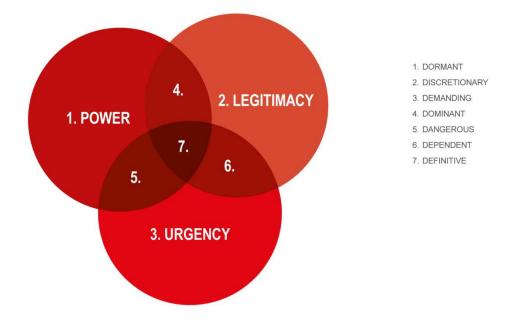# Identifying stakeholder types

It may help to apply three key attributes[1] to help identify and prioritise stakeholder groups:

- **Power:** In a position to carry out actions despite resistance.
- **Legitimacy:** A perception that the actions are desirable, proper and appropriate.
- **Urgency:** A call for immediate action, either due to time sensitivity or the critical nature of the issue.

These attributes can be used to identify and prioritise stakeholder groups for the stakeholder mapping template and stakeholder engagement plan.

From these three attributes you can identify seven stakeholder classes under three broad categories of latent, expectant and definitive.

Latent stakeholders
Latent stakeholders possess only one of the three key attributes and do not have strong influence on the organisation. Three stakeholder classes form the latent category:

1. **Dormant stakeholders** have the power to impose their views on the organisation but lack the legitimacy or urgency to do so, so their power remains unused.
2. **Discretionary stakeholders** possess legitimacy, but lack the power and urgent claim to influence the organisation.
3. **Demanding stakeholders** are those with urgent claims but lack the power and legitimacy to attract the attention of managers or decision-makers.

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[1] Mitchell, Agle and Wood's (1997), *Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience: Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts.*

Expectant stakeholders

Expectant stakeholders possess two of the three key attributes and require increased responsiveness from the organisation toward their interests or views. It is possible for latent stakeholders to acquire one of the remaining attributes and become part of the expectant stakeholder category. Three classes of stakeholder make up this category:

4. **Dominant stakeholders** are both powerful and legitimate, and typically have views that matter to managers.
5. **Dangerous stakeholders** have the power and urgency but lack legitimacy, and are in a position to have a negative impact on the organisation.
6. **Dependent stakeholders** have urgent claims and legitimate views but often rely on other stakeholders to carry out their will to compensate for a lack of power to influence the organisation.

Definitive stakeholders

Definitive stakeholders are a class and category unto themselves. They possess all three attributes and should be given the most attention. Change team leaders must engage this group and maintain strong relationships during the project. Definitive stakeholders should have the opportunity to provide input to major decisions and feedback on current progress. These stakeholders may differ depending on the nature of the change and can evolve between project phases.

This model assumes that groups or individuals not falling within these three categories are non-stakeholders and are of least concern during a change project. Remember that the stakeholder environment is often dynamic so put appropriate strategies in place to address any changes in stakeholder priorities.