# Stakeholder mapping

## INTRODUCTION

In order to communicate effectively you need to define the audiences you are going to communicate with. In this exercise participants identify stakeholders who might be potential audiences and then prioritize which stakeholders should be the focus of the communications effort. Using a 2x2 matrix (see template), participants map stakeholders according to their:

■ Power to influence: the stakeholder's ability to influence whether the delivery effort succeeds)

■ Level of support: whether they are on-board with, indifferent or resistant to what is being done as part of the delivery effort

By mapping the relative levels of influence and support, participants are able to sort the stakeholders into five broad buckets: opponents, not-a-priority, fan club, messengers/champions and targets (see handout).

The aim is to identify a manageable number of priority audiences (most likely, the targets but possibly also some messengers/champions), so forcing the participants to come up with a relative spread of influence vs. support is really important. Much of the value of this exercise comes from identifying the stakeholders that have lower influence relative to others and making an explicit decision to deprioritize communications with them.

Who qualifies as a "stakeholder" will vary depending on your context, and the number of people covered within each stakeholder group may be uneven (e.g. there are likely more teachers/faculty in your system than there are members of your board). If there are obvious differences in influence or support between identifiable sub-groups (e.g. rural principals vs. urban principals) it makes sense to call them out as separate stakeholders.

The exercise is designed for a small group (5-10 people).

## OBJECTIVES

■ Identify potential audiences for your communication effort

■ Prioritize stakeholders to identify the target audiences for your communication effort
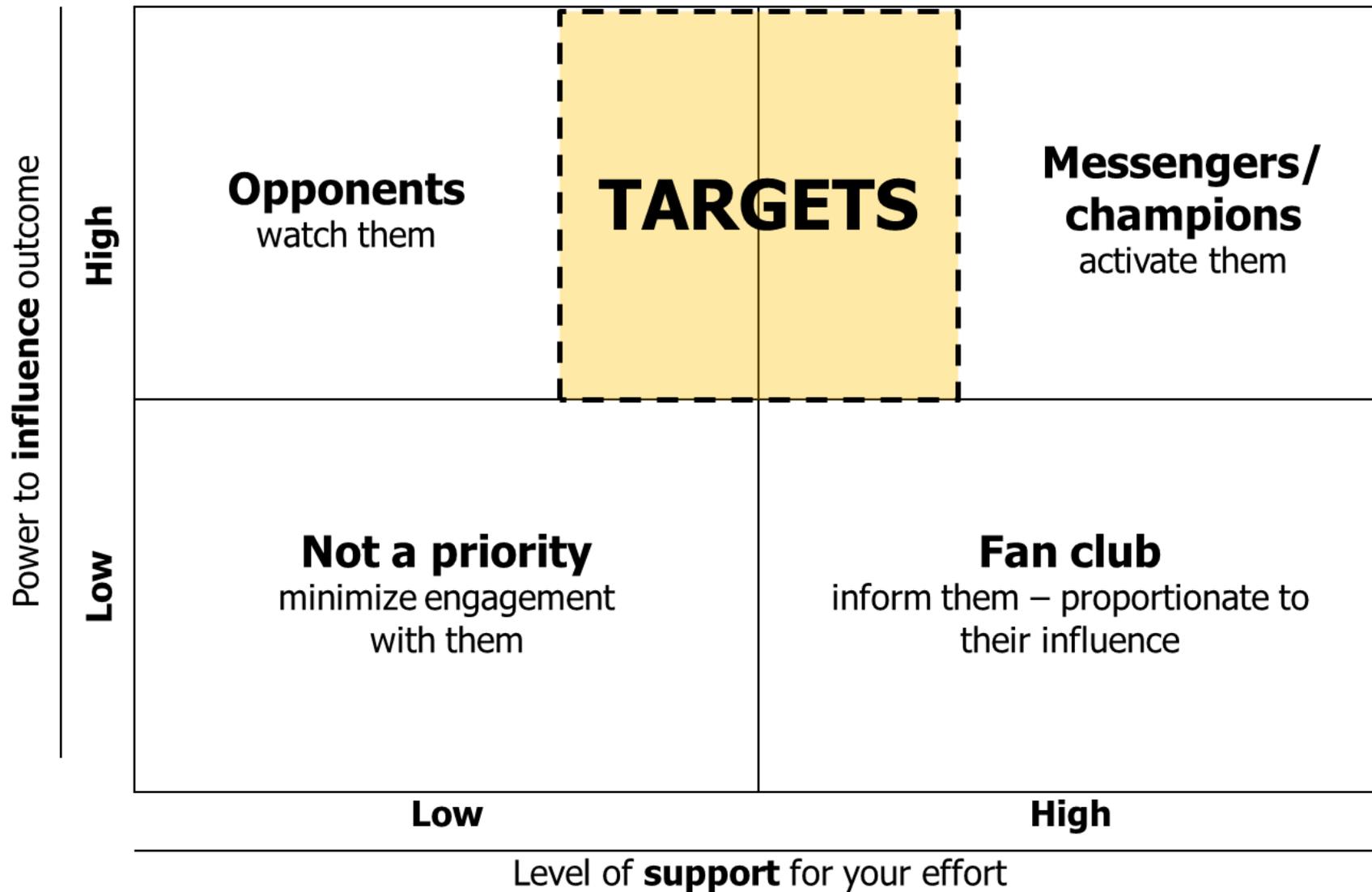
## TIME

■ 45 minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED

■ Recreate the template on page 5 and post on the wall. You can do this by printing a large version of page 5 and hanging that on the wall, or by recreating the template on a dry erase board, flip chart paper, EDI's signature "brown paper" or in a pinch projection of a computer screen. However you create this, it needs to be visible to the entire group and easy to change and add to.

■ Rather than writing directly on the template you've created, you'll need to use small, repositionable cards. These cards can be just small pieces of paper, index cards or Post-Its, and there are a number of ways to make sure they are repositionable. If on a dry erase board, you could use magnets to hold cards in place, and on other surfaces, you could use sticky tack or spray-on adhesive – whatever won't damage your wall.

■ Printed copies of handout on page 3-4

## INSTRUCTIONS

| Time | Exercise instructions | Facilitator notes | Materials |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10 minutes | Brainstorm the stakeholders who are potential audiences for communication. | ■ Ask participants to think broadly – anyone who is involved in, affected by or has an opinion about the delivery effort can be a stakeholder.<br>■ Ask participants to call out suggestions for stakeholders.<br>■ Capture suggestions on cards (one card each). | ■ Cards<br>■ Markers |
| 5 minutes | Place stakeholders where you think they should fall on the 2x2 matrix, according to each stakeholder's power to influence and level of support. | ■ Explain what we mean by "power to influence" and "level of support".<br>■ Divide cards among the participants and invite them to place the cards on the brown paper.<br>■ Push for a spread – we can't prioritize everybody. | Template on page 5 |
| 20 minutes | Discuss the relative placement of stakeholders as a group. | ■ Invite participants to challenge the relative positioning of cards and give their rationale.<br>■ Move cards to reflect group consensus.<br>■ Where participants strongly disagree use probing questions to reach consensus: e.g.<br>– Why do you think A has more power to influence the success of this work than B?<br>– Could it be that this is really two stakeholders, X group and Y group? | Template on page 5 |
| 10 minutes | As a group, discuss the implications of this "stakeholder map" for our communications effort. | ■ Share the handout.<br>■ Based on the positioning of the cards, ask:<br>– Do we agree that these stakeholders (targets, possibly messengers/champions) are our priority audiences?<br>– Do we recognize that these other stakeholders are less of a priority?<br>■ If necessary, adjust placements. | ■ Template on page 5<br>■ Handout on pages 3-4 |

**HANDOUT: STAKEHOLDER MAPPING**



Power to **influence** outcome

| | Low support | | High support |
|---|---|---|---|
| **High** | **Opponents**<br>watch them | **TARGETS** | **Messengers/<br>champions**<br>activate them |
| **Low** | **Not a priority**<br>minimize engagement<br>with them | | **Fan club**<br>inform them – proportionate to<br>their influence |

Level of **support** for your effort

| Bucket | Implications |
|---|---|
| **Opponents** | ■ High influence/low support<br>■ Unlikely ever to support the delivery effort<br>■ Watch them closely and be prepared to react to challenges |
| **Not a priority** | ■ Low influence/low support<br>■ May be vocal critics, but lack power to materially affect the success of the delivery effort<br>■ Minimize engagement with them and avoid the temptation to be drawn into time-consuming debates |
| **Fan club** | ■ Low influence/high support<br>■ May be vocal supporters, but also have limited power to affect the success of the delivery effort – be honest with yourself about who these are<br>■ Inform them about what you are doing, but use as few resources as possible to do this – avoid preaching to the choir! |
| **Messengers / champions** | ■ High influence/high support<br>■ Potentially your greatest assets, can multiply and add weight to your messages<br>■ Activate them by making them an integral part of your communications (where a stakeholder group is made up of diffuse individuals, this might mean targeting these individuals as a priority audience) |
| **Targets** | ■ High influence/indifferent (unaware or medium support)<br>■ Can still be persuaded one way or the other<br>■ Target them with your communications effort, devoting the vast majority of your time and attention to this group |

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**TEMPLATE: STAKEHOLDER MAPPING 2X2**

Power to **influence** outcome

High

Low

Low                                    High

Level of **support** for your effort