

# Simple Stakeholder Mapping That Works

**Insight Card:** *Don't let unmanaged expectations derail your mission. Discover how a simple Power–Interest Matrix can help SMEs and charities in Ireland streamline communication, reduce conflict, and ensure project success by focusing on the relationships that truly matter.*

At Project Compass Advisory, we often see SMEs and charities in Ireland struggle not with the technical side of a project, but with the "people side." Whether you are a local credit union launching a mobile app or a national charity rolling out a new service, your success depends on the people your project affects—and those who can affect it.

Stakeholder mapping is the process of identifying, analyzing, and prioritizing these individuals or groups. Far from being a corporate buzzword, it is a vital tool for ensuring that your limited resources are directed toward the relationships that matter most (Freeman, 2010).

## Why It Matters: Avoiding the "Invisible" Risks

In smaller organizations, relationships are often informal. While this agility is a strength, it becomes a liability during a project. Without a map, you are essentially flying blind.

Stakeholder management matters because it builds "social capital"—the trust and goodwill required to navigate the inevitable bumps in any project lifecycle (PMI, 2021).

Common problems caused by weak management include late-stage "snipers" (leaders who veto late decisions), communication overload for the wrong people, and scope creep from unmanaged expectations.

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"The most dangerous stakeholder is the one you forgot to identify."

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## The Simple 4-Step Approach

You don't need complex software. A simple, iterative process is more effective (APM, 2019):

- **Identify:** Brainstorm every person or group affected.
- **Analyse:** Determine their *Power* (ability to stop/move the project) and *Interest* (how much they care).
- **Prioritise:** Use the Power-Interest Matrix to decide your engagement intensity.
- **Monitor:** Relationships change; update your map at every milestone.

## Visualising Your Strategy: The Matrix



## How to Start: A Step-by-Step Checklist

### Immediate Actions for Teams

- The Brain Dump:** Spend 20 minutes listing every internal and external stakeholder.
- The "So What?" Test:** Ask: "What happens if they withdraw their support?"

- ❑ **Map the Grid:** Plot each stakeholder on the Power-Interest Matrix.
- ❑ **Assign Owners:** Ensure every "High Power" stakeholder has a dedicated point of contact.
- ❑ **Schedule the Review:** Review the map in every monthly project meeting.

### 3 Key Takeaways

1. **Prioritise, Don't Just Communicate:** Focus energy where it yields the most stability.
2. **Visualise the Landscape:** Use the matrix to turn abstract people issues into a clear plan.
3. **Be Proactive:** Manage expectations early rather than fixing grievances late.

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#### References (Harvard Style):

- Association for Project Management (APM) (2019) *APM Body of Knowledge*. 7th edn. Princes Risborough: APM. (Supports 4-step approach).
- Bourne, L. (2016) *Stakeholder Relationship Management*. London: Routledge. (Supports influence analysis).
- Freeman, R. E. (2010) *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Cambridge: CUP. (Foundational theory).
- Project Management Institute (PMI) (2021) *PMBOK Guide*. 7th edn. Newtown Square: PMI. (Supports practical matrix use).