

Managing Complex Projects - Synplex for Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement – everyone knows it needs to be done, everyone knows it is important. But to avoid project failure it needs to be done well, and to be much more than a ‘tick box’ exercise.

Each stakeholder brings to a project their own ‘world-view’, shaped by the organisation they come from, but also highly individual. This diversity of perspectives should be a very valuable thing, but it is often regarded as a problem. Any engagement process that leaves these world-views unexplored and unchallenged has failed, and the differences may emerge later in the project, possibly when it is too late.

When we get together in groups to tackle complex challenges, we use words to exchange information. We interpret the words according to our own world-view, and so we may interpret them in different ways. We also make assumptions about the mental models and world-views of those we are co-operating with, and these assumptions may be mistaken. All of this means that words alone, even supplemented by body language, are not enough for a reliable and meaningful exchange of information.

So workshops, flip-charts, post-its, meetings, documents and websites are necessary but not sufficient. What is also required is a process for the stakeholders to get below the surface, to share perspectives and to discuss a complicated situation involving facts, opinions and emotions in a constructive way. In particular, the stakeholders need to agree on the problem they are trying to solve, using their diverse perspectives.

This is where the Synplex process can help. There are 3 basic steps:

- Planning meeting – initial framing of the issue and determining the stakeholders
- Influence Mapping workshop – the stakeholders co-creating a single ‘map’ of the challenge
- Solution Design workshop – establishing the desired end state and key steps to get there

It only makes sense to move forward once we have agreed which direction forward *is*. Quality time invested here will be recouped many times as the project moves into implementation.

When you should consider applying Synplex:

- *Ideally as soon as it is possible to identify the stakeholders for a proposed project*
- *Alternatively, whenever stakeholder differences are blocking progress*

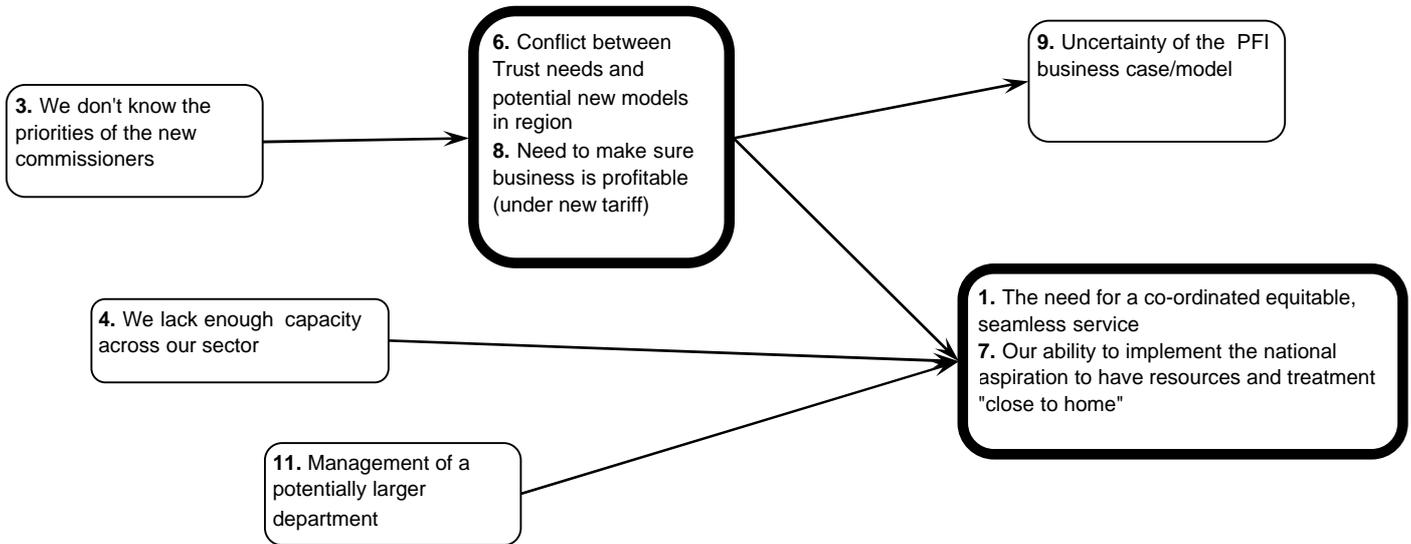
What you get:

- *An Influence Map representing the key issues, barriers and challenges, and how they interact*
- *A unified perspective of the challenge*
- ***Real stakeholder engagement***



Synplex Influence Map:

What are all the issues, barriers and challenges we face in implementing the new model?



Complexity Solutions:

Complexity Solutions has a 20-year track-record of using Synplex to tackle extremely complex, high value and often politically sensitive issues, with customers in a variety of business and government sectors in both North America and the UK. Clients include the Ministry of Defence, Rolls-Royce plc and the NHS.

Customer feedback:

Ann Barnes, Deputy Chief Executive, **Stockport Foundation Trust**

"I found both the process and the delivery of the workshops, high quality with tangible outcomes. I would, and have, recommended the methodology to colleagues faced with resolving complex problems with multiple stakeholders"

Charles Cuddington, Chief Commercial Officer - Large Engines, **Rolls-Royce plc:**

"It would have been difficult to achieve a successful outcome without such a highly focused and expertly facilitated process."

For further information or a demonstration, contact us on 0161 439 3160 or at peter.miles@complexitysolutions.com