

Positioning Charts

Positioning charts show the relationships among people, groups, or other elements of a problem in terms of their positions. The chart usually shows two factors important to the problem as the height and width of a space, with the people or alternatives arranged in the chart according to where they fit on the two dimensions. For the sample chart, different strategies can be chosen for dealing with different stakeholders according to whether they support or oppose the proposal and by their importance to its success. As shown here, placing stakeholders on a positioning chart helps identify what different approaches or strategies will be most effective for the different positions. Resources could be wasted on trying to generate greater support for those with low ability to help, or failing to recognize antagonistic stakeholders could damage prospects for success.

What are they?

Determine relationships among people, factors. Positioning charts can be useful for any situation where two different factors influence the way you would view a participant or element of a project. It is often useless to produce charts with influences or interactions among more than two factors, since they become very complex to construct and interpret.

Plot people, alternatives based on position. The relative position of participants or project alternatives are plotted on the chart to display the relationships among those factors.

What are they good for?

Understand project influences. This type of chart allows you to better understand the way two separate factors influence the place of a participant or project component in your project. For example, the components of an information system project could be classified on a positioning chart in terms of two dimensions: their development times and the degree to which other components are dependent on their completion. Components with short development times and low dependence can be scheduled with much more flexibility than long-term, high dependence components.

Communication. Representing this kind of analysis in a positioning chart is not only a good exercise, but also an effective device for communicating the results to others.

Some limitations and considerations

Three's a crowd. If more than two factors are important in positioning, as is often the case, a chart of this type is of limited value.

Somewhat arbitrary process. Placing the people or components on the chart is often an inexact, even arbitrary process. Without actual measurements of the dimensions, substantial errors can be made in positioning, which results in flawed conclusions.

Oversimplify relationships. A chart may also oversimplify relationships in a complex setting, especially when more than two dimensions are involved or the relationships are not stable over time.

For more information

Bryson, John M. (1995) . **Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations** . San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

3 Adapted from John M. Bryson. **Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations** . San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995, p. 284.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis is a structured examination of the main impacts of an integration initiative. The analysis is a way of answering the question, "Who cares about this project and why?" Anyone who cares is considered a stakeholder, and the reasons they care are examined in terms of the products and features of the initiative.

What is it?

Identify impacts on stakeholders. In the analysis, you identify the impact each product or feature will have on each stakeholder group. You also examine what products will benefit or harm these groups and in what ways.

Quantify project effects. The stakeholder analysis attempts to quantify these effects. You can begin to understand what kinds of investments might lead to different outcomes. At a minimum, you should be able to understand how far the analysis will have to go before you really understand how your project will affect stakeholders.

Group work. A stakeholder analysis can be prepared by one knowledgeable person and then reviewed and refined by others. It can also be prepared in a facilitated group decision conference, where consensus decisions are made about impacts and estimates.

What is it good for?

Expand project scope. A stakeholder analysis expands the scope of a project design and strategy. Too often, information system projects are defined in terms of only one stakeholder- the agency that will build it. More often a project will be defined in terms of two stakeholders-the agency and those directly affected by the program. This is better, but still ignores a host of factors that can impinge on the final result.

Examine impacts to design better plan. There are many stakeholders in the environment of a government program, and most information systems have multiple features or products that will affect stakeholders in different ways. Some will see increased access to services, or better quality service. Others may experience higher costs or more competition for scarce resources. It is important to anticipate these effects before a full-blown project gets underway.

Expand understanding of environment. Most organizations are better at understanding internal dynamics than external ones. The stakeholder analysis pays little or no attention to the internal dimension and forces you to look outside your organizational boundaries to estimate the impacts and outcomes of a new initiative.

Predict potential results. The stakeholder analysis forces you to be specific about how various elements of a proposal will affect stakeholder groups. It helps you move from very general descriptions to more specific and measurable ones.

Identify high-priority features, stakeholders. Once you understand the different ways the proposal will affect different stakeholders, you should be able to see which areas need priority attention. You should also be able to identify measures of how your initiative will impact different stakeholders and estimate the magnitude of those effects.

Assess data needs. A full analysis provides a basis for making a rough assessment of what data is available and what other data is needed for a more complete evaluation. You will seldom be able to quantify all effects. Often even baseline data will be unavailable. The stakeholder analysis helps you see where your data is weak.

Help choose a good problem. A "good" problem is one worth the time, effort, capital, and commitment it takes to solve it. Good problems may have a number of uncertainties about them, but their main components should be readily understood. They should not be too narrowly constructed (this makes you tend to leave out important factors) or so broadly defined that they are far beyond your ability (in terms of skills, resources, or authority) to influence or solve.

Some limitations and considerations

Assumptions required. The analysis requires assumptions about causal relationships and processes . Since you have imperfect data, make educated guesses about causes and influences. Keep testing these assumptions as your project proceeds.

Qualitative and quantitative measures. Since not every effect can be reduced to a number, qualitative measures may be the only ones that make sense. The stakeholder analysis allows for both, but don't take the lazy way out by stating a qualitative gauge, when a quantitative one would be better.

First cut analysis. This analysis will give you a rough understanding of an issue or objective. If done well, it will

gather and generate useful information, but it won't carry the weight of an entire project. Use some of the other tools presented in this guide to delve deeper.

Partisan Analysis

Partisan analysis recognizes that competing interests and conflicts are natural and unavoidable parts of any significant government action. Any new project requires careful attention to the partisan or political nature of the process.

What is it?

An inexact science. Partisan analysis can take a number of different approaches and ways of thinking about interactions, more like a craft than an exact science. However, some basic questions can guide the analysis.

Wants and needs of participants. Partisan analysis includes finding out what participants stand to gain or lose because of your project. This is more comprehensive than the stakeholder analysis, which is limited to the interests participants have in particular products or features of your project. The partisan analysis finds out what participants want in general, or what they stand to gain or lose.

Wide range of issues. Partisan compromises often involve negotiation over a wide range of issues that may be unrelated to the immediate concern. In legislatures, this is referred to as logrolling. It is also important to understand both individual and organizational interests and desires. Those who speak for a group or organization do not necessarily share all the group's desires and objectives.

Key relationships. Projects typically involve parties with existing relationships and histories. It is important to know who are friends and enemies, where natural alliances and rivalries exist or may form, and what kinds of coalitions are possible or desirable. Consider where trust has developed or been betrayed and where old friendships or wounds will shape current perspectives and actions. These issues are often critical to forming the coalitions necessary to move forward.

Who has the power. A partisan analysis considers what power resources the parties bring to the table. These include: official status or authority; ability to punish or reward other participants; special expertise, status, skills, or reputation; and access to information. It is useful to know participants' preferences for different kinds of power and how they have acted in the past.

Rules of the game. Effective strategies for playing the game depend on knowing what kinds of actions are acceptable and what tactics are the most successful in your organizational and political culture. These include preferred styles of negotiation or influencing others, limits or penalties for actions, and understanding the importance of signals and symbols of play.

Wild cards. Uncertainty plays a part in any partisan environment. One major element of uncertainty is whether any outside actor or force will affect your plans. Partisan analysis often involves scanning the environment for possible external factors that may become involved. This scanning can also include analysis of the risks and probabilities of these kinds of events and the potential range of impacts.

What is it good for?

Planning. Use partisan analysis to plan how to present your project to participants and outside audiences, what to emphasize, and your main selling points. You can also use it to decide the timing and format of presentations, what groups to make them to, and when.

Collaborating. It's an effective planning strategy for forming collaborations and work groups.

Strategizing. Use it to develop a strategy for political decisions and mobilize support among participants and stakeholders.

Some limitations and considerations

Quality, amount of available information. The value of your partisan analysis depends in large part on the quality and amount of information available about the people and groups involved in your project. In a partisan environment, people seldom announce their true objectives and strategies. In fact, there can be substantial

Appendix A.3 Tools for identifying & understanding your audience(s)

incentives to mask or deliberately misrepresent their true goals and interests. Judgments based on inferences about other people's goals and interests should be evaluated and tested against actions and other evidence.

Lack of definitive answers. Assessing the goals and interests of others involves a lot of uncertainty. There may be discord among groups about their goals and interests. It's often difficult to evaluate the accuracy and stability of statements and actions expressed by partisan groups.

No history. Historical information may be an ineffective basis for judgment. In new projects or collaborations, histories may be absent. Information about past actions and events may be unavailable, unreliable, inconsistent, or badly distorted by selective memory or interpretation.