A Mini Case Study
Managing your Stakeholders

Sarah is leading a project to implement an online benefits management portal to enable employees to have a "one stop" location to view their health and dental benefits, get answers to benefits-related questions, and enable for changes to be made to health benefit coverage.

The requirements were gathered over a two week time period at the start of the project. The project is near completion – the portal has been developed by the IT/Application Development group. It has been tested and will be rolled out early next week. Sarah was approached by a member of the senior leadership team who suggests that it would be of value to add in a component so that employees can also manage their 401Ks.

Sarah have had such an experience with this senior leadership team stakeholder in the past. Specifically, he has asked for additional scope for projects at the last minute and has been insistent about getting his requirements included, regardless of the cost. In nearly each situation, the project has not been successful and Sarah has had to answer to the fact that the project was not successful.

- How could Sarah manage this stakeholder?
- How should Sarah avoid this situation in the future?

Sarah needs to have a one-on-one conversation with this stakeholder. She should, first, acknowledge that the idea is a great one! However, she needs to be clear about the potential risks of trying to add in this feature now, including:

- The cost of trying to add the feature in now including around:
  - IT/App Dev resources (who have likely been deployed to other projects)
  - Testing the application again to ensure nothing gets "broken" in adding more functionality
- The delay that will be incurred because the application will not be able to be launched on time
- The risks to use of the application if it is launched without testing once a new feature is added

She also needs to ensure that she provides options to this individual. Options include:

- Adding a link to the current application to take users to the 401K site
- Adding full functionality (401K feature) in a Phase 2 of the project

The phase 2 can start immediately upon release of Phase 1 if she can secure resources and funding to move forward. Sarah should be prepared to discuss the potential costs of a Phase 2 project.

- How should Sarah avoid this situation in the future?

Since this stakeholder always has new requirements late in the project, Sarah may want to spend more time with him upfront gathering requirements. This might be done one-on-one. She may also choose to check in with him once the requirements document is about to be finalized to ask for his input as to whether anything may have been missed.

By engaging the stakeholder earlier on and more frequently, Sarah may avoid such situations on future projects.

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