The

Stakeholder Interview

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The Stakeholder Interview

The fact that you've downloaded this is an indication that you already recognize the *need* for conducting stakeholder interviews, but you may not yet recognize the potential *value* they bring to a project, and to you, the project manager or creative lead. If you lead a creative team, then getting your stakeholders aligned at the beginning of a design project can save you unnecessary rounds of design revisions and missed deadlines. If you're embarking on a critical or high-stakes project, effective stakeholder interviews can increase that project's likelihood that it will resonate with the target audience and be a success.

We always insist upon stakeholder interviews being conducted individually if practical, rather than in a group format, as it can uncover unexpected viewpoints about the company, brand, product, or market, and help to avoid the "me-too" thinking that can arise in a group setting. Additionally, some questions included here are intended to discover potential stories behind the brand — stories, such as getting started in a garage, which can be powerful hooks for the consumer or target audience. Avoid the temptation to leave these questions out of your interviews. They may uncover the gems that will make your website, brochure, or campaign powerful.

Tips for Success

1. Be diligent in identifying all key stakeholders. The key stakeholders are those people whose feedback and approvals are required throughout the design process, and they must be included from the beginning of the project. Failing to include all key stakeholders from the beginning of a project puts your project at risk of being sent back to the drawing board mid way through the project.

2. Record stakeholder responses to your questions verbatim, rather than paraphrasing. Don't summarize or gloss over details, as these may be the hidden insights you are searching for that will make your project a success.

3. Allow your interview to go off-script if necessary, allowing your stakeholders to speak freely and to elaborate in the areas that are important to them. By doing this, you are more likely to discover information that you had not anticipated.

4. Don't downplay answers merely because they don't fit in with your set of interview questions. If a stakeholder brings it up, it matters to them. You can follow up with other stakeholders to see if this same issue is important to them also.

5. Be sure you understand the weight of a respondent's answer. Is it a "must-have" or are they just mentioning it because it occurred to them?

6. Compile the information obtained from your individual interviews into a single document for distribution to your stakeholders to review and comment on. Be clear that this document defines all the crucial aspects of the project.

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Stakeholder Interview

Purpose	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3
1. Why are we doing this? Why do you feel that your organization needs to complete this deliverable? What do you hope it will accomplish for your organization? Why now?			
2. What is the most critical goal of this deliverable Not necessarily the stated goal, but the most important goal as you see it.			
3. How would you describe success for this deliverable? What does success look like for you? Customer Response? Board-member Response? Staying within budget? Being delivered on time?			
4. How will you monitor the results of this deliverable? Analytics? Tracking Codes? Landing Page? Event attendance ? Search Engine Results? Reviews? Sales?			

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Stakeholder Interview

Audience	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3
5. How would you describe your audience? Include age range, sex, education, occupation, position, geographic location, buying habits, fashion sense, how they become informed - whatever factors that drive their purchasing behavior.			
6. What does your audience care about? What are their biggest concerns? What factors influence their purchasing decisions (cost, quality, reputation, brand name, turnaround ...) What do you need to overcome for them to help them make a decision?			
7. How does the audience currently think or feel about your industry as a whole? What reputation do [...] companies have? (Auto mechanic? Lawyer? Artist? Surgeon? Saint?) What impressions do you try to overcome?			
8. What steps does your audience go through before making a buying decision? Do they read online reviews? Do they compare prices? Are they influenced by advertising or people in their social circles?			

Stakeholder Interview

Audience	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3
9. What else do you know about your audience? What other sites do they visit? What search terms would they use to find you? What is their most frequented social site (Facebook / Twitter / LinkedIn ...)? How do they share information?			
10. What don't you know about you audience? Have you made any decisions based on assumptions that you don't know to be factual or accurate?			
11. What are some surprising insights you've gained from working with your clients?			
12. How loyal is your audience to your organization? Do they trust you? Do they view you as an authority? Will they believe what you say?			

Stakeholder Interview

Process	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3
13. What concerns do you have about the process of designing this deliverable?			
14. What concerns do you have about this project after it is completed? e.g. for a website, there might be concerns about who will maintain it; for a social strategy, there might be concerns about whether it will provide sufficient return …			
15. What are some frustrations you've had with other design deliverables you produced in the past? Was it difficult to gain stakeholder consensus? Did the project go off track due to one person's opinions? Was it difficult communicating your desires to the design team?			
16. What are some frustrations you've had with pieces like this you've seen from other organizations?			

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Stakeholder Interview

Project-Specific	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3
17. List all mandatory elements for this deliverable Colors, logo, type size, tag lines, specific quotes, specific case studies, photographs, philosophies, etc.			
18. What is the single most important message your audience should remember from this deliverable? If they will remember just one point, what should it be?			
19. What action should this deliverable entice the user to take?			
20. List the most memorable pieces or marketing messages you've seen.			

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Stakeholder Interview

Personal Insights	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3
21. Describe your (individually or your organization's) greatest success. What is your proudest moment?			
22. How did your organization or team get to where you are today?			
23. Describe a valuable business lesson you've learned.			
24. Describe a key turning point in your organization's history.			

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