

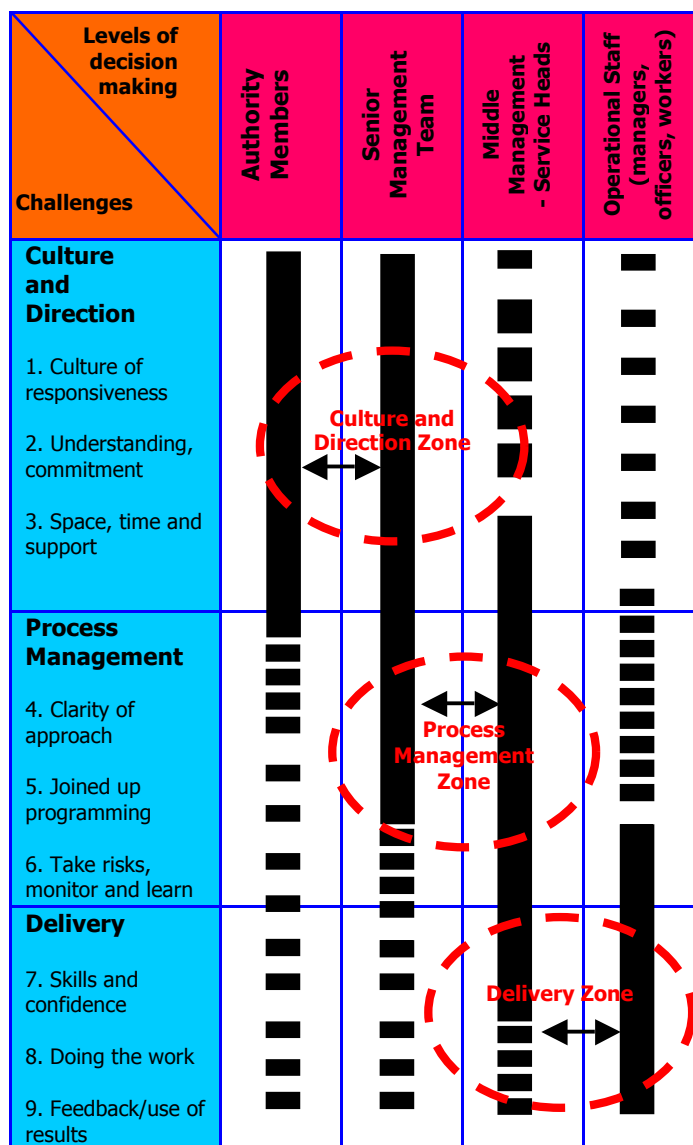
Building organisational capacity for public and stakeholder engagement

Very often, 'public engagement' is left to operational staff. But place all the responsibility on the 'coal-face doers' and the value that public engagement can deliver is limited: each activity will be isolated and peripheral to core decisions and outcomes will be limited for the organisation and the participants. Simply requiring more public engagement is therefore poor value for money while seriously overloading the staff involved and disillusioning participants. For example we worked with one local authority that was undertaking 128 engagement initiatives in 3 months!

Sometimes efforts to get better value (outcomes, cost) from public engagement place responsibility on middle management. But this will result in little more than making better sense of a medley of activities – public engagement will remain an add on, operating outside, even against, the organisational culture.

To get value from public engagement a whole organisation approach is required. It is the responsibility of decision-makers and senior staff to set the tone, the overall approach, the cultural commitment (ie the 'Culture and Direction'). It is the responsibility of middle managers to ensure a coherent programme of engagement activities, appropriate to their context and appropriately designed, resourced, managed, delivered and used to deliver clear outcomes (ie 'Process Management'). It is the operational staff who are responsible for undertaking the day-to-day engagement activity, analysing the results and feeding them into decision making and feeding back to participants (ie 'Delivery').

A whole organisation approach



All of this should be encompassed by some sort of "Engagement Strategy"

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For case studies, tools, support and advice on building your organisation's capacity for public and stakeholder engagement please go to: www.interactnetworks.co.uk