



What is a 'Process Stakeholder'?

by Adrian Reed

When modeling processes, it is very tempting to focus purely on the actors that undertake the relevant process tasks. Yet, processes often have a wide range of stakeholders—and we ignore them at our peril!

In this article we explore what we mean by 'process stakeholder' and explain why it matters.

“A group or individual with a relationship to the change, the need, or the solution.” (IIBA®, 2015)

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When analyzing, improving and managing processes, it is important to engage with a wide range of stakeholders. In the world of business process analysis, the word 'stakeholder' seems ubiquitous, and it is easy to understand why. After all, we could design the best, most efficient and effective process in the world—but if people don't 'buy in' to the changes they may find ways to 'work around' the official process (potentially causing a whole range of unexpected problems and issues).

In order to truly understand how a process works, it is clear that we must engage with people who are involved with the operation of the process itself. They will benefit from any improvements—and conversely, if things go wrong, they are the people who feel the initial 'pain'. They often have useful and actionable ideas on how particular tasks can be improved, alongside a detailed knowledge of how things currently work.

Yet we would be foolhardy to restrict our analysis to just these individuals. Whilst their opinions and knowledge is crucial, there may be wider voices that need to be heard. It is worth stopping and reflecting on what we actually mean by stakeholder. It is such a common term, but it would be easy to misunderstand it. The International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) guide describes a stakeholder in the context of business analysis or change as:

This is a broad definition, and boils down to anyone with some type of interest in the particular situation that we are examining. When we are considering a process, this will include those directly involved (those doing the work), but also those that provide inputs, receive the outputs of the process, as well as others who are impacted in some way. This can be a significantly broader set of individuals than we might first imagine!

Let's take a seemingly 'contained' set of activities—the recording of an order by a call center agent. The aim of the process is fairly straightforward, to accurately record the customer's order, take payment, and ensure their needs are met. If we were modeling and improving the process, we would clearly need to involve representatives from the call center team (including those that answer the calls, as well as their managers).

Yet, depending on the types of changes that we are proposing to make, there are other stakeholders that could potentially need to be consulted or informed. The call center workers might suggest, for example, that we streamline the process by removing certain steps (e.g. asking the customer "where did you hear about us?"). This is entirely logical—it will speed up the sale—but there might be other stakeholders who rely on this information (e.g. the marketing team). Equally, there might be some constraints and rules that must be followed for legal and regulatory purposes.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	POSSIBLE INTEREST
End customer (e.g. focus group or internal customer representative)	Ensuring that the process is easy to navigate and meets the customer's value expectation
Marketing	Ensuring that the 'source of business' is accurately captured, so that effectiveness of marketing campaigns can be tracked
Finance	Ensuring that payment details are captured in a correct (and compliant) way
Compliance	Ensuring that all data protection and privacy laws are complied with
Warehouse/Fulfilment	Utilize the data input to ship the orders; if the data changes, or if mistakes are made, their job can become more difficult
And many more....	

This table represents a partial and hypothetical example, but it illustrates the need to consider the broad stakeholder landscape.

Of course, it is not always necessary to engage with every stakeholder at every step. Yet it is important that we identify those who might have an interest, and assess when and to what extent they need to be involved. It is important that we spread the net wider than the 'obvious' stakeholders, so that we can be sure that we create a process that works well from end-to-end. This will also help ensure we hear a wide range of ideas, achieve buy-in and avoid any unnecessary surprises!

References: IIBA®, (2015). Guide to the business analysis body of knowledge v3. Toronto : Ontario: International Institute of Business Analysis.

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