

Making or breaking your library initiatives

Knowing your stakeholders and when and how to utilise them is the difference between making and breaking your library initiatives.

How you approach your clients / users or *stakeholders* will have a significant effect on the strength of your service institution in the future. By gaining a better understanding of stakeholder relationships, influence, and key needs, libraries can build stronger partnerships for improved service take-up and further ensuring that future development efforts are relevant. Gaining a more structured understanding of your stakeholders can also help develop embedded librarian skills.

***You may think you know your stakeholders.
Each library initiative has different ones to consider
often needing a different approach***

By analysing your stakeholders more thoroughly when you set out with an initiative, you can become more:

- ◆ aware of your clients' positions and motivations,
- ◆ sensitive to the way that you communicate with them to help achieve goals that make sense to both parties.

The diversity of your stakeholders

A stakeholder is a person, group, entity or organisation that can have a negative or positive influence on your policy, projects or services and/or can be affected by them.

Who works with you? Who works against you? Who is your champion? Who needs particular attention? Who do you not yet know who can support you? Above all, what **people strengths** are you missing to achieve your goals?

Stakeholders are found **on all levels** and can be internal or external.

The **prime concerns** of the faculty leader, researcher, lecturer, professor and university management and administration vary significantly. Some needs are shared whereas others are more unique.

Acquiring stakeholder support for library activities therefore needs a **varied approach**.

The role of your stakeholder in what you aim to achieve

You may want to introduce a persuasive policy, aim to involve a broad range of users in an innovative project or seek a wide take-up when rolling out a new service. Gaining a more structured understanding of your stakeholders can also help support the embedded librarian in their interaction with faculty.

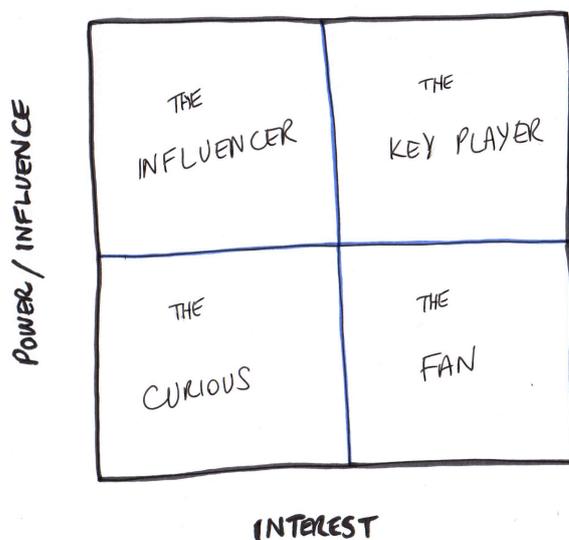
In any case, identifying and mapping your stakeholders will bring clarity as to who is interested, and what power or influence they have on what you are doing or want to do. Preparing in this way prior to communicating with important stakeholders on your initiative will help you realise your aims faster.

A two-step approach

Step One: Mapping your stakeholders

Who are your Influencers and who are the Key Players with the most power and interest to make vital decisions? Who are the Fans who can act as your ambassadors? What strengths are you missing where you can call on your stakeholders to support you?

Plot your stakeholders in the four quadrants map and form a picture of who you know and where they are positioned in relation to you.



Step Two: A stakeholder management plan

The next step is to briefly list your stakeholders' needs, and the most relevant methods in which to respond to them. This forms a short Stakeholder Management Plan. This more concrete stakeholder communication strategy can guide you more specifically when targeting and collaborating with your contacts in the future.

Case: Introducing a data management service

The Library is interested in providing support in the area of data management, e.g. storage, description or dissemination. What stakeholders does the Library need to consider to get this idea accepted and rolled out? Knowing them will also help avoid the duplication of effort.

Internal stakeholders can include for example IT services and faculty research support services. University management, impact managers, heads of research, research administrators; they all have different stakes and needs to the data generators and users from data-dependent disciplines, and to the leading research co-ordinators or to PhD students.

External stakeholders can range from data service providers, e.g. national data centres or SMEs to key national/international projects or funding bodies.

Where do internal and external stakeholders appear in the power and interest matrix? Who has the influence to make data management support happen, grow, or come to an end? What are the diverging and common interests in data management? Using this knowledge, how are you consequently going to target and address your different stakeholders most effectively? How you address the new project lead on a prestigious data project will be different to how you sell the idea to the research manager or IT service lead or developer.

In each different context

Know who your stakeholders are and what motivates them.

Briefly design your plan of approach to each stakeholder individually to achieve goals that make sense to both parties.

This outline should help you to shed more light on your stakeholders. If you'd prefer support in doing this however, contact Vanessa Proudman at info@proud2know.eu