



Understanding the importance of Stakeholder Engagement in the successful commencement and completion of a project

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Student name: Sanda Dobre

Student ID: 2415765

Lecturer's Name: Nadeem Mirza

Assignment 1: Understanding the importance of Stakeholder Engagement in the successful commencement and completion of a project.

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1.0 Introduction to the Chosen Organisation

InterContinental London Park Lane is a flagship luxury hotel within the InterContinental Hotels & Resorts portfolio, operated by IHG Hotels & Resorts. Located at One Hamilton Place on Park Lane in the prestigious Mayfair district, the hotel occupies a prime position between Hyde Park and Green Park, offering panoramic views of iconic London landmarks such as Wellington Arch, Royal Parks, and Buckingham Palace. The property comprises 449 rooms, including 75 expansive suites, award-winning dining venues, a full-service spa, a 24-hour fitness centre, and premium conference and event spaces.

As part of IHG's global network, the hotel caters to high-profile leisure travellers, corporate executives, and international visitors, delivering exceptional service aligned with the InterContinental brand promise of "True Hospitality for Good". Guest reviews consistently praise its central location, attentive staff, and elegant atmosphere, though some note occasional dated elements in décor compared to newer competitors.

The hospitality industry continues to experience rapid digital transformation. IHG's "Journey to Tomorrow" responsible business plan emphasises sustainability, people development, and technological innovation. In 2025, IHG made significant progress with AI initiatives, including the Digital Concierge chatbot handling 5.1 million guest conversations (up 40% year-on-year), advancements in AI-powered revenue management, and a new digital content platform designed for an AI-driven world. A refresh of the Journey to Tomorrow plan is planned for 2026 to strengthen impact across carbon reduction, community support, and technological integration.

In response to these trends, InterContinental London Park Lane is preparing to launch StaySmart+, an innovative premium guest-experience service. StaySmart+ integrates AI-driven tools (such as the AI Operator digital concierge), personalised travel planning and itinerary curation, smart-room technologies with eco-friendly amenities, and a seamless digital customer journey across pre-arrival, in-stay, and post-stay phases. The six-month project aims to position the hotel as a leader in next-generation luxury hospitality while supporting IHG's broader digital and sustainability goals.

As Project Manager, the responsibility is to identify, analyse, and engage key internal and external stakeholders to ensure the successful design, launch, and adoption of StaySmart+. This report applies stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), engagement frameworks, and strategic management principles to evaluate roles, expectations, and influence. It proposes practical strategies, conflict-management approaches, and recommendations to maximise project success and long-term organisational performance.

2.0 Situational Analysis and Objectives of the Project (SMART)

A situational analysis is essential before defining project objectives. The SWOT analysis provides a structured evaluation of internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats. This analysis is grounded in strategic management principles and Freeman's stakeholder theory, highlighting how StaySmart+ can leverage the hotel's capabilities while addressing risks in a competitive luxury market.

Strengths (Internal)

Prime central London location on Park Lane with iconic views, attracting high-profile leisure and corporate clients.

Strong brand reputation as part of the world's largest international luxury hotel brand, supported by consistent high guest satisfaction scores.

Excellent service culture and well-trained staff, backed by IHG's global training standards.

Established infrastructure: 449 rooms (75 suites), award-winning dining, spa, and premium event spaces.

Access to IHG's powerful loyalty programme (IHG One Rewards) and advanced AI capabilities (AI Operator, predictive analytics).

Opportunities (External)

Growing demand for AI-personalised and sustainable luxury experiences; StaySmart+ can capitalise on IHG's 2025–2026 AI investments (AI Operator, AI-compatible content platform).

Increasing RevPAR growth in London's luxury segment and strong international travel recovery.

Expansion of eco-friendly smart-room technologies to meet regulatory and guest sustainability expectations.

Leverage IHG's global loyalty data and digital channels to drive direct bookings and personalised marketing.

Weaknesses (Internal)

Some areas of the property may feel dated despite refurbishments, with occasional guest feedback noting smaller room sizes or traditional décor compared to newer competitors.

High operational costs typical of central London luxury hotels, including labour and energy expenses.

Potential resistance to rapid digital adoption among long-serving staff accustomed to traditional service models.

Dependence on IHG corporate systems can slow local innovation if not fully aligned.

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Threats (External)

Intense competition from other luxury hotels in Mayfair/Park Lane and emerging AI-driven properties.

Economic volatility, inflation, and potential slowdown in high-end corporate and leisure spending.

Data privacy concerns (GDPR) and guest scepticism regarding AI (fear of reduced human touch).

Technological risks such as system integration failures or cybersecurity threats.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis of InterContinental London Park Lane (2026 Context)

Critical Analysis: The SWOT reveals a strong foundation in location and brand but highlights the need to modernise operations and address staff readiness for digital change.

StaySmart+ directly targets key opportunities in AI personalisation and sustainability while mitigating threats through proactive stakeholder engagement and training.

PESTLE Analysis of InterContinental London Park Lane (StaySmart+ Project – 2026)

Factor	Key Issues	Impact on StaySmart+ Project	Affected Stakeholders
Political	UK tourism policies, post-Brexit labour shortages, and government sustainability targets	May affect staffing levels and operational costs; requires adaptation in HR planning and compliance with sustainability strategies	Senior Management, HR, Operations
	Inflation, high operational costs in London, fluctuations in international travel demand, RevPAR growth	Pressure to deliver cost-efficient yet premium services; need to maximise guest value through AI personalisation	Senior Management, Marketing, Guests
Social	Changing guest expectations (digital vs human service), demand for personalised experiences, cultural diversity of international guests	Need to balance AI technology with human interaction; importance of staff training and customer engagement	Guests, Operations, HR
Technological	AI developments (AI Operator), smart-room technology, cybersecurity risks, system integration challenges	Enables innovation but requires strong IT support, training, and risk management	IT Team, Technology Partners, Operations
Legal	GDPR compliance, data protection laws, consumer rights regulations	Strict requirements for handling guest data; failure may lead to legal penalties and reputational damage	Regulatory Bodies, IT, Marketing

Factor	Key Issues	Impact on StaySmart+ Project	Affected Stakeholders
Environmental	Sustainability regulations, carbon reduction targets, and eco-conscious guest expectations	Need to implement eco-friendly technologies and reduce energy consumption	Operations, Senior Management, Guests

Critical Analysis:

The PESTLE analysis highlights that external factors significantly shape the success of the StaySmart+ project. Legal and technological factors have the greatest impact due to the use of AI and guest data. Compliance with GDPR is essential to maintain trust and avoid penalties.

Economic and environmental pressures also influence strategic decisions, requiring the hotel to balance cost efficiency with sustainability and innovation. Furthermore, social factors emphasise the importance of understanding diverse guest expectations, especially in international markets.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that effective stakeholder engagement is necessary to respond to these external challenges and ensure successful project implementation.

SMART Objectives for StaySmart+ Launch at InterContinental London Park Lane

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound
Develop stakeholder coordination framework addressing SWOT-identified risks (e.g., staff resistance)	>90% meeting attendance, >85% satisfaction surveys	Use existing IHG platforms (Teams, SharePoint) + dedicated liaison	Builds on service culture strengths while mitigating weaknesses	Q2–Q3 2026
Design, test and deploy AI tools (AI Operator concierge, personalised itineraries, smart-room eco-features)	NPS >75, pilot with ≥200 guests, system uptime >98%	Leverage IHG AI innovation team & tech partners; supported by staff training	Capitalises on digital transformation opportunities	Pilot Month 3; full rollout Month 6
Increase guest satisfaction with personalisation & digital services	Minimum +10% in IHG surveys	Phased rollout + data analytics	Addresses competition threats and exploits brand/location strengths	Measured monthly; target Q3 2026
Integrate eco-friendly amenities and reduce energy consumption	-12% energy use (monthly metrics)	Aligned with IHG sustainability policies	Responds to external pressures and regulatory threats	Full integration by Month 6

These SMART objectives provide a clear roadmap, reduce ambiguity, and enable continuous monitoring while balancing technological innovation with the human element central to luxury hospitality.

3.0 Identifying Key Stakeholders

Key Internal Stakeholders:

Project Manager, Senior Management/General Manager, IT & Product Development Team, Marketing & Sales, Operations (Front Office, Housekeeping, F&B), HR Department. **Key External Stakeholders:** Guests, Technology Partners, IHG Corporate, Regulatory Bodies (GDPR, sustainability), Local Community & Suppliers.

3.1 Stakeholder Categorisation (Primary vs Secondary)

Stakeholders can be further categorised into primary and secondary groups, as suggested by stakeholder theory developed by Edward Freeman.

Primary stakeholders include those directly involved in the project and essential to its success, such as senior management, employees, IT teams, and guests. Their participation is critical for the implementation and adoption of StaySmart+.

Secondary stakeholders include regulatory bodies, local communities, and suppliers. While they are not directly involved in daily operations, they influence the external environment in which the project operates.

Additionally, the global nature of the hospitality industry means that international stakeholders must also be considered. These include global guests, international technology partners, and IHG corporate leadership across different regions. Cultural differences and expectations across markets must therefore be addressed through adaptive engagement strategies.

3.2 Benefits and Challenges

Benefits and Challenges of Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder Group	Main Benefits	Main Challenges	Critical Insight
Senior Management / GM	Strategic alignment, budget approval, brand protection	Time constraints, competing priorities	Definitive stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997)
IT & Product Development	Technical innovation, integration with AI Operator	Cybersecurity risks, compatibility with legacy systems	High power due to expertise
Marketing & Sales	Increased brand awareness, higher direct bookings	Building guest trust in AI (privacy concerns)	High interest in guest outcomes
Operations Teams	Streamlined processes, reduced repetitive tasks	Staff resistance to change, training needs	Daily users with high operational impact
Guests	Personalised, seamless, sustainable experience	Perceived loss of human touch, data privacy fears	Ultimate beneficiaries (Freeman, 1984)
Regulatory Bodies	Compliance assurance	Strict data protection and sustainability rules	High power, variable interest

Additional Critical Analysis of Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholders contribute significant value to the project through their expertise, resources, and influence. However, their interests may differ, leading to potential conflicts. For example, the IT team may prioritise technological innovation, while operations staff may prefer simplicity and stability in daily tasks.

This interdependence highlights the importance of effective coordination by the Project Manager. According to strategic management principles, successful organisations balance stakeholder expectations to achieve long-term value creation.

Failure to manage these relationships effectively can result in resistance, delays, and reduced project performance. Therefore, stakeholder engagement must be proactive, continuous, and aligned with organisational objectives.

3.3 Stakeholder Power-Interest Matrix

Stakeholder Power-Interest Matrix

Quadrant	Stakeholders	Power	Interest	Engagement Strategy
Manage Closely	Senior Management, Project Manager, IT Team, IHG Corporate AI Leadership	High	High	Joint workshops, co-decision making
Keep Satisfied	Regulatory Bodies, Key Technology Partners	High	Medium	Formal compliance reports, clear contracts
Keep Informed	Marketing, Operations, HR, Guests	Medium	High	Targeted newsletters, pilot feedback, training
Monitor	Local Community, General Suppliers	Low	Low	Social listening, annual review only

3.4 Stakeholder Salience Assessment Matrix

Stakeholder Salience Matrix (Power, Legitimacy, Urgency – Mitchell et al., 1997)

Stakeholder	Power	Legitimacy	Urgency	Salience Type	Priority
Senior Management	High	High	High	Definitive	Critical
IT & Product Development	High	High	High	Definitive	Critical
Guests	Medium	High	High	Dependent	High
Regulatory Bodies	High	High	Medium	Dominant	High
Operations Teams	Medium	High	Medium	Dependent	Medium
Technology Partners	Medium	Medium	Medium	Dangerous / Dormant	Monitor

4.0 Roles of the Manager in Engaging Stakeholders

As Project Manager, the role involves facilitation, negotiation, and leadership to align diverse interests.

Justification of Stakeholder Engagement Frameworks

The use of stakeholder management frameworks is essential to ensure structured and effective engagement throughout the project lifecycle.

The **Power-Interest Matrix**, developed by Aubrey Mendelow, is particularly useful in identifying which stakeholders require the most attention. High-power, high-interest stakeholders such as senior management and IT teams must be closely managed, while others require different engagement strategies.

The **RACI Matrix** ensures clarity of roles and responsibilities, reducing confusion and improving accountability. In complex projects like StaySmart+, where multiple departments are involved, clear role definition is essential to avoid duplication of work and delays.

The **Communication Plan** supports continuous engagement by ensuring that stakeholders receive relevant information at the right time. Effective communication is critical for building trust and reducing uncertainty, particularly during periods of change.

Together, these frameworks provide a structured approach to stakeholder engagement, supporting collaboration, transparency, and project success.

4.1 Communication Plan

Communication Plan

Stakeholder	Channel	Frequency	Key Message	Owner
Senior Management	Executive Dashboard + Meetings	Weekly	Progress, risks, ROI	Project Manager
IT Team	Technical workshops + Teams	Bi-weekly	Integration updates, issues	IT Lead
Operations & Staff	Training sessions + Newsletter	Monthly	Benefits for daily work	HR + Operations
Guests	App notifications + Surveys	During pilot	Value and feedback request	Marketing

4.2 Levels of Engagement

Engagement levels range from Inform → Consult → Involve → Collaborate → Empower, tailored to each group's needs and salience.

4.3 RACI Matrix

RACI Matrix for StaySmart+ Key Activities

Activity	Project Manager	Senior Management	IT Team	Marketing	Operations	HR	Guests
AI Tool Development & Integration	A / R	A	R	C	C	I	I
Staff Training Programme	A	I	C	I	R	R	–
Guest Pilot Testing	A / R	C	R	C	R	I	C
Communication & Launch Campaign	R	A	I	R	C	I	I
Risk & Compliance Monitoring	R	A	C	I	C	C	I
Performance Evaluation	R	A	C	C	C	I	C

(A = Accountable, R = Responsible, C = Consulted, I = Informed)

5.0 Stakeholder Engagement and Conflict Management Using the 4C's Model

A solid framework for participation is offered by the 4Cs model (Communication, Collaboration, Consultation, Commitment). Clear two-way communication creates trust; cooperation through workshops promotes team problem-solving; consultation through feedback loops guarantees that opinions are heard; and dedication through common goals and rewards creates sustained buy-in.

Interest-based negotiation is used to resolve possible conflicts, such as those between IT and operations over deadlines or between marketing and visitors regarding data usage. Conflict is transformed into positive results by early recognition, enhanced communication, and compromise procedures. Leadership commitment and organisational culture are crucial to the model's success. Over-reliance on technology in luxury hospitality without adequate human consultation runs the danger of upsetting both employees and visitors.

6.0 Impact of Stakeholder Engagement on Business Performance

Key performance measures, such as increased guest NPS, better employee retention, increased operational efficiency, and improved brand reputation, are all positively impacted by effective stakeholder engagement. IHG's 2025 results show that advances in direct bookings, loyalty penetration, and cost reductions are driven by AI efforts with widespread stakeholder buy-in.

Delays, resistance, and the inability to reap the rewards might result from low participation. In order to turn chances into quantifiable performance gains, it is essential to address internal shortcomings (such as digital readiness) through inclusive involvement, as the SWOT and stakeholder matrices highlight.

6.1 Recommendations for Future Projects

1. Embed continuous AI and digital skills training for all staff levels.
2. Establish monthly KPI dashboards with stakeholder input.
3. Develop formal partnerships with ethical AI providers.
4. Prioritise transparency and guest consent mechanisms for data usage.
5. Conduct post-implementation reviews to capture lessons learned.
6. Align future initiatives closely with the refreshed Journey to Tomorrow targets in 2026.

Critical evaluation and ethics

Ethical Considerations in Stakeholder Engagement

Ethical considerations play a significant role in stakeholder engagement, particularly in technology-driven projects such as StaySmart+. One key issue is **data privacy**. The use of AI to personalise guest experiences requires the collection and analysis of personal data. This raises concerns about how data is stored, used, and protected. Compliance with GDPR is essential to maintain trust and avoid legal consequences.

Another concern is the **balance between technology and human interaction**. Over-reliance on AI may reduce the personal touch that is central to luxury hospitality. This could negatively impact guest satisfaction if not managed carefully. Transparency is also critical. Guests must be informed about how their data is used and given the option to opt out of AI-driven services. Ethical stakeholder engagement requires honesty, fairness, and respect for stakeholder rights.

Expanded Challenges in Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement in large-scale projects is complex and presents several challenges. One major challenge is **resistance to change**, particularly among employees. According to John Kotter, change initiatives often fail when employees are not properly engaged or supported.

Another challenge is **conflicting stakeholder interests**. For example, marketing teams may push for data-driven personalisation, while guests may have concerns about

privacy. Additionally, **cultural differences** in international markets can affect how stakeholders respond to new technologies and engagement strategies.

Addressing these challenges requires strong leadership, effective communication, and continuous feedback mechanisms.

7.0 Conclusion

The successful launch of StaySmart+ at InterContinental London Park Lane depends on robust stakeholder engagement. By systematically identifying stakeholders, applying relevant theories and models (Freeman 1984; Mitchell et al. 1997; 4C's and RACI frameworks), and proactively addressing benefits, challenges, and conflicts, the project can deliver enhanced guest experiences, operational efficiencies, and competitive advantage while advancing sustainability goals.

Effective engagement is an ongoing strategic process that strengthens organisational resilience in a rapidly digitising hospitality landscape. As Project Manager, prioritising inclusive, ethical, and transparent practices will maximise value creation for all parties and support IHG's long-term vision of True Hospitality for Good.

This report demonstrates that thoughtful stakeholder management is essential for navigating the complexities of digital transformation in luxury hospitality.

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