

Turning Stakeholder Expectations into Purpose

These are the steps to follow:

1. Look at the Stakeholder groups, evaluate which are your primary stakeholders (the ones with direct contact, communication, or operations).
2. Of the remaining Stakeholder Groups, identify which are secondary stakeholders, and identify which Primary Stakeholder represents their expectations. If there are none, and they have expectations of your team, then consider whether they are actually a primary stakeholder.
3. If there are any left, consider why, and ask whether you have overlooked something important.
4. This exercise is about EXPECTATIONS not NEEDS.
5. If you find you cannot meet their expectations, avoid saying “we cannot do that”. Explore their expectations and consider what it would take to meet them. Stakeholders set your team’s purpose, not the other way around.
6. Consider that expectations change over time.
7. In each Primary Stakeholder group identify the key stakeholders who represent the expectations of the group, or whose expectations are a priority (ask yourself why you are prioritizing one group over another).
8. If there is conflict in expectation, explore with your team whether both conflicting expectations are in fact possible – how?
9. When you have a map of all stakeholders, then document their expectations, how you know, when you last checked, what you don’t know, what you need to know, and how you will find out. This usually involves formulating open questions.
10. Now you are ready to start defining your team’s purpose with your team members.
11. To be effective you should all agree on the purpose – it should be clear, specific, and understand. Then it should also be agreed that you hold each other accountable. This is a team function not a management function.
12. New team members need to know what they are “buying in to”.
13. Any change in team make up i(adding or subtracting) is a NEW team – treat it as such.
14. Purpose can change just as expectations can change – check-in regularly with your stakeholders
15. Finally – you do not tell your stakeholders what their expectations should be. They tell you what they are. The team’s job is to work out whether they can meet them and what the implications or consequences will be. Then have a conversation with the stakeholders.