peers, politicians, media) who are in a position to help or hinder with respect to what you are trying to achieve.

Analysis: Will they support you?...

Put Yourself in Their Shoes

Once the strategic stakeholders have been identified, apply the YOUR Stakeholder Analysis Model exercise to each of them. Put yourself in their shoes. Consider the over, under, and relevant stakeholder environment that these strategic stakeholders operate within. This analysis helps reveal valuable insights into the needs, wants, vested interests, and motivations of these key individuals and groups.

Having a sense for whether particular strategic stakeholders will support, resist, or maintain a neutral position relative to your proposal is critical. Understanding these positions and the underlying drivers makes it possible to pursue one of four generic strategies for engaging strategic stakeholders. These are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Four Generic Strategic Stakeholder Strategies

Strategic Stakeholder Position	Generic Strategy
Supportive	1. Defend and retain existing support. 2. Leverage existing support to influence others.
Neutral/Indifferent	3. Consult/Convert.
Resisting (Two Types) Active Resisters Iceberg Resisters	4. Convert if possible – mitigate if unable to convert.



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Supportive: Defend and Leverage

Support can shift. Just because individuals may be supportive of what you are trying to achieve today does not mean they won't change their mind. Specific strategies and regular communication with key parties may be warranted in order to defend the level of support that has been achieved.

Supporters also represent an opportunity to leverage capabilities and resources in order to gain support from others. By soliciting the help of those who are already supportive, it is possible to expand the base of support much more quickly. Actively engaging these people may also be a good defensive strategy. Those supportive of what you wish to achieve may be perceived as being more influential than you are. They may be able to achieve a level of support you might never achieve on your own. Failing to look for ways to leverage supporters should be considered a lost opportunity.

Neutral / Indifferent: Consult and Convert

Failing to consider strategic stakeholders who appear to be neutral or indifferent may be analogous to looking at a beautiful, snow-covered mountain slope on a sunny afternoon in the middle of winter. As the afternoon sun works away at the snow, a slab can suddenly break-off, rush downhill, and become an avalanche completely burying anyone below. The effect can be fatal.

Any strategic stakeholder with the potential to exert significant influence should be respected and treated carefully. At the very least, plan to consult with these individuals or groups in order to clearly identify potential risks. Consultation with neutral / indifferent strategic stakeholders represents an opportunity to build or reinforce relationships that may prove beneficial in future situations where you need their support and where their position could be different (i.e. resisting).

Resisting: Convert or Mitigate

There are two types of resisting strategic stakeholders. "Active" resisters are readily identifiable and usually quite vocal in their opposition. Passive or "iceberg" resisters are much less obvious. Like an iceberg, what is visible to you above the water represents only a very small part of the overall mass. It is the unseen mass below the waterline that represents the largest danger and can be difficult to detect. "Iceberg" resisters, may at face value, appear to be neutral or even supportive of what is being proposed. It is only with probing that the degree of resistance becomes apparent.

While it would be ideal to be able to convert all resisters, due to the needs, wants, vested interests, and other motivations involved, this is often just not possible. In these situations, the strategy then becomes one of mitigation and damage control. An understanding of the Over, Under and Relevant stakeholder environments resisters operate within will be helpful in planning a course of action for managing through these situations.

Persuasion: An Essential Skill...

Once the key strategic stakeholders have been identified and their needs, wants, and vested interests have been explored, the next step is to develop persuasion strategies for each. The worksheet shown in Table #2 can be helpful in prioritizing strategic stakeholders, and also helps surface commonalities and possible strategies among stakeholders. Clustering strategic stakeholder persuasion strategies in this fashion can result in a faster and more efficient implementation.

Table 2: Categorizing and Prioritizing Strategic Stakeholders

YOUR Relationship Environment Analysis Worksheet						
Strategic Stakeholders	S	R	N	U	Needs, Wants, Vested Interests	Possible Strategies/Actions
1.						
2.						
3.						
S = Supportive, R = Resisting, N = Neutral on the issue, U = Unknown at this time.						

Persuasion is an essential skill in successful implementation. This is especially the case when major change is involved. Change involves risk, perceived or real. While leaders may understand the merits of the change, it may take time before others are able to share this vision. People need to understand the benefits of change in order to support it. Or, on the other hand, they may need to see that the risks associated with not changing are too high, notwithstanding the potential fears and discomfort. In today's rapidly changing environment it is often the risk of doing nothing that is the most compelling.

engage YOUR stakeholders

Four Steps to Persuade Key Stakeholders

According to Professor Jay Conger, "effective persuasion involves four distinct and essential steps." These are identified in **Diagram 2**.

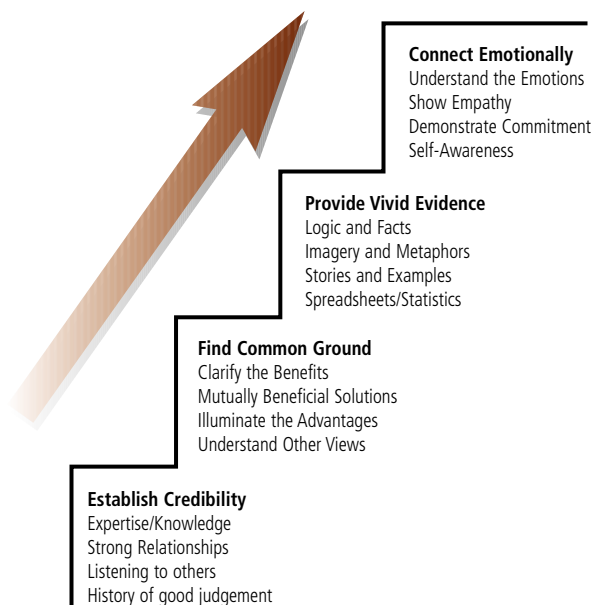


Diagram 2: Four Steps to Persuade Key Strategic Stakeholders

Adapted from *The Necessary Art of Persuasion* by Jay Cooper

Often it is not what we do but how we do it that makes the difference between success and failure. While it may be possible to cluster strategic stakeholders into groups and then apply common persuasion strategies to each, caution must be exercised. Solutions need to be customized to accommodate the personality type and style preferences of specific individuals. For example, trying to persuade a highly analytical individual who normally relies on numbers and spreadsheets by using only stories and metaphors could potentially prove very challenging. Within each of the four steps to persuasion there are several key questions that can assist in formulating the most appropriate course of action.

Establish Credibility:

1. Do I currently have credibility in the eyes of this person / group?
2. How can I build / reinforce my credibility?

Find Common Ground:

3. Do I really understand all views related to this issue?
4. What is in it for them – not just me? (WIIFT versus WIIFM)

Provide Vivid Evidence:

5. Does this person prefer hard data (e.g. spreadsheets), empirical information, examples or metaphors and stories?
6. What is the best time and location to persuade? (In a meeting or one-on-one?)

Connect Emotionally:

7. Do I really understand the potential sensitivities involved?
8. How will I show personal commitment to what I am trying to achieve while at the same time demonstrating flexibility in my position?

Strategic Stakeholders: Key to success...

Creative ideas and sound strategies are vital to the success of all organizations. However, to have any impact and generate results, they need to be successfully implemented. A more disciplined approach to obtaining support from key strategic stakeholders (e.g. identifying, analysing and persuading) can significantly enhance the probability of successful implementation.

1 Source: www.crosswaterpartners.com

2 *Managing YOUR Relationship Environment to Influence Strategic Stakeholders*, By Kevin Yousie, prepared for the Bank for International Settlements, Basel, Switzerland, 2000.

3 Ibid.

4 *The Necessary Art of Persuasion*, by Jay A. Conger, Harvard Business Review, May-June, 1998.