

Stakeholder engagement by any other name

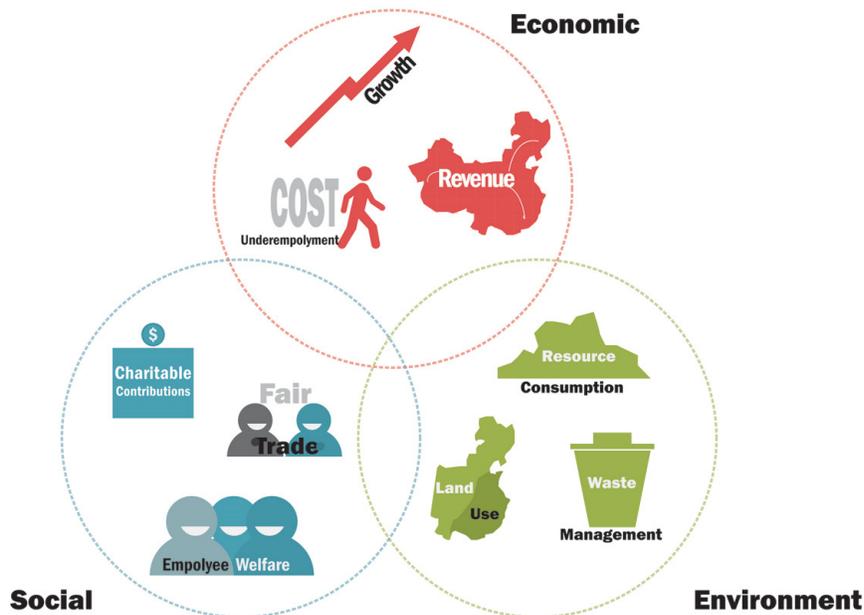


The chances are your organisation is already focusing on 'stakeholder engagement' but is using another name for the activity. From an organisational perspective stakeholder engagement is a means to achieving outcomes that are increasingly being seen as being commercially desirable or necessary to comply with various rules and regulations. Some of the overarching terms that incorporate stakeholder engagement as a core competency, that is essential for their implementation are:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR is generally defined as the continuing commitment by an organisation to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large. The social responsibilities of organisations are those responsibilities that arise in the context of stakeholder relationships. Stakeholders have expectations about the behaviour and responsibilities of organisations that increasingly go beyond the provision of jobs and products or services. No two organisations are likely to have the exact same set of responsibilities, because each organisation has different products, services and strategies and therefore, different combinations of stakeholders and stakeholder interests and issues.

The 'Triple Bottom Line' (TBL)



TBL is an accounting framework with three parts: social, environmental (or ecological) and financial. These three divisions are also called the three Ps: people, planet and profit, or the "three pillars of sustainability". Many corporations are required to report in the TBL as part of their exchange listing rules.

Sustainability

Sustainability in an organisational context goes beyond environmental issues to include every dimension of how a business operates in the social, cultural, and economic environment. It is a business approach that creates long-term consumer and employee value and directly contributes to the sustainability of the organisation itself.

ISO 26000 and GRIG4 reporting

International Standard, ISO 26000:2010, *Guidance on social responsibility*¹, and the closely aligned *Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards*² set the framework for social responsibility and guidelines for reporting.

What this means for you!

As project managers we do not have input to organisational policies, but we are at the cutting edge of organisational change and many projects have a significant impact on stakeholders outside of the organisation. Therefore, if your organisation's executives are using any of these terms and are 'walking the talk' you need to make sure your project activities support the organisation's overall stakeholder engagement philosophy.

Project failures such as the failure of tailings dams in Brazil and PNG can undo decades of work by the organisation to achieve a reputation of being a good corporate citizen. And this is not purely altruistic! ISO 26000 suggests organisations that practice CSR, sustainability and focus on the TBL have a distinct competitive advantage that includes:

- Reputation
- Ability to attract and retain workers or members, customers, clients or users
- Maintenance of employees' morale, commitment and productivity
- View of investors, owners, donors, sponsors and the financial community
- Relationship with companies, governments, the media, suppliers, peers, customers and the community in which it operates.

In summary, project managers cannot create corporate policy but if the organisation is focused on its TBL, the wise PM will make sure his or her project supports the organisations objectives and this means including proactive stakeholder engagement in the project management plan.

¹ For more on ISO 26000 see: <https://mosaicprojects.wordpress.com/2013/01/22/iso-26000-csr-and-stakeholders/>

² For more on GRI Standards, see: <https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/gri-standards-download-center/>



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