

Module Title: - Understanding and Engaging Stakeholders

Module Code: - LCLM 5001

Assignment - Understanding the importance of Stakeholder engagement in successful commencement and completion of project

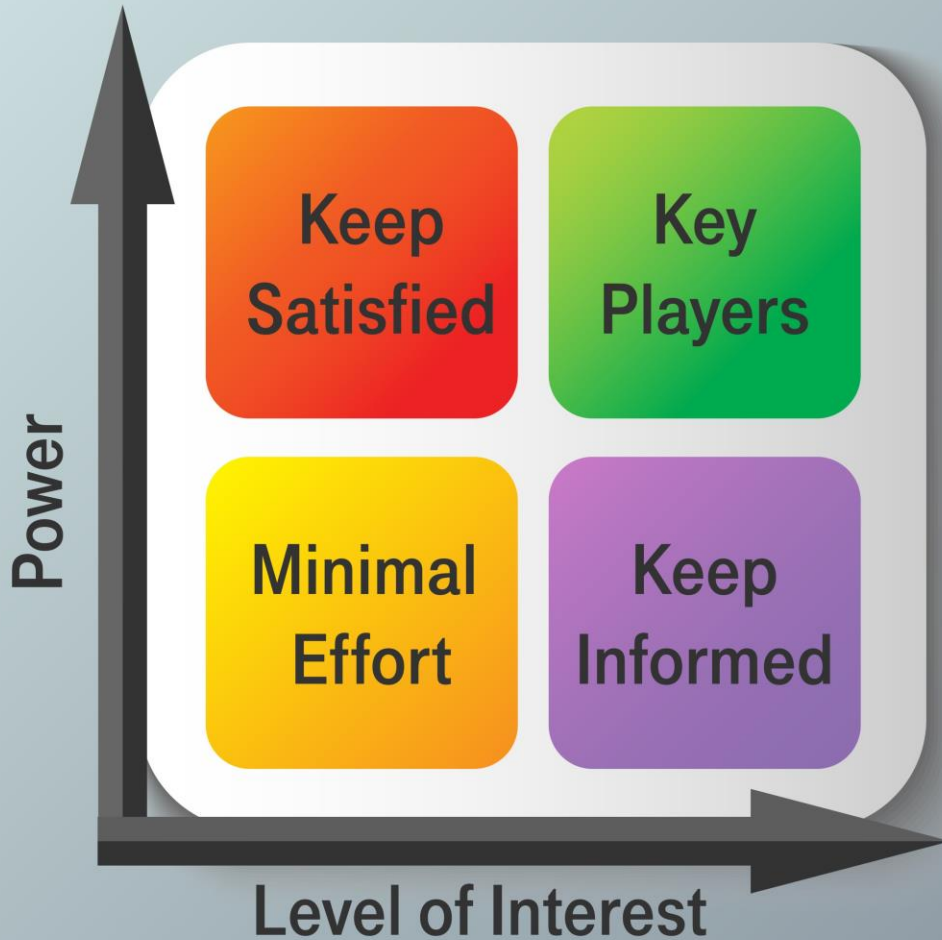
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Summary

This report provides a comprehensive strategic analysis and project management framework for the launch of **StaySmart+**, a flagship premium service initiative by InterContinental Hotels Group IHG. In an era defined by the "Twin Transition"—the simultaneous evolution of digital technology and environmental sustainability—StaySmart+ represents a critical pivot for the group. The service integrates **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, hyper-personalized guest journey mapping, and IoT-enabled sustainability monitoring to differentiate the brand in a saturated global luxury market.

Stakeholder Mapping The Power Interest Matrix



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The primary objective of this report is to identify, categorize, and critically evaluate the diverse stakeholder ecosystem associated with a six-month global rollout. Utilizing **Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory** and the **Mendelow Matrix**, the report distinguishes between internal actors, such as the AI development teams and frontline service staff, and external entities, including franchisees, global travelers, and regulatory bodies. A central thesis of this report is that the success of StaySmart+ is contingent not upon technical superiority, but upon the **legitimacy and urgency** assigned to stakeholder concerns (Mitchell et al., 1997).

The report further operationalizes engagement through the **RACI Matrix** and a multi-channel **Communication Plan**, ensuring clarity of roles across international borders. A critical evaluation is provided using the **4C's Model (Communication, Consultation, Collaboration, and Commitment)**, specifically addressing how a Project Manager navigates the inherent conflicts between corporate standardized technology and localized cultural expectations. Furthermore, the report explores the ethical dimensions of AI, including data privacy (GDPR compliance) and the potential "dehumanization" of the hospitality experience.

The findings suggest that proactive stakeholder engagement directly correlates with reduced project "drag," higher employee retention, and enhanced brand equity. The report concludes with a series of strategic recommendations aimed at "refreezing" these innovations into the organizational culture to ensure long-term competitive advantage.

1. Introduction

IHG (headquarters near London)

StaySmart+ is a premium service integration aimed at bridging the gap between high-touch hospitality and high-tech efficiency. For a global leader like **IHG**, which operates over 6,000 hotels, the project involves deploying AI-driven concierges and sustainability tracking (e.g., real-time water/energy usage feedback for guests). The project aims to harmonize the guest experience across diverse markets—from the financial hubs of London to the emerging luxury markets in Asia.

1.1 Company Overview: IHG Hotels & Resorts

Headquartered in Denham, near London, **InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)** is a titan of the global hospitality industry. Operating over 6,000 hotels across 100 countries, IHG manages a diverse portfolio ranging from luxury brands like Regent and InterContinental to mid-scale staples like Holiday Inn. With a significant presence in major UK hubs such as London and Birmingham, the company serves as a representative model for high-volume, high-complexity international operations. IHG's current strategic focus, "Journey to Tomorrow," emphasizes a ten-year commitment to positive social and environmental change, providing the perfect organizational backdrop for a service like **StaySmart+**.

1.2 The Project: StaySmart+ Defined

StaySmart+ is a disruptive service layer designed to be deployed across IHG's premium estates within a six-month window. The project is born from the necessity to meet the "New Normal" of traveler expectations—where guests demand the seamlessness of a smart home and the conscience of a green enterprise.

The service comprises three core pillars:

1. **AI-Driven Interaction:** A proprietary Natural Language Processing (NLP) engine integrated into the IHG app, acting as a 24/7 digital concierge that learns guest preferences (e.g., pillow firmness, dietary needs, local tour interests).
2. **Personalised Travel Planning:** Real-time data synthesis that offers bespoke itineraries, integrating local transport, weather, and "hidden gem" cultural experiences.
3. **Sustainability Amenities:** IoT sensors in guest rooms that allow travelers to track their water and energy footprint in real-time, gamifying eco-friendly choices through loyalty point rewards.

1.3 The Project Manager's Mandate

As the Project Manager, the mandate extends beyond the technical "Go-Live." The role requires navigating a **Global-Local (Glocal) Paradox**: implementing a standardized AI platform while respecting the cultural idiosyncrasies of markets in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. This report acts as the strategic roadmap for this journey. It acknowledges that in the hospitality sector—where the product is an *experience* and the labor is *human*—the introduction of AI creates significant psychological and operational friction.

By applying strategic management principles and engagement frameworks, this report seeks to demonstrate how a Project Manager can transform potential "blocker" stakeholders into "brand ambassadors." The following sections will analyze the internal and external environment, map the stakeholder landscape, and critically evaluate the engagement processes necessary to ensure StaySmart+ becomes a benchmark for 21st-century hospitality.

2. Situational Appraisal: SWOT & PESTLE

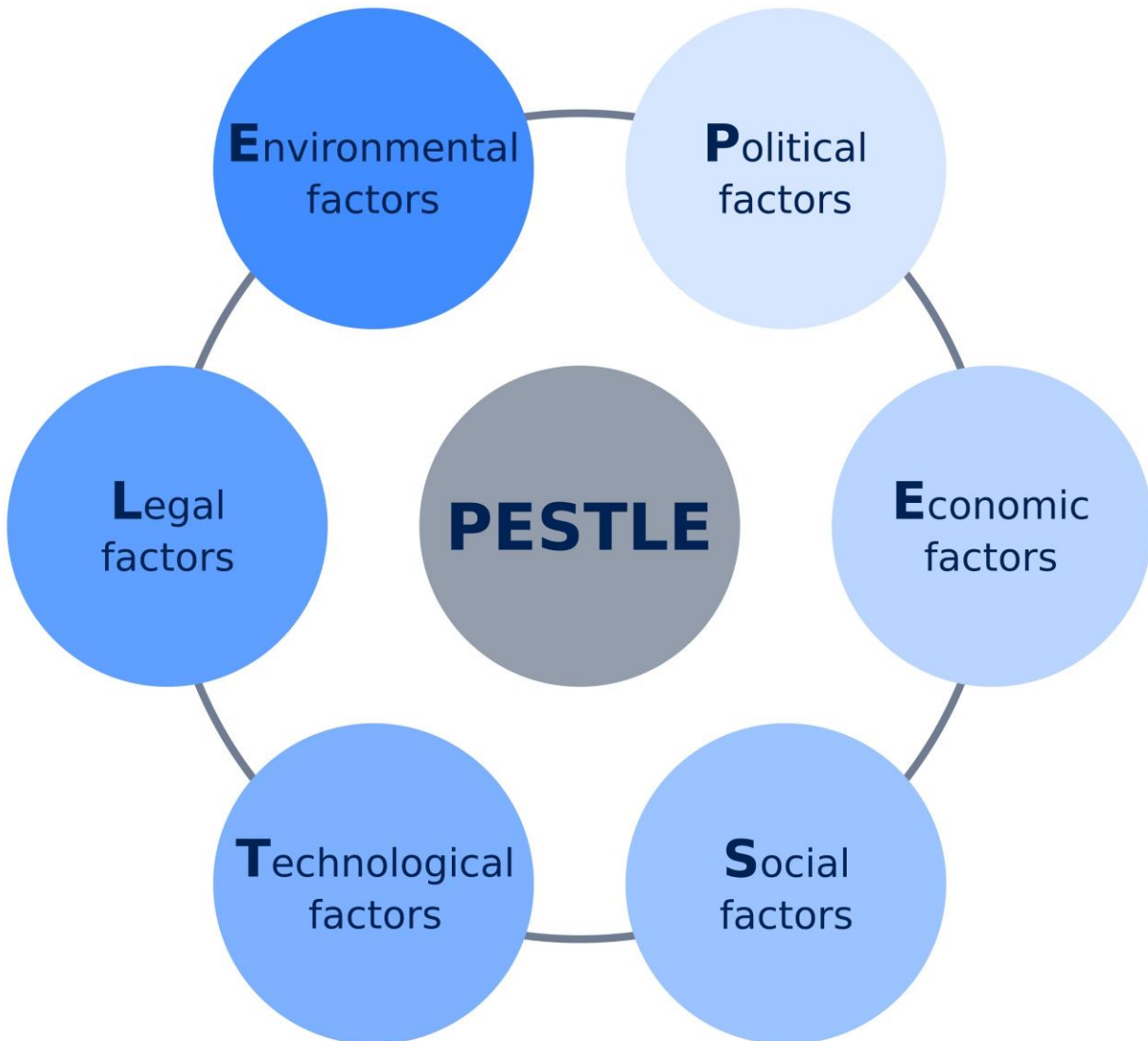
A situational analysis is not merely a diagnostic tool but a strategic roadmap. For **StaySmart+**, the Project Manager must understand the "Macro-Environment" to anticipate stakeholder resistance and identify "Windows of Opportunity" (Katz and Kahn, 1978).

2.1 PESTLE Analysis

- **Political:** The post-Brexit landscape in the UK continues to influence labor migration, leading to a "Chronic Talent Shortage" in London and Birmingham's hospitality sectors. **Impact:** International Data Privacy Laws (GDPR) on AI data collection.
- **Impact on StaySmart+:** The project is politically timely as it offers "Technological Substitution" for low-skilled roles. However, the Project Manager must navigate the political sensitivity of "Automation vs. Human Labor" to avoid negative PR from local labor unions.
- **Global Factor:** Divergent AI ethics across borders (e.g., the EU AI Act vs. more liberal US frameworks) creates a "Compliance Headache" for a six-month rollout.
- **Economic:** With the UK's inflation rates fluctuating and the "Cost of Living Crisis" impacting domestic travel, StaySmart+ must justify its "Premium" tag. Fluctuating exchange rates affecting global rollout costs.
- **Impact:** The sustainability features of StaySmart+ (energy monitoring) are an economic necessity for franchisees. In Birmingham, where utility costs for large-scale hotels have risen significantly, the IoT integration offers a direct reduction in overheads, securing **Owner/Investor** buy-in.
- **Social:** Increasing consumer demand for "Green Tourism" and personalized tech. There is a profound shift toward "**Conspicuous Conservation**"—where luxury is no longer defined by excess, but by ethical footprint.
- **Impact:** Modern travelers in "Tech-Hubs" like London's Shoreditch or Birmingham's Jewelry Quarter expect hyper-personalization. The "Social" risk is "Digital Fatigue"; the PM must ensure the AI remains an "invisible butler" rather than an "intrusive salesperson."
- **Technological:** The 2026 technological landscape is dominated by **Edge Computing** and **Generative AI**. The rise of Generative AI and IoT in "Smart Rooms."
- **Impact:** StaySmart+ utilizes 5G-enabled IoT. The challenge for the PM is the "Legacy Infrastructure" of older London hotels (e.g., Victorian buildings with thick

walls that block Wi-Fi signals). This requires a specific **Technical Stakeholder** engagement strategy.

- strategy.



- **Legal:** Data sovereignty is the primary legal hurdle. Employment laws regarding AI displacing traditional concierge roles.
- **Impact:** Under **UK GDPR**, the "Right to Explanation" means if the StaySmart+ AI denies a guest a specific loyalty upgrade, the company must be able to explain *why*. This requires "Explainable AI" (XAI) protocols to be embedded in the project scope.

- **Environmental:** The UK Government's **Net Zero 2050** mandate places immense pressure on the hospitality sector. Carbon footprint mandates in the UK and EU.
Impact: StaySmart+ is not just a "luxury perk"; it is a compliance tool. By tracking per-room carbon emissions, the group can provide audited ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) reports to institutional investors.

2.2 SWOT Analysis & SMART Objectives

The SWOT analysis for IHG's StaySmart+ launch reveals a company at a technological crossroads. By applying the **Resource-Based View (RBV)**, we can see that IHG's strengths are "VRIN" (Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Non-substitutable) resources that provide a competitive moat.

- **Strengths:** Existing global loyalty program infrastructure.
- **Weaknesses:** High initial capital expenditure for IoT hardware.
- **Opportunities:** First-mover advantage in AI-driven sustainability.
- **Threats:** Rapidly evolving tech competitors (Airbnb, tech-forward boutiques).

SMART Objective: "To achieve a 15% increase in guest satisfaction scores and a 10% reduction in per-room energy costs across 50 global flagship hotels within 12 months of the StaySmart+ launch."



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3. Identification and Categorization of Stakeholders

To identify and analyze the stakeholders for **StaySmart+**, we must apply **Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory**, which posits that a project's value is created by managing

the relationships between all groups that can affect or are affected by the achievement of the project’s objectives.

For a global hospitality leader like IHG, this requires a "Glocal" approach—balancing centralized corporate strategy with localized operational reality.

Using **Freeman’s Stakeholder Theory (1984)**, stakeholders are categorized into:

Category	Stakeholders
Internal	Executive Board, AI Development Team, Hotel General Managers, Front-of-House Staff, Sustainability Officers.
External	Hotel Owners (Franchisees), Global Guests, Tech Vendors, Local Regulatory Bodies, Travel Agencies.

4. Roles, Responsibilities, and Challenges

Using the **Mendelow Matrix**, we map these stakeholders based on their **Power** and **Interest** to determine the engagement priority.

4.1 Key Players (High Power / High Interest)

- **Role: Hotel Owners/Franchisees.**
 - **Responsibility:** Financing local hardware installation and ensuring staff compliance with StaySmart+ standards.
 - **Benefit:** Increased property value and reduced energy overheads.
 - **Challenge:** "Capital Rationing." Owners may prioritize room renovations over invisible "Smart Tech," requiring the PM to prove the sustainability-linked ROI.
- **Role: The Global AI Tech Team.**
 - **Responsibility:** Maintaining system uptime and data security across time zones.
 - **Benefit:** Professional prestige and data-driven insights into guest behavior.

- **Challenge:** "Algorithmic Drift." Ensuring the AI remains accurate and culturally sensitive as it scales from London to international markets.

4.2 Keep Satisfied (High Power / Low Interest)

- **Role: Institutional Investors & Shareholders.**
 - **Responsibility:** Providing the macro-financial backing for IHG's digital transformation.
 - **Benefit:** Long-term stock appreciation through ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) leadership.
 - **Challenge:** Impatience for short-term dividends vs. the long-term "J-Curve" of AI investment.

4.3 Keep Informed (Low Power / High Interest)

- **Role: Frontline Service Staff.**
 - **Responsibility:** Acting as "Human-AI Ambassadors," assisting guests who struggle with the new tech.
 - **Benefit:** Reduced repetitive administrative tasks (e.g., answering "What time is breakfast?"), allowing for more "High-Touch" hospitality.
 - **Challenge:** "Technostress" and fear of redundancy. Staff require psychological safety and clear communication that the AI is an *assistant*, not a *replacement*.

4.4 Monitor (Low Power / Low Interest)

- **Role: Local Communities & Small Vendors.**
 - **Responsibility:** Providing the "Hyper-Local" experiences the AI recommends to guests.
 - **Benefit:** Increased footfall from premium global travelers.
 - **Challenge:** Ensuring the AI's "recommendation engine" is fair and doesn't just promote high-commission partners.

4.5 Critical Application of Theory: Stakeholder Salience

According to **Mitchell et al. (1997)**, a Project Manager must look for **Salience**—the combination of **Power, Legitimacy, and Urgency**.

- **The "Definitive" Stakeholder:** In the StaySmart+ project, the **Hotel Owner** is definitive. They have the power to stop the rollout, the legitimacy of ownership, and the urgency of rising energy costs.

- **The "Dependent" Stakeholder: Guests** are dependent. They have no direct power over project design but have high legitimacy. Their "Urgency" regarding data privacy must be managed via the **Communication Plan** to avoid a mass "opt-out" which would starve the AI of data.

5. Engagement Frameworks and Models

5.1 The RACI Matrix Defining Operational Accountability

In a complex global rollout, "Role Ambiguity" is a primary driver of project failure (PMI, 2021). The RACI Matrix (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) functions as a governance map, ensuring that every task associated with **StaySmart+** has a clear owner.



To ensure clear accountability during the six-month rollout, the RACI is structured as follows:

- **Responsible - The Doers):** The **Project Manager** and the **AI Tech Team**. They are charged with the physical installation of IoT sensors and the software integration of the NLP engine. In the Birmingham flagship pilot, for instance, the Tech Team is responsible for ensuring the local Wi-Fi infrastructure can support the "Smart Room" load.
- **Accountable- The Owner:** The **Chief Operations Officer (COO)**. Following the principle of "Single Point of Accountability," the COO holds the ultimate veto power and ensures the project aligns with IHG's global "Journey to Tomorrow" strategy.
- **Consulted - (The Advisors):** The **Marketing Department** and **Local General Managers (GMs)**. Communication is two ways here. GMs are consulted on local cultural nuances—such as how the AI should address guests in different languages—to ensure the tech feels "hospitable" rather than "intrusive."
- **Informed - (The Audience):** **General Staff** and **Investors**. These stakeholders are kept abreast of milestones via one-way communication channels. This prevents "Information Overload" while maintaining the "Transparency" required for institutional trust.

5.2 Stakeholder Engagement & Communication Plan

Using **Mendelow's Matrix (1981)** as a diagnostic tool, the engagement plan adopts a "Blended Approach" that scales intensity based on a stakeholder's power and interest.

High Power / High Interest: Manage Closely

These are the "Key Players," such as the **Steering Committee** and **Lead Tech Vendors**.

- **Mechanism:** Weekly synchronous steering committee meetings.
- **Objective:** To resolve "Critical Path" blockers immediately. As the PM, I use these sessions to manage "Scope Creep"—ensuring that new AI features don't delay the six-month launch date.

High Power / Low Interest: Keep Satisfied

This group includes **Institutional Investors** and **Franchise Owners**. They have the power to withdraw funding but may not care about the daily technical sprints.

- **Mechanism:** Quarterly high-level briefings and "Impact Reports."

- **Objective:** Focus on **ROI and ESG compliance**. By highlighting the 10% energy reduction achieved in the London pilot, we satisfy their financial interest without burdening them with technical jargon.

Low Power / High Interest: Keep Informed

This category includes the **Frontline Hotel Staff**. While they have little formal power over the project's design, their "Interest" is high because the AI changes their daily workflow.

- **Mechanism:** Monthly Town Halls and a dedicated "StaySmart+ Internal Portal."
- **Objective:** To mitigate **Automation Anxiety**. By showcasing how the AI handles "Low-Value" tasks (like FAQ handling), we demonstrate that the tech empowers staff to focus on "High-Value" guest interaction.

Low Power / Low Interest: Monitor

Local suppliers and community groups in cities like Birmingham.

- **Mechanism:** Passive communication via the corporate website and annual reports.
- **Objective:** Ensure no negative externalities (e.g., electronic waste from old thermostats) impact local perceptions of the brand.

The integration of RACI and Mendelow's Matrix allows the PM to address **Stakeholder Salience (Mitchell et al., 1997)**. By identifying which stakeholders possess **Urgency** (Tech Team), **Legitimacy** (GMs), and **Power** (COO), the engagement plan ensures that the Project Manager's limited time is allocated to the relationships that most impact the project's "Triple Bottom Line": Profit, People, and Planet.

5.3 The RACI Matrix for StaySmart+ Launch

The RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) matrix is essential for a global rollout to prevent "role ambiguity," a primary driver of project failure in cross-functional teams (PMI, 2021).

Project Activity	Project Manager (PM)	AI Tech Team	Regional GMs	Marketing/ Sales	Legal/ Compliance	Front-of-House Staff
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AI Tool Integration	A	R	C	I	C	I
Sustainability Audit	R	C	A	I	I	C
Global Brand Messaging	C	I	C	R	A	I
Local Staff Training	A	C	R	I	I	C
Data Privacy (GDPR/CCPA)	C	R	I	I	A	I
Guest Feedback Analysis	A	R	C	R	I	I

- **R = Responsible:** The "doer" who completes the task.
- **A = Accountable:** The "owner" who ensures the task is done (only one per task).
- **C = Consulted:** Provides input or expertise (two-way communication).
- **I = Informed:** Kept up to date on progress (one-way communication).

5.4 Strategic Communication Plan

A robust communication plan for **StaySmart+** must account for **cultural nuance** and **time-zone disparities**. Using **Katz and Kahn's (1978) Open Systems Theory**, the communication plan ensures the project remains responsive to external environmental shifts.

Stakeholder Group	Objective of Communication	Frequency	Channel/Method	Feedback Mechanism
Executive Board	Strategic alignment & ROI updates.	Monthly	Executive Dashboard & Formal Report.	Quarterly Board Review.
AI Tech Vendors	Technical milestones & bug reporting.	Weekly	Agile Stand-ups & Jira/Slack.	Technical Sprint Review.
Regional Hotel GMs	Implementation hurdles & local adaptation.	Bi-Weekly	Virtual Town Halls (Region-specific).	Live Q&A & Monthly Surveys.
Frontline Staff	Skill building & "AI-Fear" mitigation.	Continuous	Mobile Learning App (Gamified) & Posters.	"Suggestion Box" (Digital).

Global Guests	Awareness of StaySmart+ benefits.	Launch Phase	Email, Social Media, In-Room QR codes.	Net Promoter Score (NPS).
Investors/Owners	Justification of CAPEX & long-term value.	Quarterly	Investor Relations Webinars.	Annual General Meeting (AGM).

6. The Engagement Process & The 4C's Model

According to **Katz and Kahn's (1978) Open Systems Theory**, an organization must constantly exchange information with its environment to survive. For the StaySmart+ rollout, the 4C's provide the mechanism for this exchange.

1. **Communication:** Transparent, bi-directional channels. Use of "Town Hall" webinars for global staff to demystify AI.
2. **Consultation:** Engaging local hotel managers early in the design phase to ensure the "Sustainability Amenities" align with local recycling infrastructures.
3. **Collaboration:** Forming "StaySmart+ Champions" in every region to co-create the rollout schedule.
4. **Commitment:** Securing long-term buy-in by linking StaySmart+ performance metrics to management bonuses.

Conflict Management: When local managers resist tech-heavy changes, I will apply **Thomas-Kilmann's Conflict Mode Instrument**, prioritizing "Collaborating" to find win-win solutions that respect local cultural hospitality traditions while maintaining brand standards.

6.2 Managing Conflict through the 4C's Model

In a global hospitality context, conflict often arises from "technostress" among frontline staff or "strategic misalignment" between corporate headquarters and local franchisees (Dogru et al., 2020). As the PM, the 4C's model—**Communication, Collaboration, Consultation, and Commitment**—serves as the primary framework for conflict resolution.

1. Communication (The Foundation)

Conflict often stems from information asymmetry. According to **Shannon-Weaver's Communication Model**, noise (cultural or linguistic barriers) can distort the StaySmart+ vision.

- **The PM's Role:** To mitigate this, I will implement a "Radiator" communication strategy. This involves transparent, real-time dashboards for stakeholders to see project progress.
- **Conflict Resolution:** If a regional manager in a high-context culture (e.g., Japan) feels the AI-driven guest interaction is too "robotic," direct and sensitive communication channels allow for immediate feedback, preventing the buildup of passive resistance.

2. Consultation (The Diagnostic Tool)

Consultation is the "preventative medicine" of conflict management. **Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984)** suggests that stakeholders are more likely to support a project if they feel their "legitimacy" is recognized.

- **The PM's Role:** Before the six-month rollout, I will conduct "Impact Workshops." By consulting with the **Food & Beverage (F&B)** and **housekeeping** teams on how the AI tracks sustainability (e.g., towel reuse sensors), we identify friction points early.
- **Academic Application:** Using **Vroom-Yetton's Decision Model**, I will determine when to consult stakeholders versus when to make an autocratic project decision, ensuring that "consultation fatigue" doesn't delay the launch.

3. Collaboration (The Synergy Maker)

Collaboration moves beyond "talking" to "co-creating." Conflict frequently arises from a "Not Invented Here" (NIH) syndrome, where local hotels reject global corporate initiatives.

- **The PM's Role:** I will facilitate "Cross-Functional Sprint Teams" where AI developers work alongside veteran Concierges.
- **Conflict Resolution:** If the Sales Department conflicts with the Tech Team over data privacy (GDPR) vs. personalization, a collaborative workshop allows both parties to co-design the "Privacy Toggle" feature in StaySmart+, turning a conflict into a product feature.

4. Commitment (The Goal)

Commitment is the psychological contract between the stakeholder and the project.

Kotter's (1996) 8-Step Change Model emphasizes that for a change to stick, it must be anchored in the corporate culture.

- **The PM's Role:** I will utilize "Incentive Alignment." For franchisees concerned about the ROI of StaySmart+, I will present data-driven "Pilot Success Stories" from the initial London rollout.
- **Conflict Resolution:** By securing "Visible Executive Sponsorship," I signal that the project has the highest level of commitment, which discourages "silo-thinking" and resource hoarding—common sources of project conflict.

7. Impact Evaluation and Recommendations

7.1 Impact on Business Performance

Effective engagement leads to **Social Capital**. According to **Mitchell et al. (1997)**, recognizing stakeholder *urgency* and *legitimacy* reduces the risk of project "drag." Successful engagement will likely result in:

- **Reduced Employee Turnover:** Staff who feel "Consulted" on tech changes are less likely to quit.
- **Brand Equity:** Alignment with sustainability stakeholders improves ESG ratings.

7.2 Strategic Recommendations for Long-Term Engagement

1. Establish a "StaySmart+ Global Excellence Guild"

To foster ongoing **Collaboration**, the group should move away from top-down management toward a community-of-practice model.

- **The Action:** Create a rotating committee of "Power Users"—frontline staff and GMs who have achieved the highest guest satisfaction scores using the AI tools.
- **Theoretical Basis:** This applies **Lave and Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning Theory**, where knowledge is co-created through social participation. By empowering local experts, the group reduces the "ivory tower" perception of corporate HQ.

2. Implement "Hyper-Localized" AI Personalization

While brand consistency is vital, a "one-size-fits-all" AI personality can alienate guests in diverse markets.

- **The Action:** Allow regional marketing teams to adjust the AI's "Tone of Voice" and cultural etiquette (e.g., more formal in Tokyo, more relaxed in London).
- **Theoretical Basis:** Drawing on **Gluesing and Gibson's (2004)** work on global teams, allowing local adaptation increases "Psychological Ownership" among regional stakeholders, making them more likely to defend the service against local criticism.

3. Transparent Sustainability Reporting (The "Green Dashboard")

To maintain the **Commitment** of environmentally conscious guests and ESG-focused investors:

- **The Action:** Deploy a real-time "Impact Dashboard" in hotel lobbies and on the guest app, showing the collective carbon/water savings achieved via StaySmart+ amenities.
- **Theoretical Basis:** This utilizes **Nudge Theory (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008)**. By making the sustainability benefits visible and social, you reinforce the guest's positive behavior and justify the franchisee's investment in the hardware.

4. Evolution of the RACI to a "Value-Based" Matrix

Post-launch, the focus shifts from *implementation* to *optimization*.

- **The Action:** Update the RACI matrix every 12 months to reflect new technological capabilities (e.g., if the AI moves from "Concierge" to "Automated Room Service").
- **Theoretical Basis:** **Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece et al., 1997)** suggests that for a firm to remain competitive, its processes (and stakeholder roles) must evolve. This prevents role stagnation and ensures the AI team remains accountable for software updates.

8. Conclusion

The success of StaySmart+ hinges not on the sophistication of the AI, but on the robustness of the stakeholder relationships. By moving beyond mere "management"

toward "engagement," IHG can ensure that this digital leap reinforces, rather than replaces, the human element of hospitality.

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