

# Navigating Project Politics

Jeff Oltmann  
Synergy Professional Services  
(503) 644-6433  
[jeff@spspro.com](mailto:jeff@spspro.com)

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## Politics attempts to :



Achieve Goals through  
Accommodation and the  
exercise of Influence.



- Do you agree?
- Whose goals?

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## “Projects are excellent breeding grounds for rampant politics” – J. Davidson Frame

What are your sources of politics?

- Diffuse authority
- Borrowed staff
- Weak management support
- Matrix organizations
- Ambiguous roles (up, down, sideways)
- “Co-opetition” for resources and recognition
- Power, stature, and egos

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## Political Action Process

- 1** Understand value of politics
  - What’s your compass?
- 2** Build a personal foundation
  - Authority and persuasion
- 3** Identify key elements of your environment
  - Who are the players?
  - What are their goals?
  - Who am I?
- 4** Make and implement course of action
  - Build commitment
  - Act on your political awareness!

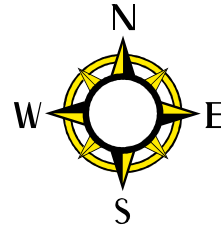


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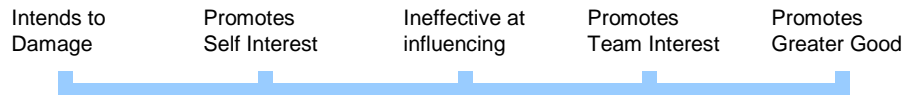
# 1

## Understand

- Politics arises from people interactions
  - Influence and accommodation
  - Conflict and cooperation
- Good use of politics ...
  - Lubricant
- Abusive use of politics ...
  - Corrosive



What Compass  
Will You Use?



# 1

## Understand . . . Your Response

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Naive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Unpleasant</li><li>■ Avoid at all costs</li><li>■ Tell it like it is</li><li>■ Truth always wins out</li></ul> | <b>Sensible</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Necessary</li><li>■ Further project goals</li><li>■ Network</li><li>■ Negotiate</li><li>■ Bargain</li></ul> | <b>Shark</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Opportunity</li><li>■ Predatory</li><li>■ Manipulate</li><li>■ Fraud, deceit</li></ul> |
|---|---|---|



## Exercise: Your Political Approach

- Think of a person you know who deals with politics effectively. List 3 - 5 skills and attributes that make that person effective in political environments.

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# 2

## Foundation . . . Develop Your Authority

### Sources of Authority

- Formal
- Reward
- Penalty
- Expert
- Referent



(PMBOK® 2000)

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## Foundation . . . Build **Multiple** Sources of Influence

### Other Sources of Influence

- Recognition
- Competence
- Follow-Through
- Charisma
- Trust
- Networks

What creative forms of influence have you seen?

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## Exercise: Influence

- What source of influence would give you the best return if you invested in developing it further? List steps you will take to develop that source.

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# 3

## The Political Environment . . . The Project Stakeholders



Blockers

Energizers

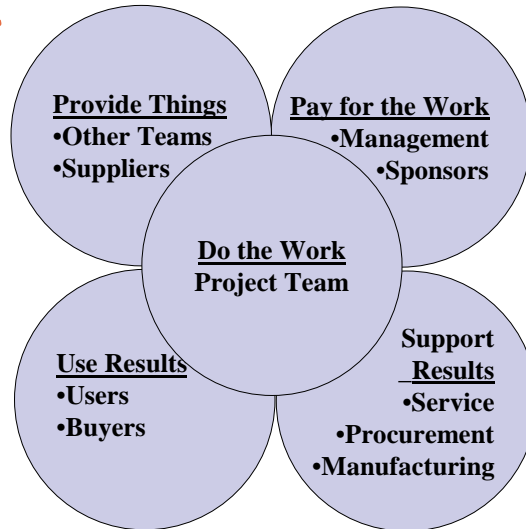
# Disaster

Do-ers

"It's bigger than you think"

# 3

## Stakeholders are People Who ...



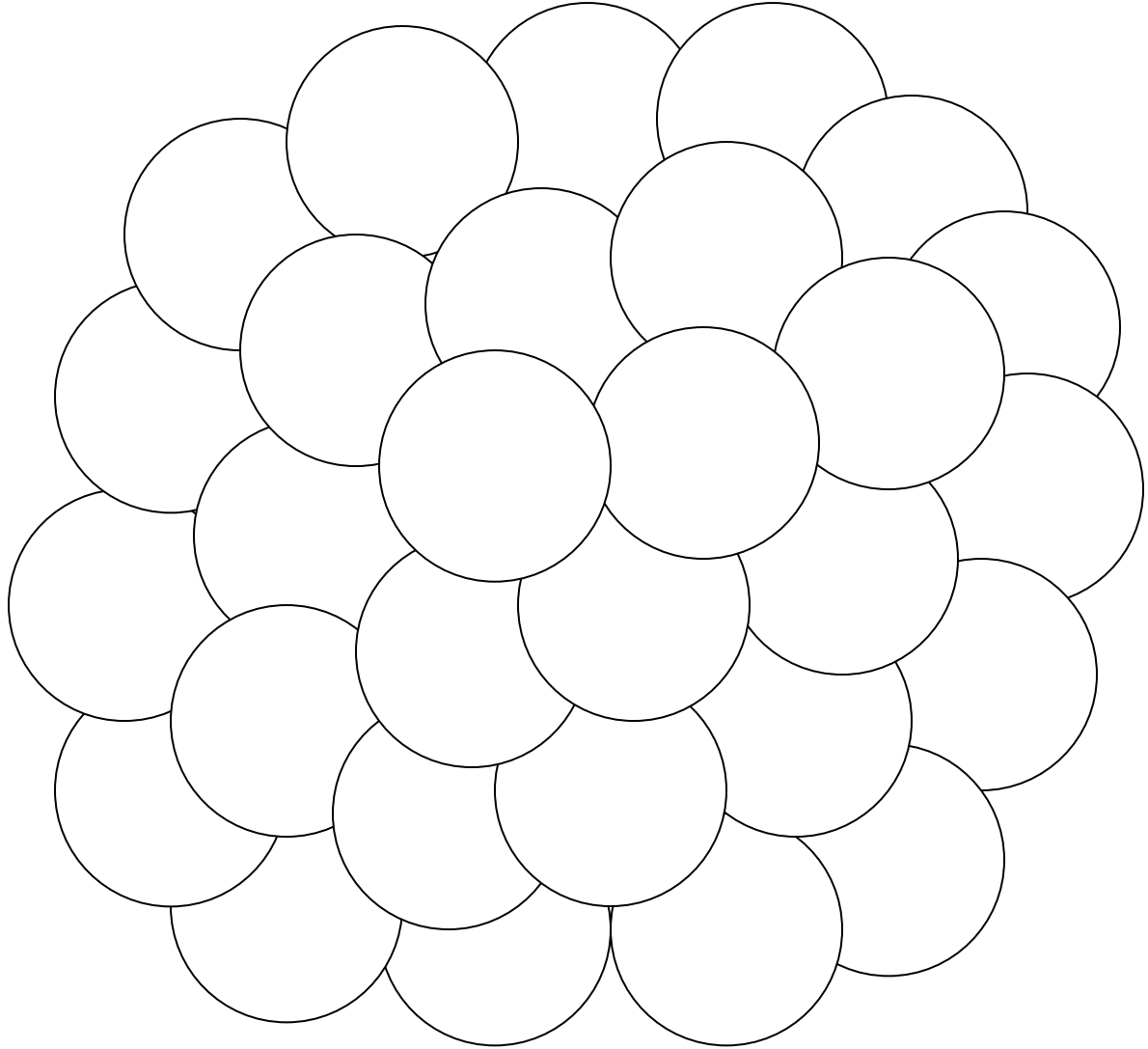
Or are indirectly  
affected by the  
project

## Exercise: Identify Your Project Community

- Using the worksheet below, list the individuals and groups in your project community.
- Make sure that you can identify at least one real person in each group.

## Stakeholder Identification

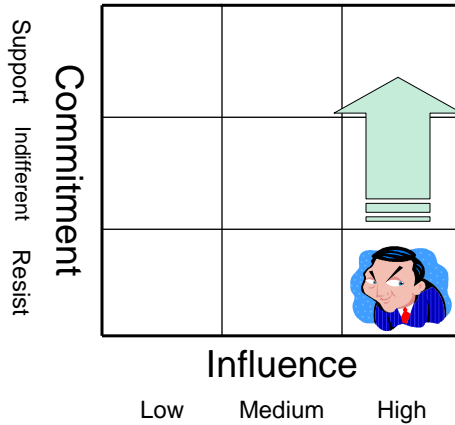
List the project stakeholders by name or group, along with a few words about what is most important to that stakeholder.



## 4 Take Action

*Invest* in stakeholders

- Learn where they are at now
- Create:
  - Alignment
  - Contribution
  - Commitment

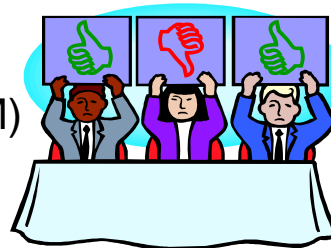


Committed stakeholders make your project soar.

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## 4 Why Do Stakeholders Commit?

- Aligned vision
- Relation to concrete, personal objectives (WIFM)
- Trust
- Frequent communication
- Recognition of value



In your organization:

What behaviors demonstrate commitment or lack of it?

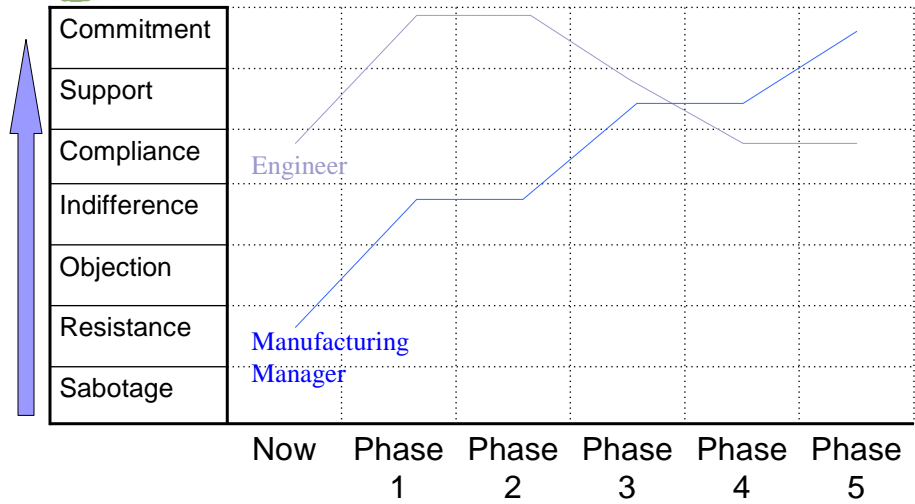
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## Commitment Scale\*

	Approve	Indifferent	Disapprove
Initiate	Commit	<b>Indifferent</b>	Sabotage
Tell	Support		Resist
Respond	Comply		Object

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## 4 Need for Commitment Varies



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## Exercise: Motivations

- List 10 things that are powerful motivators and de-motivators for people in your organization
- List 5 ideas on how you can use these motivators to increase commitment on your project

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# 4

## Commitment Conversation

Persuasion

1. Present project vision
2. Get alignment
  - Discover interests, needs, goals
  - Show how project aligns
3. Get feedback
  - Listen to comments and objections
  - Actively listen – clarify, validate, find solutions
4. Agree on role and involvement
5. Establish follow up steps



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## 4 Maintain Commitment

- Create simple commitment strategies for key stakeholders
- Communicate with them frequently
- Renew commitment periodically



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## 4 Commitment Exercise

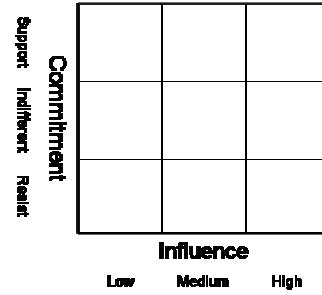
- Pick a key stakeholder from whom you need more commitment.
- Map that person's commitment and influence.
- Write a strategy for how you will get and maintain that person's commitment. Make sure you consider:
  - What are the stakeholder's needs?
  - How will you meet his needs?
  - What does the project need from the stakeholder?
  - How will you obtain it?
- Discuss.

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# Stakeholder Management

For the stakeholders that you consider most crucial to the success of the project, write a brief plan explaining how you plan to manage them over the life of the project. To create your actions, consider:

- What are the stakeholder's needs? How will you meet those needs?
- What does the project need from the stakeholder? How will you obtain it?



<i>Stakeholder name:</i>		
<i>Comments:</i>		
Action	Owner	Due Date

<i>Stakeholder name:</i>		
<i>Comments:</i>		
Action	Owner	Due Date

<i>Stakeholder name:</i>		
<i>Comments:</i>		
Action	Owner	Due Date

## 4 Political Pitfalls

- Political skills are not natural for most of us
- Learn to ...
  - Penetrate the superficial to identify the real issues
  - Do the spadework
  - Avoid gossip and manipulation
  - Appreciate what others need, want, and feel
  - Earn trust
  - Talk to people – even introverts can do it!

It is up to you to use these skills for good

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## Further Reading

“The New Project Management, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed” by  
J. Davidson Frame (chapter on politics)

Project resources:  
[www.spspro.com/resources.htm](http://www.spspro.com/resources.htm)

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