

Manage Your Stakeholders – Manage Your Life

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®, Chief Cheetah and Founder of Cheetah Learning, and Kristen Medina, CAPM®, Co-Author

Everyone reading this is a capable, smart, and skilled project manager, who is proud of managing the key stakeholder in each project with professionalism and finesse. Do you bring this same care to managing the stakeholder in your personal life? Can you imagine how much smoother things would be if you did? Who are the important stakeholders in the project called “life”? Take a moment to think about that, as this is an important question.

As the holidays approach, we can become more hypersensitive to how miscommunication and familial strife can affect our day-to-day life. And when we boil it down, it’s all about stakeholder mismanagement. Below are some of the most common pitfalls we have when managing stakeholders, in either our personal or professional lives.

Incorrectly identifying who your stakeholders are. You are planning a dinner with friends to celebrate over the holiday. You have a good idea of what your friends like and what they don’t, and have catered the menu with consideration for even your most allergy-ridden acquaintance. Your friends show up with their children, and the festivities begin—but no one told you that 6-year-old Pesky Pete was the world’s pickiest eater ever. As his temper tantrum begins to take over the room, your embarrassed friends politely excuse themselves and leave the party.

I like to call this a hidden stakeholder. This is someone who has genuine power, but is hidden behind another stakeholder who has less practical power. When you are managing a project, at work or at home, don’t stop at the surface when identifying key stakeholders who can make or break your project. There are Pesky Petes everywhere.

Communicating in a method other than what they prefer. You are organizing a holiday party, and have sent everyone a Facebook invite with instructions on what to bring, when to come, and the dress code. The problem is that a third of your prospective attendees are not on Facebook.

Before you spend a ton of energy on preparing information in an attempt to communicate to your key stakeholder, take a step back. Do you know the medium of communication that they prefer? How often do they prefer communication: daily, weekly, monthly? Do they prefer visual representations of the information, or essay format? When you utilize the medium and style of communication that your stakeholders prefer, you will not squander efficiency through a loss of communication.

Not communicating expectations properly. You and your loved one are exchanging presents for the holiday. You have put a lot of time and thought into

your gift—an engraved golf club set that cost you a fortune. They, the thoughtful ingrates they are, gave you cleaning supplies. In their defense, “Didn’t you need a new mop?”

Unmet expectations are the culprit of many disastrous events. And we only have ourselves to blame. To set yourself, and your stakeholders, up for success, you need to clearly communicate your expectations, and make sure you have a clear understanding of theirs.

Not getting buy-in from key stakeholders. It has come to the day of your holiday party, and you are running around like crazy getting ready. Your kids are hiding, but you know they are underfoot as you keep finding their messes. Your spouse is out running personal errands because they forgot about the party. And you are going CRAZY.

When you are working on a project, you need to rally members of your support group and get their buy-in to help you succeed. You can do this by making these stakeholders part of the decision-making process—would they like to invite friends to the party? What do they want to contribute to the menu? When you engage the stakeholders who are there to support you, you will be less stressed and more successful.

This holiday season, remember to treat the people who are most important to you as key stakeholders in the “Project of Life.” Happy planning, and Happy Holidays!

About the Author:



Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, is an entrepreneurial powerhouse with a penchant for making success easy, fun, and fast. She is the founder of [Cheetah Learning](#), the [author](#) of the [Cheetah Success Series](#), and a prolific [blogger](#) whose mission is to bring Project Management to the masses.

Cheetah Learning is a virtual company with 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide. To date, more than 50,000 people have become “Cheetahs” using Cheetah Learning’s innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques.

Recently honored by the Project Management Institute (PMI®), Cheetah Learning was named Professional Development Provider of the Year at the 2008 PMI® Global Congress. A dynamic keynote speaker and industry thought leader, Michelle was previously recognized by PMI as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in Project Management in the world.

Michelle's articles have appeared in more than 100 publications and websites around the world. Her monthly column, the [Know How Network](#), is carried by over 400 publications.

She is a graduate of the Harvard Business School's Owner President Manager's (OPM) program and also holds engineering degrees from Syracuse University and the University of Dayton.