

Mapping your stakeholder network

Informal networks are important to truly connect with stakeholders. A stakeholder relationship map helps identify networks for change in a complex stakeholder environment. It helps you to:

- pinpoint individuals with information crucial to the success of the change initiative
- identify where you and your team have existing relationships to leverage or gaps to plug.

How to do it

1. Identify stakeholders

Select individual stakeholders or stakeholder groups that have the potential to impact or be impacted by the change initiative. You should have already identified these in the stakeholder prioritisation exercise.



Templates to help with mapping your stakeholder network
[Mapping your stakeholder network](#)

2. Map networks

You will need a white board or large sheet of paper for this exercise.

- Draw a circle representing you in the middle of the page.
- Draw a circle representing each critical stakeholder. Include the name of each stakeholder inside or alongside the circle.
- Draw lines between the circles to indicate current relationships. It may help to start by identifying your closest relationships and then move outward, discovering where connections exist between others. You can differentiate strong relationships with a double line and weaker relationships with a dotted line, or through the use of colours.
- Get each member of your team to map their stakeholders and relationships in the same way, and compare your networks to see if there are any obvious gaps.
- Finally, put a stakeholder in the centre of the map and use your best information to plot a network based around them. Don't base your map on guess work. If you are unsure of connections between people, ask them.
- At this point, you should try to compile this information into a single map to get a comprehensive view of your network.

3. Assign roles

After finalising stakeholder relationships, assign one of four roles to each one where relevant. There are four key stakeholder roles that could impact on a change initiative¹:

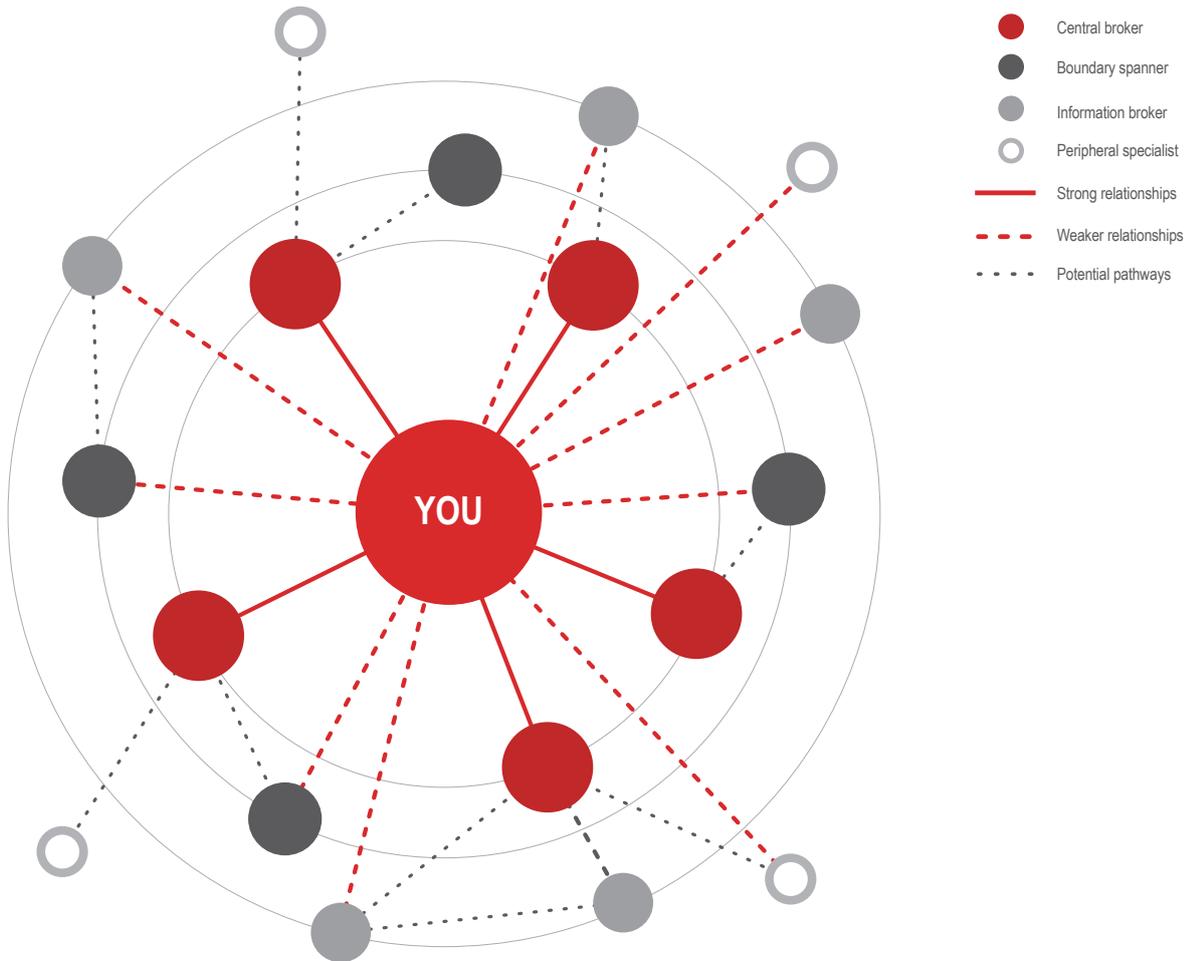
1. **Central brokers:** The 'go-to' people for everyone within a social network – the ones that many stakeholders have a direct relationship with.

¹ Cross, R., & Prusak, L. (2002). The people who make organisations go-or stop. *Harvard business review*, 104-112.



2. **Boundary spanners:** People who connect their network with other networks. For example, they might be a member of People and Culture who used to work in Asset Planning and still have strong relationships there.
3. **Information brokers:** Similar to boundary spanners except they function within social networks. They are often seen as experts who people go to for information.
4. **Peripheral specialists:** Subject matter experts who provide specific information when required but are largely disconnected.

Please note that not all stakeholders need to be assigned a role. Here's an example of how your network might look:



4. Adjust your stakeholder engagement plan where required

This mapping exercise should have highlighted:

- individuals who have more impact on your project than you thought, particularly central connectors and boundary spanners
- strong relationships that you can leverage
- weak relationships
- potential pathways for building a stronger relationships through somebody you have a direct relationship with.

Update your stakeholder engagement plan as your relationships develop.

