

stakeholder assessment

value selling system® template

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This Value Selling System® stakeholder assessment template provides a framework for identifying, analysing and assessing every key customer stakeholder in every significant sales opportunity.

The stakeholder assessment template should be completed to the best of your current knowledge at the earliest possible stage in the development of every significant opportunity and reviewed and updated at regular intervals throughout the sales cycle.

It is unlikely that you will be able to complete the assessment first time around - so you must make it your mission to progressively fill in the gaps in your knowledge and to regularly reassess the current status of stakeholders.

Please email Bob Apollo of Inflexion-Point on bob@inflexion-point.com to request an editable version of this deck.

introduction

The typical complex B2B buying decision process now includes an average of 6.8 actively engaged customer stakeholders [source: CEB/Gartner] - and many opportunities involve even more decision-makers.

In addition to identifying all the stakeholders who are actively involved in every sales opportunity, it is critically important that sales people accurately assess:

- Each stakeholder's **role** in the decision-making process
- Each stakeholder's predominant **perspective**
- Each stakeholder's **influence** on the final decision
- Each stakeholder's **attitude** to us
- Each stakeholder's **accessibility**

These factors must be regularly reassessed throughout the sales cycle, and sales people must always be prepared to justify their conclusions. If you are uncertain about any of these factors you should declare this and make determined efforts to accurately assess the true situation.

Each of these factors is defined in greater detail on the subsequent slides.

The following two slides contain tabular and embedded excel versions of the one-page stakeholder assessment - you can use either. The excel version has the advantage of having drop-down menu choices and colour-coded answers.

stakeholder assessment summary (table)

name	title	role	perspective	influence	attitude	accessibility
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-

----- options -----

Final Approver	Strategic	Dominant	Very positive	Unrestricted
Power Sponsor	Financial	Strong	Somewhat positive	Frequent
Key Contributor	Operational	Average	Neutral	Infrequent
Gatekeeper	Technical	Weak	Somewhat negative	Promised
Influencer	Contractual	Non-existent	Very negative	Inaccessible
None	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Uncertain				

This is a tabular version of the assessment - an embedded excel version (which allows colour coding of the entries) is on the next page

In addition to identifying all the stakeholders who are actively involved in the opportunity, you need to assess their role, focus, influence, attitude and accessibility, using the definitions established on subsequent slides. You must always be prepared to justify your conclusions.

DO NOT GUESS. IF YOU ARE UNSURE, RECORD STATUS AS “UNCERTAIN” AND TAKE STEPS TO CLARIFY YOUR UNDERSTANDING.

stakeholder assessment summary (excel)

name	title	role	perspective	influence	attitude	accessibility
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

----- options -----

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None	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Uncertain				

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This is an embedded excel version of the assessment - a simple tabular version is available on the previous slide. Click on the spreadsheet object to edit the contents.

In addition to identifying all the stakeholders who are actively involved in the opportunity, you need to assess their role, focus, influence, attitude and accessibility, using the definitions established on subsequent slides. You must always be prepared to justify your conclusions.

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individual stakeholder profile

name	title	role	perspective	influence	attitude	accessibility
-	-	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Key Responsibilities	<i>Summarise what you understand of this stakeholder's key responsibilities, with particular emphasis on the ones that are most relevant to this project</i>					
Key Priorities	<i>Summarise what you understand of this stakeholder's key personal and departmental priorities, with particular emphasis on the ones that are most relevant to this project</i>					
Motivations	<i>Summarise what you understand of this stakeholder's motivations, with particular emphasis on the ones that are most relevant to this project</i>					
Their Role	<i>Summarise what you understand about the role this stakeholder will play in the decision-making process for this project</i>					
Their Perspective	<i>Summarise what you understand of the perspective this stakeholder will bring to this project</i>					
Influence	<i>Summarise your assessment of the degree of influence this stakeholder has over the decision-making process</i>					
Attitude	<i>Summarise (and explain) how you assess this stakeholder's attitude to us</i>					
Accessibility	<i>Summarise your attempts - successful or otherwise - to engage with this stakeholder</i>					
Strategy	<i>Taking all of the above into account, summarise your strategy for dealing with this stakeholder</i>					

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You should complete a detailed profile (one slide per stakeholder) for all the stakeholders you have managed to identify, engage and profile in depth - which may be subset of the entire stakeholder community. You should make it your mission to “fill in the blanks” as you progressively learn more about the project, the stakeholders and their individual attributes.

In addition to summarising the key factors along the top section, you should capture a brief summary in the right-hand column against all of the key factors outlines down the left-hand side.

Detailed Guidelines

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The next section contains detailed guidelines for completing the templates

stakeholder assessment - their role

role in decision process [choose the best fit]	
final approver	the project cannot proceed without their consent
power sponsor	someone capable of driving the decision making process and aligning the other decision makers around their preferred option
key contributor	a key member of the core decision group, with a significant contribution to make to the final decision process
gatekeeper	someone who has the potential to veto or delay the decision - typically on technical, commercial or legal grounds (e.g., IT, procurement or legal)
influencer	someone whose opinions are sought by the core decision group but who is not part of that group
none	someone who does not fit into any of the above categories
uncertain	we are currently uncertain about this individuals' role in the process

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Stakeholders can sometimes play more than one role. In such situations, you should choose the ONE option that most accurately describes their most important contribution (for example, a power sponsor will inevitably also be a key contributor, but should be categorised as a “power sponsor”).

There may be multiple final approvers, key contributors, gatekeepers and influencers, but there will usually only be ONE power sponsor (and engaging with them and gaining their support is often critical to the success of the sale).

You must always be prepared to justify your conclusions.

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stakeholder assessment - their perspective

predominant perspective [choose the best fit]	
strategic	this stakeholder's primary focus is on the long-term strategic aspects of the project
financial	this stakeholder's primary focus is on the financial or budgetary aspects of the project
operational	this stakeholder's primary focus is on the operational aspects of the project
technical	this stakeholders' primary focus is on the technical aspects of the project
contractual	this stakeholder's primary focus is on the commercial, legal or procurement aspects of the project
uncertain	we are currently uncertain about this individuals' primary focus

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Different stakeholders contribute to the decision-making process from a number of different perspectives - strategic, financial, operational, technical and contractual. Recognising that some stakeholders may look at the project from more than one perspective, you should choose the one that seems to best reflect their primary focus.

In complex buying decisions, all of these perspectives will usually need to be represented within the decision-making group at a primary or secondary level. You should consider it a red flag if any of these perspectives appear to be "missing".

You must always be prepared to justify your conclusions.

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stakeholder assessment - influence + attitude

influence on the decision		attitude to us	
dominant	have the power and authority to drive a decision through even in the face of opposition from other stakeholders	very positive	they have a very positive attitude to us and are actively championing our cause
strong	their contributions are regarded as important to the ultimate decision	somewhat positive	they have a generally positive attitude to us and appear to be actively supporting us
average	their contributions have some useful impact on the ultimate decision	neutral	they give no indication of being either in favour of or against us
weak	their contributions have a minor impact on the ultimate decision	somewhat negative	they have a generally negative attitude to us and may be supporting another approach
non-existent	their contributions have no impact whatsoever on the ultimate decision	very negative	they have a very negative attitude to us and are likely to be actively championing an alternative approach
uncertain	we are currently uncertain about their influence on the decision	uncertain	we are currently uncertain about their attitude to us

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Every stakeholder needs to be assessed in terms of their **influence** on the decision making process and their **attitude** towards us as a potential vendor. Choose the ONE value from each column that most accurately reflects their situation.

You must always be prepared to justify your conclusions.

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stakeholder assessment - accessibility

our access to them [choose the best fit]	
unrestricted	we have frequent and unrestricted access to this stakeholder
frequent	we have relatively easy and frequent access to this stakeholder
infrequent	we have only been able to have infrequent access to this stakeholder
promised	we have been credibly promised access to this stakeholder but have not yet been able to engage directly with them
inaccessible	despite our best efforts, it appears to be impossible to access this stakeholder
uncertain	we are currently uncertain about our ability to access this stakeholder

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You must assess your current ability to engage with each of the stakeholders - unrestricted, frequent, infrequent, promised or inaccessible.

You must always be prepared to justify your conclusions.

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