

# Collaboration: engaging stakeholders helps you overcome barriers & siloes

When you bring people together, you tap into the creativity and energy they each bring. You learn to analyse problems from different points of view and make your goals more compelling. Chris Rainsforth shares some proven and tested methods for gaining buy-in and understanding.

“Siloes are the biggest hindrance to growth”, notes Amy Scott, Customer Experience Specialist at **Sedulous**. By breaking them down, you can connect channels and align KPIs across the organisation. Yet, many people do not see change as in their interest or do not believe it’s possible. This is true in a planning, insight or QA team, as it is for leaders. The skills we bring can be transformative only when we gain buy-in and understanding. Collaboration is key to releasing potential.

Taking time now will save time later and help you progress faster. Start by brainstorming who you need to collaborate with. Think of everyone who is affected by what you do, has influence or power over it or has an interest in its success (positively and negatively). This list might include: your boss, your team, senior leaders, customers, advisors, team leaders, service or operations managers, finance, marketing, IT – plus your professional network and The Forum team. Include all your potential supporters! “Make time to collaborate with like-minded people”, suggests Ian Robertson, Insight Specialist at The Forum, “so

you can share ideas and find solutions”. The next step is to prioritise; engagement takes time and we often can’t do it all! Some people can stop your work in its tracks, some may be interested while others have no interest at all. Why not map your stakeholders (see matrix) and then start understanding their needs and styles, so you can adapt your approach and the language you use. “My key learning was the steps I need to take to get agreement and support”, says John Senior, Information Analyst at **Yorkshire Ambulance**.

Why not try the proven and tested approaches in our toolkit (see box) or these questions?

- What financial or emotional interest is there in the outcome of your work? Is it positive or negative? What motivates most of all?
- What information do they want from you? What is the best way of communicating your message to them? What has worked (or not worked) in the past?
- What is their current opinion of your work? Is it based on good information? Who influences

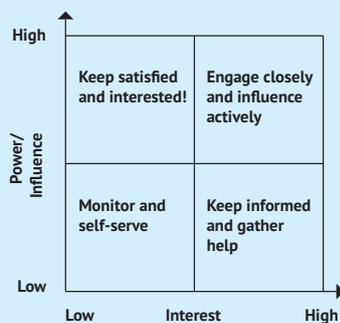


their opinions generally? Or their opinion of you? Who else might be influenced by their opinions?

- Do some of these influencers therefore become stakeholders in their own right?
- If people are not likely to be positive, what will win them around? If you can’t, how will you manage their opposition?

All this is far easier if you have a shared purpose and values. “How many organisations hire on skills and fire on attitude?” asks Emma Botfield, Head of Customer Service North Europe at **RS Components**. “If your beliefs and attitudes aren’t aligned, you are going nowhere”. Have you tried linking your work to corporate values, if these are living and embedded, or creating values-based relationships within your stakeholder network?

## Stakeholder mapping and the influencing toolkit



Find out more online or email [info@theforum.social](mailto:info@theforum.social).

Focus collaboration by creating a stakeholder map. Identify who you need to influence, learn from or work with. Then prioritise, start to understand their needs and create a communications plan. These six steps are proven approaches that can help you gain buy-in and expand your sphere of influence.

- 1 Is this the right cause? Prioritise what matters most!
- 2 How can you connect stakeholders emotionally?
- 3 Be passionate, but controlled. Mirror your stakeholder.
- 4 Get help from your friends and use your network.
- 5 What methods and channels will be most effective?
- 6 Focus on their key problems and offer viable solutions