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Transforming Public Sector Stakeholder Engagement

Effective Digital Channels and Strategies

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Content

Effective Digital Channels and Strategies

This guide is essential reading if you:

- **Are a public sector manager or director**
- **Work with internal or external stakeholders**
- **Want to make stakeholder engagement cheaper and more effective.**

You will learn:

- **How organisations classify stakeholders**
- **Why traditional stakeholder engagement methods are not enough**
- **How to transform stakeholder engagement using digital channels.**

You will receive:

- **A free trial of Government accredited cloud collaboration software that is already used across the public sector to deliver powerful and cost-effective stakeholder engagement.**

Analysing your Stakeholders

Public sector organisations thrive when they engage effectively with their stakeholders.

But before they can do so, they need to know who those stakeholders are. In the broadest sense, a stakeholder is:

> *"A person such as an employee, customer or citizen who is involved with an organisation, society, etc. and therefore has responsibilities towards it and an interest in its success."*
>
> *(Cambridge Dictionaries Online)*

A quick glance at any public sector organisation reveals that most have a huge number of potential stakeholders, both internally and externally.

For example, the stakeholder mapping grid on the following page, adapted from one published by the NHS Calderdale Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in its Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2012-2013, prioritises their stakeholders in four key groups based on their influence and interest.

High

Keep satisfied
Inform + Consult

- Other Providers / Local Contacted Services: eg. Pharmacists, Opticians
- Third sector: inc Disability Partnership,
- Area Forum, Calderdale Engage and Voluntary and Community Sector
- Other agencies: Housing, Police

Work together
Inform + Consult + Collaborate

- Internal: incl. Member Practices, CCG Staff, Cluster Board, Non-exec Associates, Practice Staff
- Government/regulatory: incl. Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Partners: incl. Health & Wellbeing Board, Local Authority Commissioners, Calderdale Assembly,
- Neighbouring CCGs
- Providers: incl. Acute Trusts, Private/Independent Community Interest Providers, NHS Trusts
- Suppiers: Commissioning Support Unit
- Professional bodies
- Patients: Representative Organisations eg. LINK/ Health Watch

Minimal effort
Inform

- Education: incl. Appraisers, Schools, Universities and Training Institutions
- Professional bodies
- Third sector: incl. Religious Group, Housing • Public: (as Tax Payers and Potential Patients)
- Suppliers: e.g. Pharmaceuticals, Bank etc.

Show consideration
Inform + Consult

- Patient and Public: incl. Tax Payers
- Media: Local, Regional & National
- Government/Regulatory: incl. NHS Commissioning Board, CQC, Monitor, Health & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Political: incl. MPs and Councillors

Stakeholder Influence

Low .... **Stakeholder Interest** .... ► **High**

As you can see, Calderdale has identified a significant number of stakeholders (elsewhere in its strategy it breaks them down further into a list of over 60 stakeholder groups), meaning it would be impractical to engage with them all to the same extent.

Fortunately, different stakeholders have differing needs and expectations of any public sector organisation, and vice versa.

A supplier will want a much simpler relationship with Calderdale CCG than that required by a regulatory body. The supplier will be motivated by selling more goods, such as pharmaceuticals, and making more profit, while the regulatory body will want to know how money is being spent by the Commissioning Group, how key services are being integrated and how health services are planned, provided and operated.
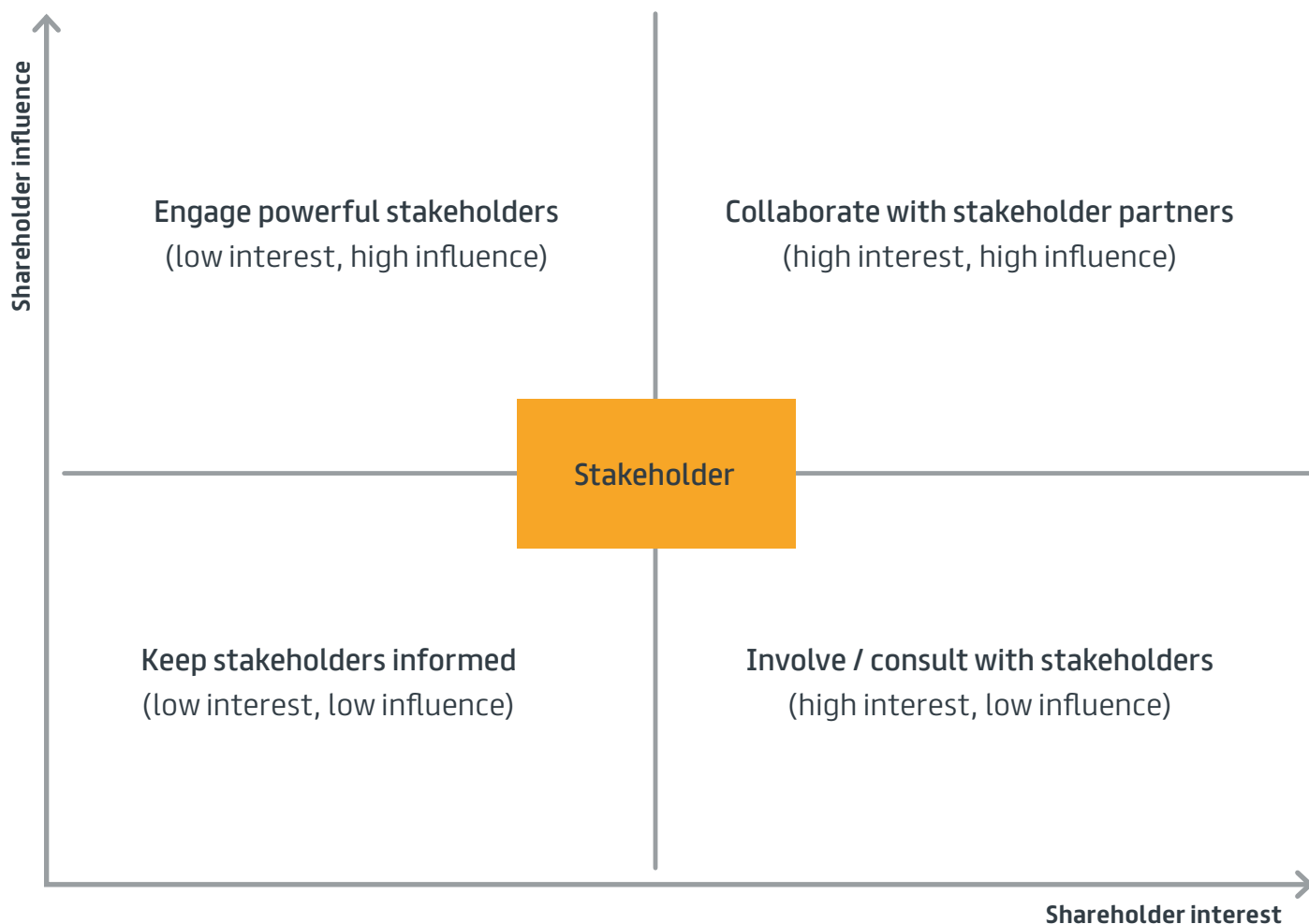
So, in this context, Calderdale will need to invest less time and resource to engage with a supplier than it does for the regulatory body.

To help it prioritise time and resources, Calderdale divides stakeholders into the four areas represented in the grid, depending on the level of interest and influence each stakeholder has. This helps it define the ways in which it needs to manage stakeholder engagement in each area.

We'll be looking at these relationships in more detail on page 12, but in summary Calderdale will involve stakeholders in the following ways:

Only by mapping stakeholders into such segments can you find the best strategies to engage and communicate with them, using both traditional and online methods. Certainly, many of the stakeholders identified by Calderdale are busy health professionals with little time to spend away from the office, hospital or surgery — making it impractical to rely on traditional time-consuming engagement methods such as face-to-face meetings.

Let's take a closer look at how you can do it...

Shareholder influence

Engage powerful stakeholders
(low interest, high influence)

Collaborate with stakeholder partners
(high interest, high influence)

Stakeholder

Keep stakeholders informed
(low interest, low influence)

Involve / consult with stakeholders
(high interest, low influence)

Shareholder interest

Making Stakeholder Engagement Meaningful

Wikipedia has a good definition of stakeholder engagement that hints at the different kinds of relationship the process may involve:

"Stakeholder engagement

is the process by which an organisation involves people who may be affected by the decisions it makes or can influence the implementation of its decisions. They may support or oppose the decisions, be influential in the organisation or within the community in which it operates, hold relevant official positions or be affected in the long term."

(Wikipedia).

As we saw, a public sector organisation can have dozens, if not hundreds of potential stakeholder groupings.

Engaging them, therefore, sounds like a complex challenge, but you need to remember that not all stakeholders are going to be interested in all areas of your organisation's work. For example, if you belong to a local authority, developers and architects will be stakeholders — but they will want to be engaged primarily in planning and housing issues, not your collection of Council Tax, provision of benefits or leisure facility programmes.

This means that the key to effective stakeholder engagement is a clear purpose. Before getting stakeholders on board, you need a vision of what you want to achieve as this will make the engagement process more meaningful for everyone involved.

Purpose: the Key to Stakeholder Engagement

Case Study

Local Authority Emergency Planning

South Gloucestershire Council is a unitary authority in an area that has major infrastructure facilities, including nuclear power plants, the busy M4/M5 motorway intersection, chemical works and the River Severn crossings.

Failure, accidents or natural disasters affecting any of these could have catastrophic effects for the region. To minimise risk, and respond quickly when needed, the Council needs robust and reliable emergency planning.

The Council alone can't provide emergency planning, so it needs to involve major stakeholders who can help. The purpose of emergency planning helps to define and scope the stakeholders South Gloucestershire needs to engage with.

They include:

- **Police**
- **Fire Brigade**
- **Military**
- **NHS**
- **Council Departments**
- **Nuclear Licensed Sites**
- **Environment Agency**
- **Highways Agency**
- **Network Rail**

Thanks to a clearly defined purpose, the Council can identify the stakeholders it needs to engage with relatively easily.

The next stages in the process are finding the most appropriate ways to involve them, and the techniques used to do so. We'll cover those later in this guide.

Deciding on the Most Appropriate Level of Engagement

There are lots of different reasons public sector organisations need to engage with stakeholders. Here are just some examples:

- **Policy development**
- **Joint commissioning and supplier management**
- **Development of shared services**
- **Economic and tourism development**
- **Healthcare campaigns and initiatives**
- **Service and business transformation**
- **Neighbourhood planning schemes**
- **Gateway and public sector procurement reviews**
- **Environmental initiatives**
- **Regional waste management projects**
- **Spinning out public services to new social enterprises**
- **Curriculum development**
- **Local crime reduction**

Each purpose and business context naturally requires relationships with different people, and the key to success is correctly identifying the right stakeholders and managing their involvement in the most appropriate way — by working together, showing consideration, informing them, or keeping them satisfied - depending on how active or influential your stakeholders are.

Example: engaging stakeholders in new service provision

Imagine you belong to the Department for Education and you want to develop a new curriculum policy and support materials on preventing alcohol and drug misuse. There are four (potentially overlapping) groups of stakeholders you will engage with:

Group 1

Stakeholders you need to work together with

These are the people you need to work with to develop and implement your policy and materials. In this case it could include the Teaching Agency, the Personal Social Health & Economic Education (PSHE) Agency, Public Health England, medical colleges, national drugs and alcohol charities, The Portman Group and other representatives from government, industry and the third sector. You would need to inform them of news, consult with them and collaborate on the policy.

Group 2

Stakeholders you need to show consideration to

This group could include bodies such as the teaching and headteachers' unions, smaller drugs and alcohol charities, parents' associations, local councils, student councils, police and others with an interest in alcohol and drugs policy and education. You would need to inform them of updates and consult with them on policy development.

Group 3

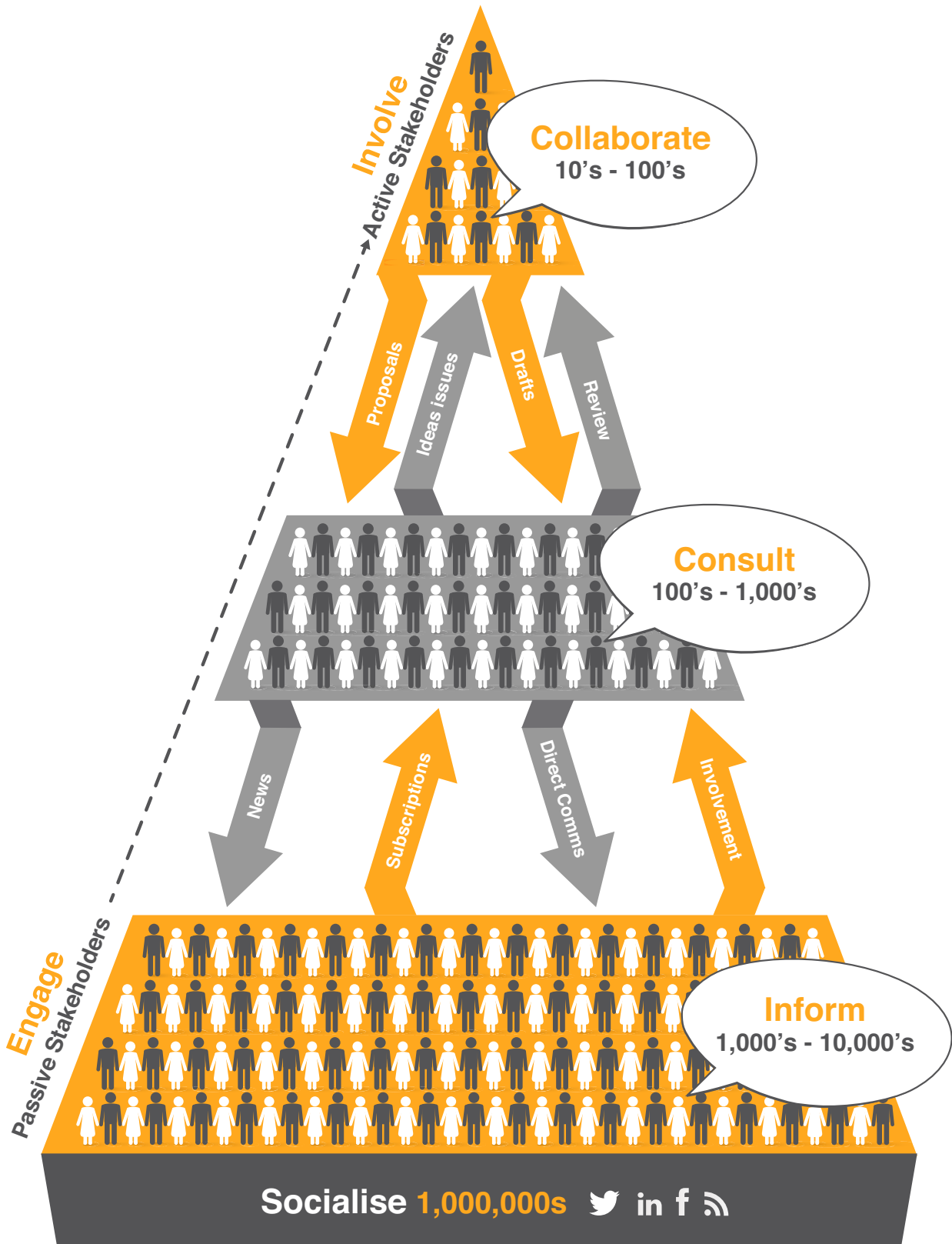### Stakeholders you need to inform with minimal effort

This group would include schools, colleges, members of the public, parents and those with a potential interest in the proposed changes.

Group 4

Stakeholders you need to keep satisfied

This group is of high influence, but potentially low interest people who you need to keep on side via engagement. Ensuring they have the right information and the opportunity to take part in consultation helps them to 'buy in' to your plans. This group could include other Government departments and the national media. You would use a combination of informational and consultative techniques to keep these stakeholders engaged.

Hierarchy of Engagement - Inform. Consult. Collaborate.

Involve — Active Stakeholders

Collaborate
10's - 100's

Proposals · Ideas issues · Drafts · Review

Consult
100's - 1,000's

News · Subscriptions · Direct Comms · Involvement

Engage — Passive Stakeholders

Inform
1,000's - 10,000's

Socialise 1,000,000s

Levels of stakeholder engagement

To engage all four groups of stakeholders, there is a three-stage hierarchy of engagement that allows you to inform, consult, and collaborate according to the type of stakeholder — as explained by the diagram on the previous page.

Some stakeholders will require two or more levels of engagement, others only one. Informing stakeholders can inspire them to respond and emerge as valuable consultees, and consulting with them can see them become useful collaborators. Informing and consulting can also keep high influence/low interest stakeholders satisfied, and keep the door open to collaboration if they should choose to get more deeply involved. Empowering stakeholders in this way becomes simpler using digital methods of engagement, as you will see later in this guide.

Most organisations would like their stakeholders to get more involved, which can only be done through improved communications and more opportunities to take part. Some stakeholders may only wish to be kept informed, while others may wish to provide feedback and get more involved by volunteering their skills and resources. This pipeline effect ensures that you don't just rely on the 'famous 'few' – and that all stakeholders have the opportunity to get involved in the ways that work best for them and you.

The three main levels of engaging stakeholders require different approaches if they are to succeed, and each presents its own challenges. We'll tackle these in the next section.

Shortcomings of Traditional Stakeholder Engagement

To be inclusive, traditional methods of stakeholder engagement have an important role to play, whether you need to inform, consult or collaborate with people. However, they do have shortcomings that – in a digital age – are becoming easier to overcome.

For example, public sector bodies often use advertisements, flyers and letters to inform stakeholders. These methods are effective, but expensive – especially if you need to reach a large number of people on a regular basis.

Similarly, paper questionnaires and street surveys are good for consulting stakeholders, but are expensive to implement and process. Interviewers cost money and considerable time and effort is required to transpose feedback error free into a suitable format that can be easily analysed.

Finally, collaborating with stakeholders using traditional methods can quickly become arduous and sometimes chaotic. Trying to organise face-to-face meetings is time consuming and difficult, especially when key stakeholders are often busy people and belong to different organisations or are spread across a wide geographical area. It can also be difficult for participants to collaborate between meetings, meaning work is slow to progress. Managing project work and partner involvement requires lots of dedicated staff time, which can stand in the way of starting speculative or small-scale projects as a means to innovate.

That said, all these techniques are still valuable for engaging stakeholders, but they pose serious cost and efficiency problems that both limit the number and diversity of interested parties you can engage with, and the viability of involving them on all but the most essential issues.

But by integrating digital channels into your wider stakeholder communications and engagement strategy, you change the game significantly. Read on to see how.

Digital Channels &
Tools Available to You

Given the inadequacies of traditional forms of stakeholder engagement, there's little wonder that public sector organisations are switching to inexpensive digital channels to help improve engagement at all stages of the process.

The major advantage of most of these channels is that they offer mass media opportunities for minimal cost and maximum exposure, no matter how you want to engage your stakeholders.

Keep satisfied
inform & consult

- Issue Registers
- Targeted Alerts
- Document review
- Risk registers
- Project blogs
- Links to Articles
- Information updates
- Facebook page
- Secure file sharing

Work together
inform & consult & collaborate

- Task assignment
- Document co-authoring
- Wikis
- Team management
- Team diaries
- Analysis & reporting

Stakeholder
Profiles/Database

Minimal effort
inform

- Tweets
- RSS feeds
- Public web pages
- YouTube channel

Show consideration
inform & consult

- Discussion forums
- Message moderation
- Formal e-consultations
- Quick polls
- Online surveys
- Ideation

Stakeholder influence

Stakeholder interest

You'll notice that the diagram on the previous page is charted in a similar way to the stakeholder map on page 5. However, instead of mapping stakeholders, this diagram shows different ways you can use technology to inform, consult, collaborate and engage with them, determined by their level of interest and influence.

Let's take as an example a local authority that wants to create a plan to pedestrianise the High Street in a local town. If it is to have a chance of success, it needs to create a workable plan for revised traffic flow and disabled parking, provision for deliveries to High Street retailers, evidence that footfall won't drop and damage businesses, renewed policies on cycling and cycle parking and much more. Above all, it needs to demonstrate that there's a need for the policy, based on factors such as air pollution, accidents, falling retail trade and more — as well as to find out whether there's significant public backing for the move.

To do this, it could engage stakeholders in all of the following ways:

1. To inform – with minimal effort

To maximise exposure and awareness, digital channels permit the council to reach many more stakeholders, using a variety of interactive text, pictures and video. When complemented by the traditional methods of disseminating information outlined in the last section, the following tools and techniques allow it to provide information-rich resources to stakeholders with minimal effort and cost.

Public web pages: to provide easy-to-find project bulletins and design plans for all interested parties plus links to relevant 3rd party web sites and other digital channels:

RSS Feeds: to provide anonymous online subscription to instant updates and news on pedestrianisation to all stakeholders' desktops and mobile devices.

YouTube channel: to provide evidence of current town centre congestion, disseminate interviews with traders, disabled people, shoppers, cyclist, motorists, families and others who might be affected by any changes.

Twitter: to release news of developments as they happen, and engage with stakeholders by answering queries and providing links to further information.

Facebook and social media: social and networking tools provide an opportunity for stakeholders to 'Like' news content therefore bringing it to the attention of the wider community.

Quick polls: to get instant snapshots of stakeholder feeling (without the need for in-depth analysis), and chart how it develops over time.

2. To consult – and show consideration for views

The scheme may be of high interest to many local residents, not all of whom will be influential. It is important therefore to explain what the council intends to do, discuss issues and options and allow for challenges. Using digital channels to consult could help the council gather and quickly analyse feedback from any number of stakeholders at minimal cost – in stark contrast to paper questionnaires, public meetings and other traditional methods. Techniques the council could use to consult with stakeholders include:

Online surveys: to gauge stakeholder reaction to the principle of pedestrianisation, and to identify issues, objections and support for the plans and options presented.

Ideation: using online feedback forms to gather and vote on alternative ideas on how to implement the plans for the best benefit of the whole community.

Formal e-Consultations: inviting responses using online questionnaires and capturing official representations on design options and policy documents as part of development planning regulations.

Discussion forums: providing an online space to discuss the pedestrianisation plans, put forward ideas and objections and ensure stakeholders feel listened to — while using moderation facilities to keep debate focused and on track.

3. To collaborate – closely in partnership

To develop closer and more effective working relationships with key stakeholder groups, the council could use a variety of online tools to actively engage and assist project team members and the key partners responsible for shaping the final pedestrianisation policy and for implementing the plans. One huge advantage with cloud-based project collaboration tools is that they eliminate the need for many face-to-face meetings, as well as phone calls and uncontrolled emails, allowing the project to proceed much more rapidly.

Secure file sharing workspaces: a secure repository of project files with variable access privileges, ensuring team members can access only the information that's relevant to their area of responsibility.

Team management & task assignment: online project management tools can be used to manage cross-organisational teams and monitor tasks and completion dates.

It would also allow the council to collaborate more effectively with internal colleagues, transportation officers, contractors, town planning consultants and others.

Shared team diaries: to help keep work on track and co-ordinate activity and conference calls.

Wikis: a collaborative resource to share and brainstorm ideas, best practice and lessons learned.

Document co-authoring: allowing people from different organisations to work on a single copy of an online document, such as a design specification or supplier contract, eliminating complex paper trails and conflicting document versions.

Risk registers: allow project management and team members to record, rate and correlate each risk against likelihood, so to highlight and manage the threat posed.

4. To engage – and keep satisfied

Stakeholders in this category can be powerful influencers, but because they potentially have low interest the council will need to find appropriate digital channels and techniques to target their messages in ways that provide context and address the specific issues that interest them to build political support for the project.

Issue registers: the council can compile an online issue register to record, rate and deal with the individual concerns of influential stakeholders regarding each part of the pedestrianisation plan.

Document review: key documents can be shared with stakeholders online, providing them with an opportunity to offer their views before wider publication.

Targeted alerts / information updates:

stakeholders can sign up for regular email updates as policy is formulated and the plans are put into action. As they are busy people, the council should allow them to tailor their updates around the specific topics they're interested in.

Links to articles: to provide wider context, the council can publish web links to relevant press articles and pertinent articles from interest groups regarding pedestrianisation

— such as town planner, disabled groups and environmental organisations.

Project blogs: to keep stakeholders up-to-date regarding progress, selected project team members can share news of important developments and pitfalls using a dedicated pedestrianisation project blog.

Stakeholder Database: placed right in the centre of the grid, this could include stakeholder attributes that allow you to build a deeper understanding of their interests and involvement by the information they have received, the consultations they have contributed to and the collaborative work they have undertaken. Importantly, in this way you are able to quickly measure stakeholders' levels of engagement and selectively target them for involvement in future stakeholder projects.

As you can see, digital channels bring major benefits to stakeholder engagement, allowing public sector organisations to inform, consult, collaborate and engage in a wide range of ways. Using them also brings major cost, efficiency and opportunity benefits to the stakeholder engagement process, as you'll see in the next section.

Benefits of Digital Stakeholder Engagement

At first glance, the number of different ways you can engage with stakeholders digitally suggests you need to invest heavily in lots of different kinds of technology.

That's not the case. While you could in theory set up separate tools to provide blogs, RSS feeds, discussion forums, project management software and other functionality, it's not necessary.

Instead you can use an online engagement package which bundles all this functionality together. Easy to set up and simple to use, these software packages allow you to deploy the tools you need to each aspect of stakeholder engagement. And because they are flexible and easy to deploy, they allow you to think big, but start small - growing organically by adding functionality and new stakeholders as and when you need to.

Stakeholders can access the tools and information you provide within a secure online workspace or public web communities, which they can use directly from a web browser on any Internet- connected device. And you can use access privileges to ensure that different stakeholders only see and contribute to documents or data you want them to.

To illustrate, a good online collaboration package can offer you the following:

- **Secure workspaces for stakeholders to gather information, share ideas or contribute to a common project**
- **Stakeholder management allowing you to create different teams, assigning different permissions to give tailored access and communications to each individual member**
- **Secure file sharing with a full document audit trail, document locking and notification emails**
- **Team collaboration using a range of tools from co-authoring documents, online databases, blog posts, polls, discussion forums and more**
- **Task and project management allowing you to bring key stakeholders together and manage, drive and evaluate their contributions using task lists, progress updates, calendars, email reminders, agendas and shared materials**
- **Consultation using online questionnaires, quick polls and online comment forms**

To learn more about how collaboration software works, download our free guides How to collaborate online: a public sector guide and Choosing the right collaboration tool for your public sector organisation.

You'll learn that having access to all the digital channels you need for effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement brings major savings, efficiency and opportunity benefits to your public sector organisation. These include:

1. More opportunities for stakeholder engagement

Traditional methods of engaging stakeholders are expensive, and you have to weigh up the cost of engagement with the benefits it may bring.

Using relatively inexpensive online tools allow you to inform, consult,collaborate and engage simply by setting up dedicated online workspaces and communities.

It costs little to do, and it enables you to bring stakeholders together on a more frequent basis to contribute to policy, projects and initiatives at an early stage – something that may have been prohibitively costly beforehand.

2. Cutting travel costs and increasing productivity

Collaborating with stakeholders used to be time consuming, hard to arrange and expensive. Even something as simple as organising a face-to-face meeting between key stakeholders in different organisations could take weeks.

Using an online platform to share information and invite responses means that stakeholders can participate by simply going online. This allows you to reduce travel costs, break down geographical barriers, get faster responses and give stakeholders the tools to contribute between meetings, resulting in a faster pace of work. Consultations are improved because busy stakeholders can contribute in their own time, not just at sessions held in office hours or at distant venues.

3. Widen your stakeholder base

Traditional methods of stakeholder engagement can be limiting. There is usually an upper limit to the number of people you can inform or consult, simply due to the expense of sending out paper documents or holding face-to-face sessions (these are often restricted by the number of people you can fit in a room). Digital channels allow you to widen your consultation base.

Because information can be shared easily; you can quickly reach more stakeholders than the normal 'famous few' who traditionally have become the mainstay of many consultations.

Additionally, allowing stakeholders to contribute online will attract many more people who might feel uncomfortable about speaking at meetings or coming to meet officers face to face. It's also much easier to engage with the traditionally hard to reach, including young people, people with disabilities and those who have busy lives.

In these ways you can bring vital, extra viewpoints to the engagement process.

4. **Improve transparency and accountability**

If you use an online collaboration platform to engage stakeholders, you have a full audit trail of all activity, and can easily publish documents and responses for any audience of stakeholders. An audit trail can also make responses to Freedom of Information requests cheaper and simpler to fulfil – every item of information regarding a project is kept within one workspace. This, combined with widened participation, increases both transparency and accountability.

Another major benefit of an audit trail is the way in which you build a coherent and solid evidence base on which decisions can be made and justified.

5. **Meet stakeholders' expectations**

Growing numbers of stakeholders now expect the public sector to engage with them digitally — sending them blanket emails, or simply providing an email address or feedback form isn't enough.

It's your responsibility to make it easy for stakeholders to have their say about issues they care about, and providing a proper online platform for engagement speaks volumes about your organisation and your brand values — it sends a clear signal that you truly value stakeholder involvement and are engaging because you want to, not because you have to.

In the next section, we'll see how some public sector organisations are already reaping the rewards of intelligent digital stakeholder engagement strategies.

Effectively Using Digital Tools – Some Examples

As we saw earlier, it's possible to provide most, if not all, of the tools you need for stakeholder engagement by using an online stakeholder engagement platform.

These systems are like a digital Swiss Army knife, allowing you to inform, consult, collaborate and engage with stakeholders in many different ways.

To give you an insight into what you can achieve with both small and large projects, look at these two short case studies.

Case study 1:
The Land Registry

The Land Registry planned to introduce a new e-Conveyancing system. To do it effectively, it needed to bring together a task force of over 50 people across England and Wales, as well as engage over 200,000 people from a variety of stakeholder groups in the property sector, government and within the Land Registry itself.

Initially the organisation ran face-to-face meetings with conveyancing groups and VIP stakeholders to find out their views on electronic registration, digital signatures and electronic funds transfer —but as Stakeholder Liaison

Manager Christine Beech pointed out, this was "costly and time consuming, and as we started to work on the detail of the new system we needed to find new ways to dramatically expand our reach to a wider cross-section of practising professionals".

To solve this problem, the Land Registry chose online collaboration software because it wanted a people-centric, not document-centric, approach and "required a tool that could be used for engagement and consultation as well as document collaboration and information publishing."

The Land Registry ran a pilot e-lodgement service and used the collaboration software "to inform everyone on legislation changes as they happened. We were able to use the service to provide training materials, keep the project on track and deal with problems during the pilot." They also ran online groups under the banner "e-Conveyancing, Realising the Vision" in which they surveyed each company's state of readiness and applied different group membership based on the state they selected. Stakeholders were then able to receive and discuss information relevant to them and progress through each state as appropriate.

The software became integral to the Land Registry's way of working, and it achieved survey responses that were 30% higher than those issued on paper. It now has the tools to stay in touch with existing stakeholders and reach those it hasn't yet met. As Beech concludes: "The service is certainly making it easier to involve our stakeholders and it is now a fundamental part of the way we do things. Our stakeholders are becoming increasingly aware of our web communities and value them as a method of keeping in touch with fast moving ideas and events in e-conveyancing."

Case study 2:
Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG)

DCLG needed to procure a new IT supplier, and its IT Services Outsourcing Project brought together a project team and stakeholders across several organisations. It needed to deliver large amounts of information securely to external suppliers and didn't want the risk of sending bulky email attachments.

The Department solved the problem by using collaboration software. It created secure workspaces for internal stakeholders and the project team, and private groups for each long-listed bidder, where it could publish answers to clarification questions and add details of meeting schedules.

At the time, Anne Waller, the Project Support Office Manager, said: "We felt we needed a web-based collaborative tool to communicate in the way we envisaged. It was important to be able to form interest groups so that the most appropriate information was given to the right people, with automated notifications when new content was added." Anne added: "We had lots of ideas about how we could use such a tool and wanted to keep our options open as much as possible. Time was a huge constraint; we had already started the procurement exercise and the time was approaching when we would need a secure way of collaborating with bidders."

The procurement was completed in a little over 7 months. In that time DCLG had more than 200 stakeholder members using the software and published approximately 700 answers to clarification questions, and more than 200 documents in 20 subject areas.

In addition, the answers to the clarification questions became a valuable asset for the project because they were available in a single place, not stuck in stakeholders' inboxes.

The beauty of investing in a more flexible online collaboration package is that it allows you to think big and start small and grow organically as new projects arise.

You don't have to use it solely for major stakeholder projects — low cost and ease of use mean you can bring stakeholders together for many different purposes that would have been difficult using traditional methods.

For example, public sector organisations have used collaboration software to:

- **Bring different mental health services together to work co-operatively**
- **Draft neighbourhood plans**
- **Manage public tender processes**
- **Set up support networks for carers and supply teachers**
- **Develop road network repair schedules**
- **Create online neighbourhood**
- **policing forums**
- **Work on environmental audits**
- **Develop shared services**
- **Create member management systems**
- **No matter how you want to work**

Agile Stakeholder Engagement

Online collaboration software is perfect for engaging stakeholders when you need to:

- **Empower stakeholders** – and give them the tools to influence and collaborate on projects, policy, and services
- **React quickly** — and set up online stakeholder environments on the fly
- **Build a business case** — by gathering evidence from stakeholders
- **Create a culture of collaboration** — and bring innovation to your day-to-day work
- **Be inclusive** — by offering stakeholders accessible software
- **Use only the tools you need** — ensuring technology assists engagement and doesn't get in the way
- **Cut costs** — you can engage stakeholders for a lot less

Next Steps

Whichever online collaboration tool you decide to use to engage stakeholders, these are our top tips based on over a decade of providing collaboration software to the public sector.

1. **Have a clear purpose**. Decide what you want an online workspace or community to achieve. Do you want to inform, consult or collaborate – or a combination of the three? Make sure your stakeholders understand the business context and what is expected of them.

2. **Provide governance.** But devolve ownership where possible, both internally and externally. It empowers stakeholders and strengthens engagement.

3. **Keep focused.** Don't let a minority hijack the engagement process – don't be afraid to use moderation, but similarly don't be afraid to allow innovation and the organic development of ideas and options.

4. **Give feedback.** Update stakeholders on the actions you take in response to their concerns. It rewards their participation.

5. **Foster innovation.** Allow colleagues to take risks and use collaboration software in new contexts, and to achieve different goals. You'll soon find collaboration becomes ingrained in your way of working.

Get Started Today

If you're interested in seeing how online collaboration can improve stakeholder engagement for your organisation, why not simply give it a go with a free trial of Kahootz collaboration software?

Simple to use, completely secure and fully approved by Government for public sector use, when you use the free trial you enjoy:

- **One or more secure workspaces to collaborate and share files**
- **Workspace templates to get you up and running quickly**
- **Enough storage for hundreds of project files**
- **Unrestricted access to all features**
- **Full customer support – just contact us for help**
- **Upgrade options – add more users or free up more storage.**
- **No need to download anything**

Kahootz is ideal for putting online collaboration to work to solve specific problems, risk free and at little cost.

It allows you to collaborate on documents, share files, manage projects, consult with stakeholders and monitor progress - all from any internet connected web browser.

Start a free trial at:
www.kahootz.com/start-trial

For more information about Kahootz and

to sign up for a FREE trial please visit Kahootz.com