

CONTENT ETHICS STAKEHOLDERS

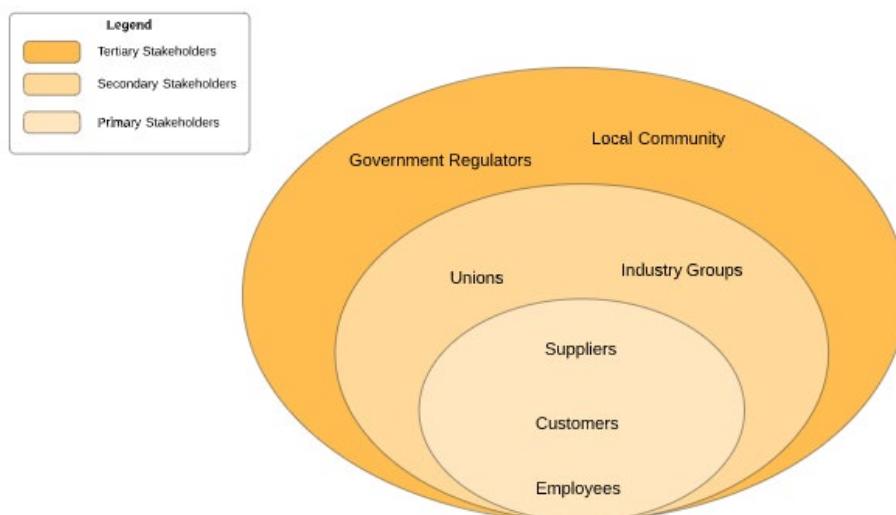
This is the second installment in a series on **content ethics** (digital ethics in enterprise content management). Click [here](#) for the introductory article.

INTRODUCTION

Content management initiatives should put **stakeholder interests** front and center when defining future state goals, planning procurements, designing solutions, training users, and integrating the technologies into work practices. Stakeholders are defined as **groups the organization depends on for its success, and that in turn depend on the organization in some important way**.

The concept of stakeholder groups is central to an approach to ethically managing organizations generally referred to as the “**stakeholder theory of management**”. The **core idea behind stakeholder management is that because stakeholders contribute to the success of the organization and are affected by it, each group deserves ethical consideration from its manager**. Further, this consideration generally goes beyond what would be required by law and our common morality if these groups did not benefit the organization in the particular way that defines them as stakeholders. (For a fuller explanation, see my book, [Ethics for Records and Information Management](#).)

Typical stakeholder groups include: **Employees, customers, clients, suppliers, partner companies, and contractors**. These are normally considered primary stakeholder groups because of the strength of their contribution and commitment to the organization. Secondary (and tertiary) stakeholders include **professional groups, industry groups, trade unions, regulators, and the local community**, among others. A related distinction is between **internal** and **external stakeholders**.



Since the stakeholder relation is based in the contributions made by stakeholders, and by their stake in the organization (that is, what they get from it) **stakeholder relations exist in degrees**, from the very robust to the very weak. When performing a **stakeholder inventory**, the nature of the **contribution**, the **received benefit**, and the **risks** borne by the stakeholder group should be accounted for.

From a digital ethics perspective, stakeholder inventories should look at **how the stakeholder group is situated within the organization's digital transformation initiative**. That is, what contributions does the stakeholder group make to the success of the initiative? What risks/burdens/harms do they bear? These and others are questions to ask when developing an **ecm digital transformation road map** and when planning particular projects.

While each organization and its initiatives differ, some general stakeholder groups and their interests and risks form a starting point for reflection. Below is a high-level list for reference.

1. Customers
 - a. Information Privacy / Identity Theft
 - b. Confidentiality
 - c. Automated Decision Making
2. Employees
 - a. Workplace Privacy / Surveillance
 - b. Confidentiality
 - c. Work Automation
3. Suppliers
 - a. Confidentiality
 - b. Intellectual Property
4. Society
 - a. Liberty / Autonomy / Surveillance
 - b. Fairness / Justice
 - c. Employment / Economics
 - d. Democracy / Stability
5. Government
 - a. Regulating all of the above

ECM STAKEHOLDERS

The concept of a stakeholder is familiar within the context of **IT projects**. This should not be surprising. The stakeholder theory was originally a theory of management before its central ideas were coopted by business ethics, and project management is fundamentally aimed at the success of projects, measured in terms of their objectives, budget, and schedule.

The **Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBOK) Guide**, published by the Project Management Institute (PMI), provides a definition of and methods for identifying project stakeholders.

“A stakeholder is an individual, group, or organization who may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity or outcome of a project.” (PMBOK 5th Ed., pg. 30) It describes stakeholder identification as “... a continuous process throughout the project lifecycle. Identifying stakeholders, understanding their relative degree of influence on a project, and balancing their demands, needs, and expectations are critical to the success of the project.” (Ibid., pg. 31)

Inputs for stakeholder identification include: Project charters, procurement documents, process assets, among others. The output is a stakeholder register. (Ibid., pg. 393)

Consistent with stakeholder management objectives, the focus of project management stakeholder analysis is to understand how different stakeholders potentially influence the project's success. Different matrices are used to categorize stakeholders by their impact or influence and the level of attention they should thereby receive to realize the project objectives. Below is a sample Influence/Impact grid.



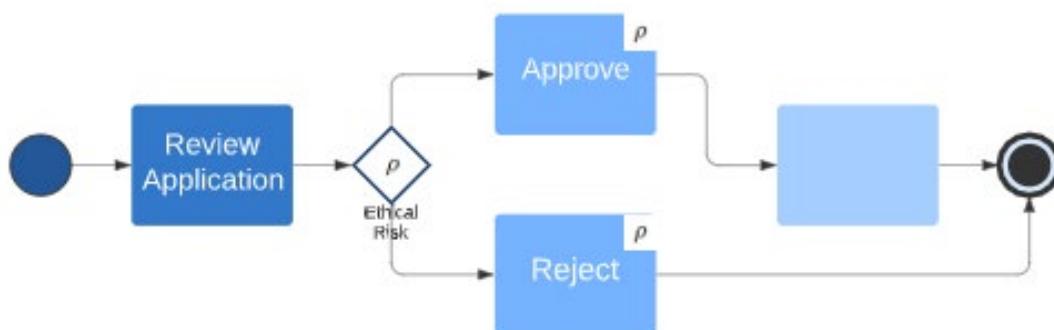
While external stakeholders are identified as a type of group, (real world) project management tends to focus on the players actually “in the room” or “at the table.” These are the stakeholders normally identified in stakeholder registries. The reasons for this are clear. These stakeholders are central to the project and they own accountabilities within it. Their satisfaction is a criterion or condition of the project’s success. So, for a customer facing project, members of sales, marketing, customer service, IT, finance, and other operational units will be primary stakeholders identified in the stakeholder register. Sales or marketing leadership is likely to be project sponsor. Customers themselves are not likely to be represented directly. Rather, the customer perspective is supplied by the customer facing business functions (sales, marketing, and customer service). But the perspective of the business unit (sales) about the customer is not the same as the customer’s perspective. They certainly have to intersect somewhere for the sales and marketing function to be successful, but they are not identical and the one is not a sufficient proxy for the other. User-centered design may serve as a partial corrective of this indirect relation to the customer perspective, but a full correction would require interviews and other mechanisms that provide a direct voice to the customer stakeholder group(s).

To employ **stakeholder analysis** as an **ethical tool**, it will often be necessary to dig deeper than the project management approach and its inputs, especially when dealing with external stakeholders who are not in the room. One way to do that is to use **business analysis** tools, inputs and outputs. A design phase is a normal part of IT projects (though in agile approaches is manifests differently) and business or requirements analysis is the official (though not always used) designator of the discipline that develops software requirements. Its techniques include:

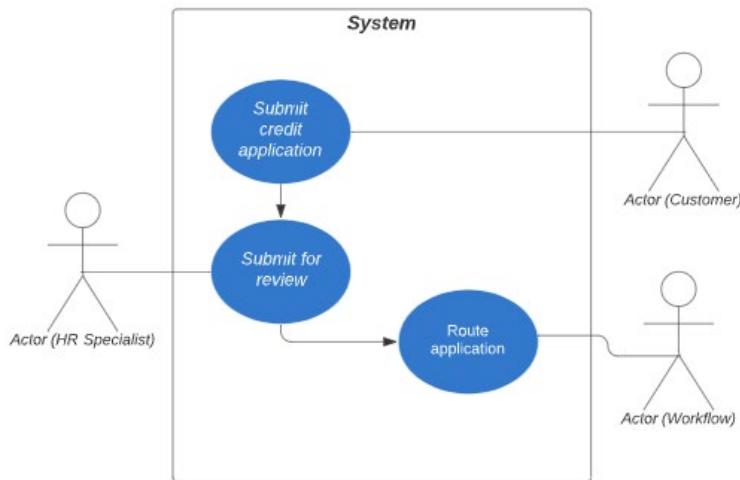
- Document Analysis
- Data Dictionary
- Data Modeling
- Data Flow Analysis
- Decision Analysis
- Decision Modeling
- Business Rules Analysis
- Process Analysis
- Process Modelling
- Concept Modeling

Outputs include **data flow diagrams**, **BPMN activity diagrams** and their associated narratives (Business Process Modelling Notation); **UML use case diagrams** and **narratives** (Unified Modeling Language); and other artifacts. These methods of analysis and their products can provide a detailed view of how certain stakeholders' (e.g., customers) data flows through a system (**data flow diagrams**), how decisions and actions are taken relative to these stakeholders (**activity diagrams**) and how the stakeholders interact with the system (**use case**). To understand the particular stakeholder group's perspective, especially where direct outreach and communication is not feasible, these system design artifacts need to be developed with an awareness of the **fundamental interests** and **rights** of the stakeholder groups. (For a fuller discussion of how to incorporate ethical and legal analysis into business analysis, see my article [Business Analysis and Data Ethics](#)).

For example, an activity diagram such as the one below captures the activities of a business process and the decisions that lead to subsequent activities in the process. **Decision gates** represent the **decision points** and arrows indicate the subsequent activities based on the decision. Full descriptions of the decision points (yielded through decision analysis) and the activities (yielded through process analysis) should provide useful information about the stakeholder's interests relative to the process. One might even consider adding a symbol (outside of BPMN) to indicate where interests or rights are implicated. In the diagram I use the Greek letter **rho** to indicate that a right or ethical risk is implicated by a decision and an action.



Another example is a UML use case (and the discovery notes and user stories that lead up to it).



The **use case narrative** should provide critical information about the customer role's privacy interest by describing the data submitted through (for example) an online form designed to collect personal financial information. Also, as with an activity diagram and its narrative, the UML diagram and narrative will also implicitly indicate the interest of the customer in the process and his or her associated rights. In this case, the interest is in obtaining credit.

CONCLUSION

The concept of stakeholders is familiar within project management and therefore within enterprise content management initiatives. Tools and methods of stakeholder management are documented in the PMI PMBOK and other professional guides, e.g., the BABOK (the Business Analysis Book of Knowledge). Within this context, it is a special case of stakeholder management, which is a theory of business management that focuses on managing stakeholder interests to improve project outcomes. Building from its tools and those of business analysis, an inventory and plan should be developed for managing the ethical concerns and rights of an organizations stakeholders in relation to ecm roadmaps and projects.