

Individual Report

**M&S ConnectPlus: A Strategic Stakeholder Engagement and
Communication Framework for a Digitally Enabled Customer
Loyalty Platform**

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Executive Summary

The report analyses the involvement of the stakeholders in the planned introduction of M&S ConnectPlus, an AI-based customer loyalty and engagement platform that will likely improve customer retention, personalisation and international competitiveness. As the Project Manager, there is the need to identify stakeholders, communicate and collaborate with them to make sure that internal teams, customers, suppliers, regulator and all the technology partners are aligned throughout the project life. The stakeholder theory underlines that value creation to the interdependent stakeholder groups is the key to sustainable project success, rather than a focus on the organisational goals (Ashcroft, 2017; Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 2013). The report has applied the stakeholder models, engagement practices and governance procedures to examine how M&S can effectively implement a global platform.

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1. Introduction of the Company

Marks and Spencer (M&S) is a leading retailer organisation that is located in the United Kingdom, and has branches located in all parts of the world and sells clothing, home products and food. The company has also achieved a good brand reputation due to quality, relationship-based long-term customer relationship and trust and, therefore, management of the company stakeholders has emerged as the key to maintaining the competitive advantage. Relationship-based models suggest that organisations create sustainable value by carrying out proactively the interactions with the customers, employees, suppliers as well as larger communities (Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 2013).

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In this case, I take the role of the Project Manager who will implement M&S ConnectPlus, digitally-enhanced customer loyalty and engagement platform. The platform combines personalised recommendations (which are developed based on the artificial intelligence), mobile rewards and customer insight analytics to enhance customer experience and facilitate data-driven decision-making. Retail digital transformation imposes more and more demands on organisations to achieve a balance between technological change and stakeholder demands in terms of privacy, trust and quality of services (Behera et al., 2024; Kihn and Lin, 2024).

Implementation of the successful application of ConnectPlus involves coordinated interaction of heterogeneous groups of stakeholders, such as the top management, IT experts, marketing, employees, customers, technology vendors and governmental agencies. Through stakeholder analysis project managers are able to know the influence of the stakeholders, their interests and possible opposition in advance prior to undertaking significant organisation change (Gandhi, 2026; Sharma, 2026). Thus, this report assesses the way M&S can strategically involve stakeholders during the six months roll out process and meet the purpose of the project, reduce conflicts and provide sustainable business performance.

2. SMART Objectives

Well-defined SMART objectives are used to control M&S ConnectPlus implementation and ensure stakeholders' groups see tangible and time bound outcomes:

- **Specific:** Roll out the AI-powered ConnectPlus platform in three potential first markets (UK, Ireland and Germany) to enhance personalised customer interactions and engagement, and consequently, customer loyalty.
- **Measurable:** Achieve:
 - 30% customer adoption rate within six months
 - 20% increase in repeat purchase behaviour (baseline: previous 12-month average)
 - 90% employee training completion rate
 - 85% stakeholder satisfaction score (via post-engagement surveys)
 - Full regulatory compliance approval prior to launch
- **Achievable:** Cross functional working (IT, marketing, operations and external vendors) will be required and budgets, training programme and progressive roll out will be agreed.
- **Relevant:** Objectives can be linked to the strategic emphasis of the digital transformation, customer-centric innovation and the use of data in decision-making, which is the strategic focus of M&S.
- **Time-Bound:** All goals will also be achieved within a six-month rollout schedule and progress will be reviewed monthly.

SMART Objective Framework for M&S ConnectPlus Implementation

SMART Element	Project Objective
Specific	Launch AI-enabled ConnectPlus loyalty platform across selected markets
Measurable	Monitor adoption rates, customer engagement levels and stakeholder satisfaction
Achievable	Use cross-functional teams, technology partners and structured communication plans
Relevant	Strengthen customer loyalty, operational efficiency and competitive positioning
Time-bound	Complete implementation within six months

Figure 1: SMART Objective Framework for M&S ConnectPlus Implementation
(Source: Gandhi, 2026; Sharma, 2026).

3. Identification and Categorisation of Key Stakeholders for M&S ConnectPlus Project

The Stakeholder Salience Model is used with the Power-Interest Matrix to rank stakeholders in terms of their power, legitimacy and urgency. This allows M&S to distribute resources in engagement better and be strategic in stakeholder expectations.

The definitive stakeholders, such as the senior management and regulatory authorities, have all three attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency and thus need constant and top-level involvement. The success of the project depends on them since they have the influence on making and adhering to decisions.

Power and legitimate stakeholders, such as IT teams and technology partners, have a lot of power and legitimacy on the basis of their technical expertise and operational roles. The collaboration, communication and good governance of these stakeholders must be proactive to ensure a project is delivered.

Stakeholders, including customers and employees, are legitimate, urgent and have little formal power. However, their tolerance and engagement with the platform is required to be successful in the long run and adopt the platform. Therefore, it is crucial they be consulted, have feedback and support programmes.

The discretionary stakeholders include the broader community and indirect partners, and have less power and urgency but have legitimate. To continue to have organisational reputation and social responsibility, these stakeholders need to be monitored and engaged periodically.

The use of Stakeholder Salience Model enhances the stakeholder analysis, by making the analysis more dynamic and realistic, i.e. the stakeholder influence, which allows M&S to focus the engagement strategies, and reduce the possible conflicts during the implementation of the ConnectPlus.

M&S ConnectPlus Stakeholder Power-Interest Matrix

Stakeholder Group	Category	Power Level	Interest Level	Engagement Approach
M&S Board and Senior Executives	Internal	High	High	Manage closely through strategic reviews
IT and Product Development Team	Internal	High	High	Continuous collaboration and technical meetings
Marketing and Customer Experience Teams	Internal	Medium-High	High	Joint planning and feedback sessions
Store Employees and Customer Service Teams	Internal	Medium	High	Training and communication programmes
Customers	External	Medium	High	Consultation, surveys and digital feedback
Technology and AI Providers	External	High	Medium-High	Partnership management and performance monitoring
Suppliers and Business Partners	External	Medium	Medium	Regular coordination and information sharing
Regulators and Data Protection Authorities	External	High	Medium	Compliance reporting and consultation
Competitors and Industry Bodies	External	Low-Medium	Medium	Market monitoring and benchmarking

Figure 2: M&S ConnectPlus Stakeholder Power-Interest Matrix

(Source: Sarungu, 2024; Sharma, 2026)

To reinforce stakeholder prioritisation, the Stakeholder Salience Model is formally applied based on power, legitimacy, and urgency.

Stakeholder	Power	Legitimacy	Urgency	Category	Engagement Strategy
Senior Management	High	High	High	Definitive	Manage closely, continuous involvement
Regulators	High	High	High	Definitive	Ensure compliance, frequent reporting
IT & Tech Partners	High	High	Medium	Dominant	Collaborative engagement
Employees	Low	High	High	Dependent	Training, consultation, support
Customers	Low	High	High	Dependent	Feedback loops, co-creation
Suppliers	Medium	Medium	Medium	Expectant	Regular coordination
Community	Low	High	Low	Discretionary	Monitor and inform

The internal stakeholders include groups of people directly involved in the design, implementation and management of the program, ConnectPlus. The IT department and the product development team are of utmost importance as they are responsible for integrating the system, implementing AI features, and ensuring cybersecurity. Their efficiency in terms of technical competencies directly influences the chances of reliability of the platforms, trust and performance of the

customer (Gebauer et al., 2023). Close contact is necessary with these stakeholders since system failures or delays or lack of system integration may have a negative impact on customer experience and project credibility.

The marketing team and customer experience team will ensure that the features of the platform align with the expectations of the customers and in line with the M&S brand values. They do more than merely promote since they convert the customer insights into valuable digital experiences. The process of digital transformation should involve the cooperation of both marketing experts and technical teams, because the design element is as well important as the technical skills of digital transformation as it puts the customer in the center of digital transformation (Moorthy and Parvatiyar, 2023).

Employees particularly those working in the stores and serving customers are significant as they have direct interaction with customers and hence affect the level of adoption by customers. The resistance can be minimized by effective employee involvement and, consequently, it enhances the acceptance of digital transformation initiatives (Sagar, 2024). The senior management is a top priority stakeholder since they offer strategic guidance coupled with financial resources alongside decision-making power over the lifecycle of the project (Gandhi, 2026). Their dedication is also indicative of organisational significance and promotes a broader employee involvement. The external stakeholders also play an important role to the success of the project. The primary stakeholders emphasized are customers since their uptake influences the success of the adoption of the enhanced loyalty and engagement results of the use of the product, ConnectPlus. There should then be a reaction by the digital platforms with regard to the customer expectations of personalisation, convenience and ethical use of data (Kihn and Lin, 2024). The customer engagement via testing, survey and feedback platforms enable M&S to enhance the functionality of the platforms prior to their production in large scale.

Technology partners provide professional AI services, but require absolute control to ensure the quality of services, cyber security and quality system operations. These partners can be useful in providing innovation, but can become problematic in operations if they become too dependent without having service agreements and accountability mechanisms that are clear. Suppliers and business partners are also likely to affect implementation since aligned data sharing and coordinated operation is needed in order to achieve the same customer experiences.

Highly legitimate stakeholders are regulatory bodies since M&S will have to adhere to international data protection and digital consumer regulations. Balancing commercial objectives with ethical responsibilities and obligations is the key to sustainable stakeholder engagement in the context of creating a customer analytics and artificial intelligence (Moorthy and Parvatiyar,

2023). Therefore, the stakeholder mapping enables M&S to prioritise activities to engage with others, predict potential conflict and build cooperative relationships that would benefit to the global implementation.

The general categorization of stakeholders assists M&S to have a strategic perspective on who will be involved, how and what value will they add. The balanced strategy will make sure that strong stakeholders get due attention as other less influential groups like customers and workers are also fully engaged in the development of the ConnectPlus platform. This helps in efficient management of projects in sustainable manner and increases project adoption in international markets.

4. Roles, Responsibilities, Benefits and Challenges of Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder management entails the articulation of the roles of the stakeholder, the contributions he or she should make besides the possible challenges he or she might have in executing the project. The different value types that are provided by the stakeholders include customer knowledge and operational support, strategic direction and technical expertise. Nevertheless, their presence can be problematic as well when it does not manage to balance expectations, communication processes and priorities (Ashcroft, 2017).

Table 2: Key Stakeholder Roles, Benefits and Challenges in M&S ConnectPlus Implementation

Stakeholder	Key Responsibilities	Benefits Provided	Potential Challenges
Board of Directors and Senior Management	Provide strategic approval, allocate resources and monitor project outcomes	Ensures leadership support, investment commitment and alignment with M&S strategy	Conflicting priorities, budget concerns and pressure for immediate returns
IT and Product Development Team	Develop platform architecture, integrate AI systems and ensure cybersecurity	Provides technical capability, innovation and reliable digital infrastructure	System complexity, cybersecurity risks and integration difficulties
Marketing and Customer	Design customer communication, loyalty	Improves customer awareness,	Difficulty predicting customer behaviour and

Experience Teams	strategies and adoption campaigns	engagement and brand differentiation	managing changing expectations
Store Employees and Customer Service Teams	Support customer adoption, provide feedback and assist users	Enhances service quality and reduces resistance to digital change	Lack of digital skills, training requirements and employee resistance
Customers	Use the platform, provide feedback and share behavioural data	Generates customer insights, improves loyalty and supports personalisation	Privacy concerns, low adoption and distrust of AI recommendations
Technology Partners	Provide AI solutions, software support and technical expertise	Accelerates innovation and improves platform functionality	Dependency risks, service failures and data governance issues

(Source: Gandhi, 2026; Sharma, 2026; Gebauer et al., 2023)

The strategic alignment and ongoing decision-making makes the governance role of the senior management critical since success of the project is pegged on these two issues. Their support offers legitimacy and supports effective allocation of resources. However, the management may have a problem of weighing the expenses and digital investments against uncertain gains in the long-run (Gandhi, 2026).

IT and product development teams will deal with the development of the idea of the ConnectPlus into the working digital solution. They offer technical expertise, AI expertise and systems security expertise. However, intricate technology integration and cybersecurity dangers can pose threats to timelines of implementation unless managed efficiently (Behera et al., 2024).

Marketing teams help provide insights to customers and create communication plans to promote the use of the platform. They are engaged to enable M&S to build on customer relationships and develop personalised experiences. However, they may also have a problem with catering to the needs of different customers in the international markets (Gallery, 2024).

Employees are a critical group of operational stakeholders as they have a direct impact on customer experiences. Acceptance of digital transformation can be enhanced through training and inclusion and might cause resistance and a low success rate in implementation due to lack of proper preparation (Sagar, 2024). Customers offer useful behavioural information that makes it possible to make personalised recommendations and enhance loyalty. However, the issue of

privacy, transparency and ethical use of AI can reduce the level of trust without addressing this aspect (Kihn and Lin, 2024).

Technology partners introduce professional knowledge and accelerate the innovation process, still, high-level governance should be maintained in M&S not to become dependent and ensure that everyone adheres to the established rules. In this way, mapping the benefits and concerns of the stakeholders can help M&S to develop balanced approach to engagement that will allow the company to achieve sustainable outcomes of the project (Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 2013).

5. Stakeholder Engagement Process and Conflict Management Approach for M&S ConnectPlus

The stakeholder engagement process related to the M&S ConnectPlus as Project Manager will imply developing the process of the constant communication, collaboration and commitment during the six months of the implementation. Stakeholder engagement should not just stop at the information sharing but at establishing long term relationships that are founded on trust, mutual value and shared objectives (Ashcroft, 2017). In this regard, M&S will embark on a systematic engagement approach combining the stakeholder scrutiny, communication planning, RACI governance, and 4C engagement model.

5.1 Stakeholder Engagement Process Using Engagement Frameworks

The first stage of stakeholder engagement will be the stakeholder analysis and prioritisation of the Power-Interest Matrix and Stakeholder Salience Model. This will assist the company to determine the stakeholders according to their impact, legitimacy and urgency such that M&S will know the appropriate level of engagement (Sarungu, 2024; Shafique and Gabriel, 2022). Constant contact will be availed to the high-power and high-interest stakeholders, such as the top executives, the IT teams and technology partners through project meetings and strategic reviews. The medium-power players like employees and the marketing teams will be attending workshops, training sessions and feedbacks. Customers will not have as much direct project control but will be ranked first as they will be the gauge of commercial success of platform. The online feedback systems, beta testing will assist in making sure that the users are happy with the use of ConnectPlus (Moorthy and Parvatiyar, 2023).

Table 3: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Stakeholder	Current Engagement	Desired Engagement	Objective	Strategy/ Action	Owner	Frequency	KPI	Risk
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Senior Management	Supportive	Leading	Strategic alignment	Executive reviews, dashboards	Project Manager	Monthly	Approval rate	Budget conflict
IT Team	Neutral	Leading	System delivery	Agile sprints, technical reviews	IT Lead	Weekly	System uptime	Integration delays
Employees	Neutral	Supportive	Adoption	Training, workshops	HR Manager	Monthly	Training completion %	Resistance
Customers	Unaware	Supportive	Adoption & trust	Beta testing, surveys	Marketing Lead	Continuous	Adoption rate	Privacy concerns
Regulators	Neutral	Supportive	Compliance	Reporting, audits	Compliance Officer	Monthly	Approval status	Legal risk
Tech Partners	Supportive	Leading	Innovation	SLAs, coordination meetings	IT Lead	Monthly	Performance metrics	Dependency

M&S ConnectPlus Stakeholder Engagement Priority Model

Stakeholder Category	Engagement Level	Main Engagement Activities
Manage Closely	High	Board meetings, project reviews, decision-making sessions
Keep Satisfied	Medium-High	Progress reports, compliance updates, partnership meetings
Keep Informed	Medium	Training, newsletters, workshops and feedback sessions
Monitor	Low	Market analysis and competitor monitoring

Figure 3: M&S ConnectPlus Stakeholder Engagement Priority Model

(Source: Sharma, 2026; Sarungu, 2024)

The engagement process will also take place with the assistance of the RACI Matrix to establish accountability. The matrix determines the responsibility of each individual, accountability, consultations and information of the project throughout the project activities. This will reduce

confusion, improve coordination and make all the stakeholders understand their contribution in making it a successful implementation (Gandhi, 2026).

Table 4: RACI Matrix for M&S ConnectPlus Project

Project Activity	Board	IT Team	Marketing	Employees	Customers	Technology Partners
Strategy Planning	A	C	C	I	I	Strategy Planning
System Development	C	R	I	I	I	System Development
Customer Testing	A	C	R	C	I	Customer Testing
Launch Campaign	A	I	R	C	I	Launch Campaign

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

(Source: Gandhi, 2026)

5.2 Applying the 4C Model: Communication, Collaboration, Consultation and Commitment

The 4C model offers an empirical model of creating stakeholder relationships. The first is the communication where there should be open and frequent sharing of information. To report progress, risks and changes to stakeholders, M&S will develop monthly reports, digital dashboards and project meetings. Clear communication in intricate digital projects can be used to reduce uncertainty and can enhance stakeholder trust (Possoli, 2025).

Collaboration is concerned with building common ownership amongst departments and other partners. The sharing of knowledge and problem solving will be encouraged in cross-functional teams consisting of IT, marketing, operations and customer service personnel. Particularly, collaborative methods are imperative because the digital transformation requires the combination of technological resources and human skills (Behera et al., 2024).

Consultation is useful in making sure that the perspectives of the concerned are put into consideration in project decisions. M&S will conduct employee workshops, customer survey, and partner discussion, before coming up with major implementation decisions. This is a better way to ensure acceptance as stakeholders feel involved and not just given an organisational decision (Jun and Kim, 2021).

The last step is commitment where commitments of stakeholders are directed towards project objectives. M&S will strengthen commitment by conducting training programmes, leadership

support, and rewarding stakeholder efforts. Sustainable engagement entails long-term relationship sustainability, rather than a project participant throughout the duration of the project (Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne 2013).

5.3 Conflict Management Strategies

The stakeholder engagement is a value creating activity, however, various priorities and expectations of the stakeholders may create conflicts. An example is that customers may desire even greater personalisation, whilst regulators may demand a high level of data security. Similarly, IT teams may be more interested in technical security, whereas marketing teams may be greater interests in accelerating the platform rollout (Kihn and Lin, 2024).

M&S will adopt a proactive conflict management approach which is grounded on timely identification, negotiation and involvement of stakeholders. Risk meetings will be done regularly by project teams in order to make sure no conflicts within the team have an influence on implementation. The project manager will use negotiation skills that will not be premised on the individual positions of the stakeholders but rather on the mutual goals.

The SWANS and OWANS approach will also be used to help know stakeholders that may favor or object to project decisions, which will assist in addressing conflicts. The supportive but non-active stakeholders will undergo encouragement to be involved and the resistant stakeholders will be contacted and consulted more to discuss their interests (Sharma, 2026).

Conflict Management Process for M&S ConnectPlus

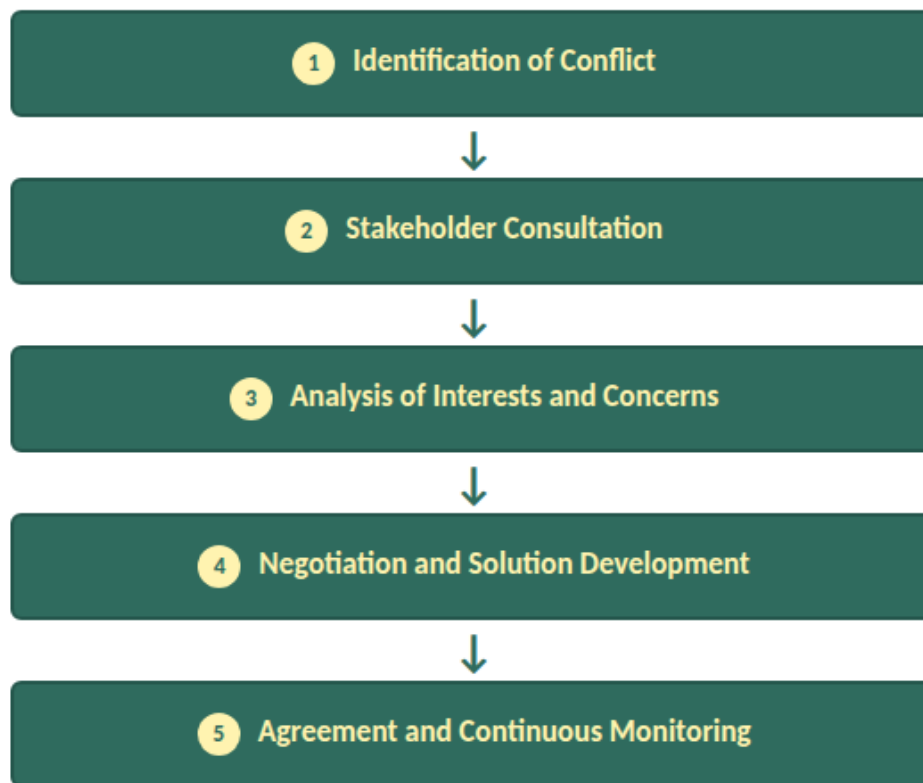


Figure 4: Conflict Management Process for M&S ConnectPlus

(Source: Sharma, 2026; Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 2013)

There are certain challenges concerning AI in terms of ethics and customer data. M&S must be open in terms of gathering, analysing and utilisation of customer information. Engaging in digital responsibly can build trust and avoid damage to one's reputation due to privacy issues (Ali, 2024).

5.4 Evaluation of Engagement Effectiveness

The stakeholder engagement will be measured on a balanced system that will quantify it through quantitative and qualitative measures. KPIs include the rate of customer adoption, rate of employee training, customer contentment rates, and system efficiency rates.

Nonetheless, the use of quantitative indicators only is problematic. These adoption rates do not necessarily imply that the people have developed trust in the platform since there is a possibility that the user may be using the platform yet have some doubts regarding the privacy of his data. Similarly, surveys whose responses are influenced by bias can be deemed as low reliability due to the presence of bias in the surveys.

The engagement activities also introduce the costs of operation including trainings costs, the cost of communication and wastage of time due to time-consuming consultation procedures. Excessive engagement of the stakeholders may equally cause exhaustion of the consultations and loss of quality engagement in the long run.

A hybrid evaluation approach will therefore be evaluated, which entails application of dashboard analytics, and qualitative data including interviews, focus groups, and stakeholder examination meetings. This will ensure long-term improvement on a sustainable efficiency, cost and stakeholder expectation.

5.5 Communication Plan for M&S ConnectPlus

In order to ensure that the stakeholders are transparent, coordinated and trusted in the implementation of the project of the Connect Plus a structured communication strategy is required.

Stakeholder Group	Communication Method	Frequency	Purpose
Senior Management	Strategic meetings, reports	Monthly	Review progress, approve decisions
IT & Product Teams	Agile meetings, dashboards	Weekly	Track development and resolve issues
Marketing Team	Workshops, campaign briefings	Bi-weekly	Align promotional strategies
Employees	Training sessions, internal newsletters	Monthly	Build skills and reduce resistance
Customers	App notifications, surveys, emails	Continuous	Gather feedback and increase adoption
Technology Partners	Review meetings, service reports	Monthly	Ensure performance and compliance
Regulators	Compliance reports	As required	Ensure legal and ethical alignment

This communication plan facilitates prompt flow of information, lessens the uncertainty and improves the stakeholder collaboration at all levels of the project.

6. Impact of Sustainable Stakeholder Engagement on M&S Business Performance

Sustainable stakeholder engagement potentially has far reaching effects on the M&S business performance since it may improve relationships, decision making and long term resilience of the organisation. Sustainable engagement involves a continuous communication with stakeholders and not only when implementing the project. The relationship-based stakeholder management assists organisations to create shared value by matching business objectives and stakeholder anticipations (Ashcroft, 2017; Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 2013).

In the case of M&S ConnectPlus, stakeholder engagement has the potential to drive customer loyalty and online uptake. Strategies that use feedback, tailored services and transparent use of data form a major strategy in developing customer trust and engagement. AI-enabled customer engagement is able to increase personalisation based on understanding of customer preference and closer relationship between brands and customers (Behera et al., 2024). However, M&S must ensure that the personalisation will not affect the privacy of the customers, since they will lose the good reputation in the brand stock in case it violates customer privacy.

Sustainable Stakeholder Engagement Impact Framework for M&S ConnectPlus

Stakeholder Engagement Area	Business Impact	Performance Indicator
Customer involvement	Higher loyalty and retention	Customer satisfaction and platform adoption rates
Employee engagement	Improved service quality and digital acceptance	Training completion and employee feedback
Supplier and technology collaboration	Greater innovation and operational efficiency	System reliability and partnership performance
Regulatory engagement	Reduced compliance and reputational risks	Data protection compliance levels
Community and environmental alignment	Stronger corporate reputation	Sustainability reputation measures

Figure 5: Sustainable Stakeholder Engagement Impact Framework for M&S ConnectPlus

(Source: Jun and Kim, 2021; Blak Bernat et al., 2023)

Employee engagement is another important factor contributing to the success of a project. The trained and decision makers involved in areas relating to implementation have a greater likelihood of promoting digital transformation. This aids in reducing resistance and increasing the performance of the new technology in action since employees now become active participants in the process rather than consumer of the new technology (Sagar, 2024). Yet, M&S will have to continuously accommodate workers because with the process of digital transformation, anxiety about shifting work roles and skills demanded may develop.

The capability to innovate is also increased through sustainable stakeholder engagement as they will more efficiently collaborate with technology partners. To design and continuously improve AI systems, there is a need for knowledge sharing between M&S teams and external providers. Strategic partnership with stakeholders helps organizations to respond faster to changes in customer demands and competition (Moorthy and Parvatiyar, 2023). However, data security, supplier reliability and control over risks of digital capabilities are brought by dependence on outside technology associates.

Stakeholder engagement from a strategic level helps with improved risk management and project governance. Timely identification of possible issues will be possible during the communication with the regulators, customers and internal teams. This assists in reduction of implementation failures and facilitates in making responsible decisions along the ConnectPlus lifecycle (Gandhi, 2026). The stakeholder analysis tools also help M&S to be conscious of the changing priorities of the stakeholders and modify engagement activities to suit the circumstances (Sharma, 2026).

Table 5: Expected Business Performance Outcomes from Sustainable Engagement

Performance Dimension	Positive Impact on M&S
Financial performance	Increased customer retention and improved marketing effectiveness
Customer performance	Higher loyalty, satisfaction and personalised experiences
Operational performance	Better coordination and efficient project delivery
Strategic performance	Stronger competitive advantage through digital innovation
Reputation performance	Greater trust and stakeholder confidence

(Source: Shu and Zhang, 2025; Dębski and Szkudlarek, 2026)

Although all these are advantages, what sustainable engagement requires is continuous investment in communication, training and management of stakeholder relationships. The result of low engagement may be conflict, decreased uptake and loss of confidence by the stakeholders on the platform. Therefore, stakeholder engagement is a strategic capability that should be regarded by M&S rather than an activity within the project management.

Sustainable stakeholder engagement can have a positive impact on the business performance of M&S in terms of building better customer relationships, better innovation, lower risk and support for long-term competitiveness. ConnectPlus will be successful not just because of the technology, but because of the transparent, ethical and collaborative relationship that M&S will be able to have with all stakeholder groups.

7. Recommendations and Conclusion

7.1 Recommendations

M&S needs to take a continuous stakeholder governance approach during the project lifecycle of ConnectPlus based on the stakeholder analysis and engagement assessment. Stakeholder expectations, engagement and any new conflicts should be monitored by a dedicated stakeholder management team, through regular reviews. This will assist it in maintaining the relationship with the stakeholders abreast with the changing business and market conditions (Sharma, 2026).

By establishing explicit AI governance processes, M&S should gain the confidence of its customers. Openness of information regarding data gathering, personalized suggestions, and confidentiality will instill confidence in the customers and encourage sensible digital transformation. The value of customer analytics responsible usage cannot be overestimated as trust directly influences loyalty and prolonged brand relations (Kihn and Lin, 2024).

Employee engagement should also be improved through continuous development of digital skills and feedbacks in the organisation. The employees need to be treated as strategic partners in the transformation process as their acceptance will have an impact on the successful technology adoption. Resistance can be minimized and operational performance enhanced through collaborative learning approaches (Sagar, 2024).

7.2 Conclusion

In a nutshell, technology is not enough to make M&S ConnectPlus a success – effective stakeholder engagement is key. The report demonstrates that collaboration and risk reduction of projects can be achieved through the application of stakeholder mapping, RACI governance, communication planning, and relationship-based approaches. Sustainable stakeholder engagement creates shared value in the form of customer loyalty, employee commitment and resiliency of the organisation (Ashcroft, 2017; Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 2013).

Although the implementation may be challenged by some issues such as data privacy issues, stakeholder conflicts and reliance on technology, the previously mentioned threats can be addressed through proactive engagement strategies. Hence, M&S needs to further build its transparent, inclusive and sustainable stakeholder relationships to ensure ConnectPlus can continue to provide long-term business value and competitive advantage.

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