

Original Article

Stakeholder Engagement Level for Project Success: A Case Study of the Embedded Team at PT XYZ

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Abstract: This study examines the Stakeholder Engagement Level (SEL) and its contribution to project success within the Embedded Team of PT XYZ Fintech, a rapidly growing financial-technology company in Indonesia. The research focuses on understanding how collaboration, communication, and decision ownership among internal stakeholders influence the effectiveness of the partner onboarding process. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach supported by quantitative scoring, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to Sales Partnership, Sales Administration, and Credit Review Analyst teams. Root-cause analysis was conducted using a Fishbone Diagram to identify bottlenecks across four dimensions: Communication, People, Tools, and Process. The study found that the absence of standardized Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and overlapping responsibilities were the main causes of inefficiency. As a solution, the research proposes implementing a cross-functional SOP integrated with Project Management Software (PMS) specifically JIRA to improve transparency, coordination, and accountability. The proposed framework enhances stakeholder engagement and strengthens project delivery performance, providing a scalable model for digital transformation initiatives in fintech organizations.

Keywords: Stakeholder Engagement, Project Management Software, Digital Transformation, Fintech, Fishbone Analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become a strategic imperative for fintech companies, requiring efficient project execution and seamless coordination among stakeholders. PT XYZ Fintech established the Embedded Team in 2023 to expand its B2B ecosystem through partnerships with corporate clients. Unlike PT XYZ's traditional microfinance model that targets rural entrepreneurs, the Embedded Team integrates the company's financing platform directly into partners' digital ecosystems.

Despite strong growth, the team faces challenges in the partner-onboarding process. Delays, redundant approvals, and limited cross-functional visibility have hindered operational efficiency and slowed financing disbursements. These issues reveal a deeper organizational problem insufficient stakeholder engagement and unclear process accountability. This study aims to assess the level of stakeholder engagement (SEL) in the onboarding process, identify the root causes of inefficiency, and propose a structured solution leveraging Project Management Software (PMS). The research contributes to both theory and practice by demonstrating how stakeholder-engagement metrics can guide digital-project optimization in fintech environments.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A) Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, first conceptualized by Freeman (1984), posits that organizations must consider the interests and influences of all parties affected by their actions, not just shareholders. In project management, stakeholders are defined as individuals or groups who can affect or be affected by the project's objectives and outcomes. Effective stakeholder engagement ensures alignment of goals, resource allocation, and communication, which directly contribute to project success. Research Aaltonen et al., (2024) demonstrated that project performance in technology-driven organizations is significantly enhanced when stakeholder relationships are well-managed and decision-making processes are inclusive.

Within PT XYZ Fintech's context, multiple stakeholder groups Sales, Operations, Credit, and Technology interact throughout the onboarding process. Ensuring clear role definition and engagement is crucial, especially when projects involve cross-functional collaboration. The complexity of inter-departmental coordination in fintech companies reinforces the relevance of stakeholder management as a determinant of operational success.

B) Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a behavioural lens to understand why stakeholders choose to participate or disengage in project activities. Prebanić & Vukomanović (2023) describe social exchange as a process where individuals weigh the perceived rewards and costs of their interactions. In the context of project management, engagement levels tend to increase when stakeholders perceive mutual benefit, recognition, and trust. Fobbe et al. (2024) applied this theory to project teams and



found that participative leadership styles foster higher engagement and initiative-taking among team members.

In the Embedded Team of PT XYZ Fintech, this translates into the need for transparent communication, acknowledgment of contributions, and decision-making inclusion. When stakeholders feel excluded or undervalued, their participation becomes minimal or reactive, leading to inefficiencies. Conversely, when they experience psychological ownership and see tangible project impacts, engagement tends to rise significantly.

C) Stakeholder Engagement Level (SEL) Model

To quantify engagement, this study adopts the Stakeholder Engagement Level (SEL) framework derived from the Project Management Institute (PMI) PMBOK 7th Edition (2021). The model operationalizes engagement across three measurable dimensions:

- Frequency of Participation (FP): how often stakeholders are actively involved in project activities, meetings, or decision forums.
- Quality of Contribution (QC): the perceived value and relevance of inputs provided by stakeholders during project execution.
- Decision Ownership (DO): the degree to which stakeholders feel responsible for or empowered to make project-related decisions.

These variables are aggregated into a weighted composite score using the following equation:

$$SEL = w1.(FP) + w2.(QC) + w3.(DO)$$

Each stakeholder's SEL score is then categorized into engagement levels Unaware, Resistant, Neutral, Supportive, or Leading based on scoring intervals from 0 to 100. This quantitative framework allows for the empirical assessment of engagement patterns and their relationship to project outcomes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study applies a single-case study approach, focusing on the Embedded Team at PT XYZ Fintech as the unit of analysis. The design allows for an in-depth understanding of real implementation challenges, organizational dynamics, and stakeholder collaboration during digital transformation initiatives. According to Ferrarez et al. (2023), single-case studies are suitable when investigating complex socio-technical systems where quantitative data alone cannot capture process-level insights.

A) Research Design

The project adopts a mixed qualitative–quantitative descriptive design. The qualitative component explores behavioral and organizational aspects of stakeholder engagement, while the quantitative part translates perceptions into measurable indicators using the Stakeholder Engagement Level (SEL) model.

The research process followed six key stages:

- Problem Identification: Observation and document review identified onboarding inefficiencies and low engagement levels.
- Root Cause Analysis: Application of Fishbone Diagram to classify causal factors across four dimensions: People, Process, Tools, and Communication.
- Questionnaire Development: A structured Likert-scale survey was designed to assess stakeholder participation, contribution quality, and decision ownership.
- Data Collection: Surveys distributed to internal divisions directly involved in partner onboarding: Sales Partnership, Sales Administration, and Credit Review Analyst.
- Quantitative Analysis: Weighted scoring used to calculate SEL values for each group of respondents.
- Solution Formulation: Integration of findings into a proposed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) supported by Project Management Software (PMS) for sustainable process improvement.

B) Data Collection & Respondents

Primary data were collected through self-administered questionnaires and follow-up discussions. Respondents included 15 members of the Embedded Team, representing functional roles across the onboarding process: 2 from Sales Partnership, 2 from Sales Administration, and 2 from Credit Review Analyst. The demographic diversity ensured a comprehensive perspective on the coordination challenges between business and operational units.

Secondary data included internal SOPs, PMS (JIRA) activity logs, and onboarding project reports from Q3 2023 to Q1 2024. The combination of primary and secondary data.

C) Structure

a. Fishbone Diagram

The Fishbone (Ishikawa) analysis was conducted to identify potential root causes of the prolonged onboarding cycle. Each category People, Process, Tools, and Communication was examined through both qualitative responses and project documentation.

- People: Lack of standardized training, unclear task ownership, and inconsistent communication frequency.
- Process: Missing timeline standards and overlapping accountability among departments.
- Tools: Limited utilization of PMS features, such as task linking and reporting dashboards.
- Communication: Informal coordination, lack of structured project reporting.

The results were summarized visually in Figure 1:

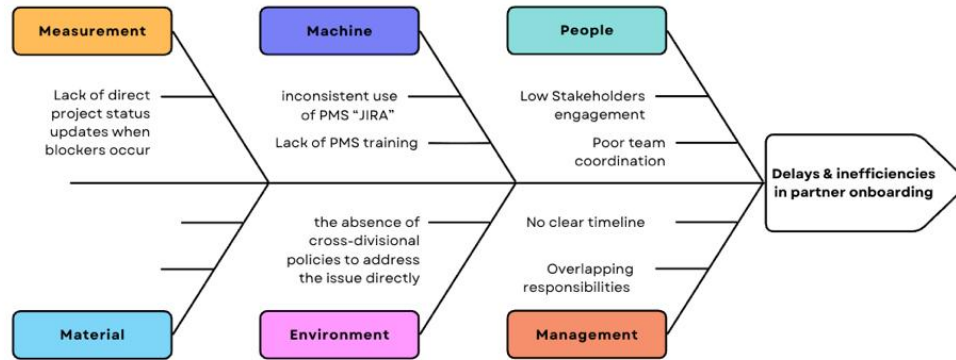


Figure 1. Fishbone Analysis

b. Solution Validation Approach

After identifying the key problem areas through the Fishbone Analysis, the next stage involved validating the proposed solution to ensure its feasibility, alignment with organizational needs, and practicality of implementation. Validation was conducted through a simplified internal review process involving the project supervisors, functional team leads, and several representatives from the Sales Partnership, Sales Administration, and Credit Review divisions.

The validation was performed through structured internal evaluations and document-based feedback sessions. Each stakeholder group reviewed the draft of the proposed solution namely the design of a cross-functional Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) integrated with Project Management Software (JIRA) and assessed it using three qualitative criteria:

- Feasibility: The extent to which the proposed workflow and role distribution could be realistically applied in day-to-day operations.
- Relevance: The degree of alignment between the proposed improvements and the actual bottlenecks identified in onboarding activities.
- Sustainability: The potential for the proposed system to be maintained and scaled over time without increasing workload complexity.

Feedback was collected through asynchronous review sessions, follow-up clarifications, and iterative refinements to the SOP document. This pragmatic approach ensured that the solution was validated directly by the end users, promoting higher acceptance and minimizing resistance during implementation.

The final output of this validation stage was a revised SOP template embedded into the JIRA PMS workflow, complete with defined timelines, approval checkpoints, and responsibility mapping based on the RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed) model. This validated solution was then approved for pilot application within the Embedded Team to assess its initial impact on process efficiency and stakeholder engagement levels.

c. Stakeholder Engagement Level (SEL) Model

To quantitatively assess stakeholder engagement, the SEL model was adapted from the Project Management Institute's PMBOK (7th Edition). The formula used was:

$$SEL = w1.(FP) + w2.(QC) + w3.(DO)$$

Where FP = Frequency of Participation, QC = Quality of Contribution, and DO = Decision Ownership. Weights (w_1 , w_2 , w_3) were normalized to reflect the importance assigned by PT XYZ Fintech's project governance committee. The data were analysed to determine engagement categories across five levels Unaware, Resistant, Neutral, Supportive, and Leading as summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: SEL Scoring

Range (Score)	Engagement Level	Intpretation
0-20	Unaware	No participation or knowledge of project scope
21-40	Resistant	Aware but opposing objectives or changes
41-60	Neutral	Passive participation without contribution
61-80	Supportive	Active contribution with moderate ownership
81-100	Leading	High participation, proactive decision ownership

D) Results and Discussion

a. Rootcause Analysis Outcomes

The Fishbone analysis revealed that Process-related issues were the dominant cause of inefficiency. The absence of an integrated SOP created role confusion, redundant task handovers, and inconsistent expectations between teams. For example, Sales Partnership initiated partner assessment without a clearly defined submission checklist, resulting in repeated document revisions by the Credit Review team.

Fish bone analysis illustrates how each dimension contributed to the overall problem hierarchy, emphasizing the Process and Communication branches as critical leverage points for improvement. These results align with the study by Liu et al. (2021), which found that workflow standardization through PMS significantly improves collaboration and reduces error cycles in fintech ecosystems.

b. Stakeholder Engagement Analysis

The overall SEL analysis indicated that the Embedded Team's stakeholders predominantly fell into the Supportive category, with an average score of approximately 76.5 (out of 100). This suggests a generally positive attitude and consistent participation in project activities but limited initiative in strategic decision-making.

Table 2: SEL Score Respondent

Division	Respondent	FP	QC	DO	SEL Score	Engagement Level
Sales Partnership	Person 1	85	79	68	77.5	Supportive
Sales Partnership	Person 2	78	73	65	71.8	Supportive
Sales Admin	Person 1	88	82	74	82	Leading
Sales Admin	Person 2	79	76	69	74.5	Supportive
Credit Review Analyst	Person 1	84	80	72	79.6	Supportive
Credit Review Analyst	Person 2	76	71	67	71	Supportive

$$SEL = 0.4.(81.7) + 0.3.(76.8) + 0.3.(69.2)$$

$$SEL = 76.5 \text{ (Supportive)}$$

The SEL dimensions provided deeper insights:

- Frequency of Participation (FP): Average score 81.7, indicating regular involvement in meetings and updates.
- Quality of Contribution (QC): Score 76.8, showing that while inputs are constructive, they are often reactive rather than proactive.
- Decision Ownership (DO): Score 69.2, implying that many operational members rely on top-down instructions instead of shared decision authority.

This finding aligns with Aaltonen et al. (2024), who emphasized that project engagement improves when leaders adopt participative approaches that empower decision-making

E) Proposed Improvement Strategy

Three main improvement strategies were generated and evaluated:

- Cross-Functional SOP Development: Define clear process ownership, standardized timelines, and communication checkpoints.
- Enhanced PMS Utilization: Expand use of JIRA features such as automation rules, progress dashboards, and comment tagging.
- Project Governance Alignment: Establish an accountability matrix (RACI) to clarify roles and decision rights.

AHP-based prioritization determined that Cross-Functional SOP Development integrated into the PMS framework is the most feasible and impactful solution.

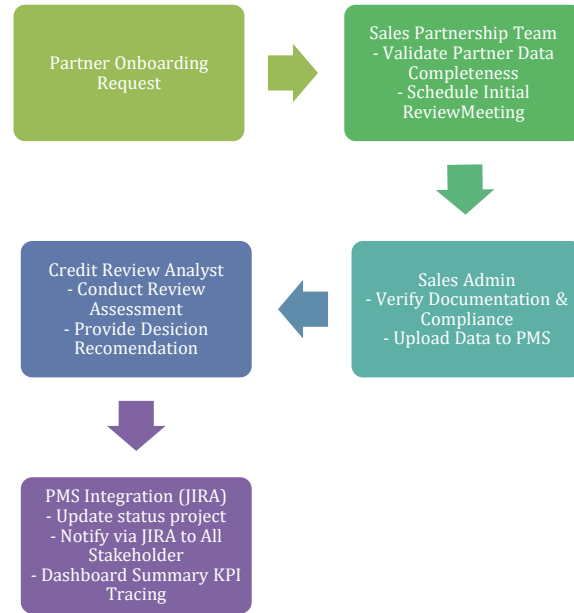


Figure 2. The Improvement Roadmap

Implementing a standardized PMS-based SOP offers both operational and strategic benefits:

- Operational: Reduces project handoff time by establishing clear checkpoints.
- Collaborative: Promotes transparency through shared dashboards accessible to all stakeholders.
- Strategic: Strengthens stakeholder trust and accountability culture, aligning with PT XYZ Fintech’s digital transformation roadmap.

This is consistent with Prebanić et al. (2023), who reported that digital process integration fosters higher accountability and accelerates innovation cycles in fintech project environments

IV. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that stakeholder engagement plays a pivotal role in determining project success, particularly within the complex and cross-functional digital environment of fintech organizations. In the case of the Embedded Team at PT XYZ Fintech, the findings indicate that low engagement effectiveness and inefficiencies in project execution primarily stem from procedural and structural gaps specifically, the absence of clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and overlapping responsibilities across divisions. These structural issues not only prolonged partner onboarding timelines but also weakened stakeholder participation, reducing accountability and shared ownership in decision-making processes.

The proposed solution the development and implementation of a cross-functional SOP integrated with a Project Management Software (PMS) platform (JIRA) and reinforced by a RACI (Responsible–Accountable–Consulted–Informed) governance framework has demonstrated strong potential to address these challenges. By introducing standardized workflows, clear timelines, and transparent reporting mechanisms, this solution establishes a more disciplined yet collaborative environment. Stakeholders can now visualize progress in real-time, identify bottlenecks earlier, and coordinate decisions through a unified digital platform. As a result, the overall Stakeholder Engagement Level (SEL) improved to a “Supportive” level, confirming that engagement intensity is strongly influenced by clarity of processes and the accessibility of communication tools.

From a practical standpoint, the implementation of this integrated approach offers substantial managerial value for PT XYZ. The cross-functional SOP supported by PMS provides a repeatable and scalable framework that can be adopted by other business units within the organization. This model aligns with PT XYZ’s broader enterprise digital transformation roadmap, which aims to enhance operational agility and governance maturity. The project’s success reinforces the strategic importance of combining technology adoption with human-centered collaboration a balance that ensures efficiency does not come at the cost of engagement or creativity. In operational terms, this alignment has led to reduced onboarding lead time, improved data visibility, and higher accountability among functional teams.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse in stakeholder and social exchange theories by providing empirical evidence that engagement is not merely a relational construct but also an operational one. Engagement flourishes

when individuals perceive fairness, recognition, and empowerment in their roles conditions made possible through structured communication and transparent project governance. This finding resonates with Fobbe et al. (2024) and Vrečko et al. (2023), who emphasize that digital project success increasingly depends on the quality of stakeholder interaction rather than technical proficiency alone. Hence, this research bridges theoretical understanding with managerial application by illustrating how behavioral and process-oriented elements jointly shape project outcomes in digital ecosystems.

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