

The Stakeholder Pattern Decoder

**2 Dynamics That Derail Project
Alignment—and a 4-Part AI Framework to
Surface Them Faster**

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Intentional Intelligence

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Introduction

Traditional stakeholder management templates are stale.

Instead, you need to develop **stakeholder behavior pattern recognition**.
GenerativeAI can assist you in accelerating that recognition.

Here is the situation:

You're juggling inputs from 8 different voices. All are saying slightly different things. Your ability to frame a clear project direction depends on spotting what's missing.

This guide introduces:

- 2 misalignment patterns that derail even well-structured projects
- A 4-part AI prompting framework to help you surface those patterns faster

Use this as a thinking tool. Run it against your current project notes. Let it reduce your cognitive load so you can focus on framing with confidence.

Why Stakeholder Alignment Matters

Project alignment is about understanding the hidden dynamics that prevent progress.

Have you ever left a meeting where everyone nodded in agreement? Weeks later, you discover something surprising. People had completely different ideas about what was decided.

Has your perfectly planned project stalled because an important stakeholder delayed their input?

These are predictable patterns.

Project managers are taught to document stakeholder inputs.

Usually, you end up with notes that miss the real story.

You need to be able to decode the patterns.

Beyond Surface Agreement

Traditional stakeholder templates focus on roles and responsibilities. While important, they fail to help you spot when:

- The VP of Marketing politely attends meetings. They fail to see how the project impacts their goals
- Your technical lead is focusing on tasks without understanding the business purpose
- Two departments are using the same words yet mean different things

These misalignments hide beneath the surface of productive conversations. When they finally emerge, they often trigger rework and frustration.

Creating Pattern Recognition Tools

The goal is to help you extract value from the project notes that you already have.

By applying focused and intentional AI prompts to your existing documentation, you can:

- Spot potential roadblocks before they derail your timeline
- Ask more targeted questions that reveal alignment (or lack thereof)
- Build stronger project framing that addresses hidden concerns
- Save time by focusing your energy on the conversations that matter

most

The framework reduces your cognitive load. Think of it as having an experienced project coach looking over your shoulder. The goal is to help you spot what you might otherwise miss.

Let's discover the patterns and how to use AI to uncover them faster.

Prepping Your Project/Stakeholder Notes

Using GenAI **intentionally**, requires work.

This stakeholder exercise is dependent **on you having some kind of notes**.

These can be your own meeting notes. These can be meeting transcriptions. These can be a series of emails.

Many people are scared to upload notes into GenAI. It is a privacy issue after all!

Just remember these two items:

- PII - Personally Identifiable Information
- BII - Business Identifiable Information

What is PII?

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is any data that can be used to identify a specific individual. This includes information that directly identifies a person or that can be used in combination with other data to identify someone.

Common examples of PII include:

- Full name
- Social Security number
- Date of birth
- Home address
- Email address
- Phone number
- Financial account numbers
- Biometric data (fingerprints, facial recognition data)

- Medical records
- Driver's license number
- Passport number

PII is protected by various privacy laws and regulations around the world, such as GDPR in Europe, CCPA in California, and HIPAA for health information in the US. Organizations that collect, store, or process PII typically have legal obligations regarding data security, breach notification, and user consent.

What is BII?

Business Identifiable Information (BII) refers to sensitive data that can be used to identify or locate a specific business entity, or information that could cause commercial harm if disclosed inappropriately. **Similar to how PII protects individuals, BII protects confidential business information.**

Common examples of BII include:

- Business tax identification numbers (EIN, VAT numbers)
- Financial statements and records
- Trade secrets and proprietary information
- Client lists and customer databases
- Pricing strategies and sales data
- Contract details and terms
- Strategic plans and market analyses
- Intellectual property not yet publicly disclosed
- Business banking information
- Vendor relationships and supply chain details

BII is often protected through various legal mechanisms including non-disclosure agreements, confidentiality clauses in contracts, trade secret laws, and industry-specific regulations. Unauthorized disclosure of BII can lead to competitive disadvantages, financial losses, reputational damage,

or legal liability for the affected business.

Find and Replace

Using your favorite document editor (Word, LibreOffice, GoogleDocs, Zoho Writer, etc.) conduct several "Find and Replace" rounds

- For every personal name in your notes, replace it with a title
 - Example, Fred becomes "VP of Marketing"
 - If still uncomfortable using titles, make up nicknames (but be kind)
 - Fred becomes "Dude"
 - Sandra becomes "Magnetic"
 - Dave becomes "Quiet"
- For every department named, change the name of the department (if you want to)
- Every time your company name is listed (or its various forms), change it to something generic
 - Google becomes Acme Co.
 - Apple becomes Fred's Beans
- Every time a vendor is named, change it to something generic
 - Cisco becomes Router Co.
 - MasterCard becomes Credit Palace, Inc.
- (yes, have fun with it, you are allowed!)
- Find and Replace any other PII or BII that is listed above
- Your goal is to prep your notes so they still makes sense, but do not connect to any real person or any real company. You are keeping ALL of that private.

Now, your project/stakeholder notes are ready!

The Strategic Prompting Blueprint: WHO / WHY / WHAT / HOW

Prompt Element	Purpose	Example
WHO	Who should the AI act like?	"Act as a stakeholder alignment coach..."
WHY	Why are you asking?	"Because I need to identify misalignment..."
WHAT	What should the AI do?	"Analyze the input and flag contradictions..."
HOW	How should it respond?	"Return a short summary + 2 follow-up questions..."

You'll see this framework used with each pattern that follows.

Now, three years into the GenerativeAI revolution, there are approximately 6 gazillion prompting frameworks out there.

For me, I want to keep it simple. And that means using words and questions we are already familiar with: Who? Why? What? and How?

So as you continue to read thru each of the patterns, I want you to be thinking about these four questions.

The more you ingrain them into your prompting, the better your prompting will become over time.

How to use these prompts

I have formatted this document so that all prompts fit on one page. This makes it easy to copy and paste.

To use these prompts

- Copy and paste the prompt into a text editor
- Change the wording for anything that occurs in brackets []
 - This is how you will make the prompt relevant to your project context
- Change ANY wording to fit YOUR context
- Copy the text from your editor
- Choose the GenAI LLM of your choice
- Paste the prompt into a new chat
- Attach your relevant project documents
 - Make sure you have scrubbed that PII and BII!!
- Get your response!

The Patterns

Pattern 1: The Disconnected Contributor

Why It Matters:

You've seen this stakeholder before. They attend every meeting. They nod when you present updates. When you ask for feedback, they offer a mild "sounds good" or "no concerns from my side."

They fail to see themselves in this project.

They are unable to articulate how this work connects to their team's goals. The project exists in some abstract space that lives outside their world. Their alignment is based on a foundation of disinterest. Their polite and cooperative demeanor is masking that disinterest.

This matters because **disconnection creates blindspots.**

If you need them to set priorities, they fail to be able to in any meaningful way. When you need executive sponsorship, they offer lukewarm support at best. During implementation, they suddenly surface concerns that should have shaped the project from day one.

This is not direct sabotage. Their behavior suggests a lack of investment. And that passive disengagement quietly erodes the quality of your framing work.

Hard to Spot:

Disconnection masquerades as cooperation.

They smile at unreasonable timelines. They keep their mouth shut so that the meeting stays on track. In the short term, they make your life easier. One less voice to manage, one less source of friction.

Watch for these behaviors:

- **Generic comments:** "This looks fine." "No issues from our side." "Whatever the group decides."
- **No clarifying questions:** While others probe priorities or challenge assumptions, they remain silent.
- **Constant deferral:** "I'll go with what Marketing thinks." "Sales would know better than me."
- **Their action items are compliance-based:** They attend meetings. But no pre-work for a meeting is every done.
- **They never volunteer information:** You have to explicit ask for their input. Any input you do get is minimal

The clearest indicator: you are unable to picture what success looks like from their perspective. They've never told you. And you haven't had the two uninterrupted hours to figure it out.

This pattern is insidious in matrix organizations. People are spread across many initiatives. They show up because they were told to. And in the fragmented time you have between meetings, you miss the signal.

Why It Derails:

Disconnected contributors create two types of failure.

Strategic gaps in your framing

Synthesizing stakeholder needs into project goals requires meaningful input from everyone. The disconnected contributor hasn't given you anything substantial to work with.

Your options:

- Make assumptions about what they need (and get it wrong)
- Write generic language that technically includes them without specificity
- Omit their perspective entirely and hope it doesn't matter later

All three options weaken your project. Your outcomes may sound comprehensive. But they lack sharp, interconnected logic that makes stakeholders say "yes, that's exactly it."

Late-stage misalignment that feels like betrayal

Three months into implementation, the disconnected contributor suddenly has opinions. Strong ones.

"Wait, I thought this was about X, not Y."

"This doesn't solve our problem."

"Why wasn't my team consulted on this approach?"

They were consulted. They were in every meeting. They said it sounded

fine. Because they never engaged with the purpose, they never caught the disconnect between what you were building and what they needed. Now you're managing conflict that should have been resolved during discovery.

The cognitive burden compounds: You're not just managing their belated concerns. You're doing the synthesis work you should have done upfront. Now you're doing it under timeline pressure with stakeholders who feel unheard. This is the moment you think, "Why is this always so hard for me?"

Prompt:

WHO: Act as a senior stakeholder alignment advisor who has facilitated [the types of projects YOU need go here] . You specialize in detecting subtle disengagement patterns that derail project framing before they become visible problems.

WHY: I'm synthesizing stakeholder input for a project charter. I need to identify any stakeholders who may be attending meetings while remaining disconnected from the project's purpose or outcomes. Their lack of investment will create strategic gaps in my framing and potential late-stage objections that derail momentum.

WHAT: Review the meeting notes, email exchanges, and stakeholder comments attached. Identify any stakeholders showing signs of disconnection: minimal contribution, generic language, deference to others, lack of clarifying questions, or absence of clear connection between the project and their team's goals. For each disconnected stakeholder, analyze what might be causing the disconnection.

HOW: Return your analysis in this structure:

- **Stakeholder name and role**
- **Specific language or behavior** that signals disconnection (quote directly from notes when possible)
- Likely cause of disconnection (e.g., unclear relevance to their role, competing priorities, lack of context on project value, organizational politics)
- **Strategic risk** if this disconnection continues
- **Two clarifying questions** I can ask in our next interaction. Phrased to surface their perspective without making them defensive

Pattern 2: The Political Operator

Why It Matters

This stakeholder holds influence. They might represent an external partner, a senior executive, or a public-facing entity. They speak in big-picture terms. Their opinions carry weight.

Beneath the surface, they're protecting political capital. They make vague requests or make extreme pivots on decisions. They may signal resistance without saying it outright. You leave meetings with them unsure what they want. Are they invested in the project's success?

The Political Operator introduces strategic ambiguity into your framing process.

When you ask for specific requirements, they respond with platitudes: "We need to make sure this aligns with our strategic vision." When you present options, they defer: "Let's see what the steering committee thinks."

Every interaction feels productive. Every outcome remains unclear.

This matters because projects need concrete commitments. You need to know what stakeholders will support. You need defined non-negotiables live. The Political Operator gives you none of this. Instead, they give you plausible deniability. for themselves. You, then, absorb the risk of building something they might later disavow.

The cost shows up in two places:

- the time you waste trying to decode their actual position
- the credibility you lose when they claim you misunderstood their requirements.

Hard to Spot:

At first, they seem engaged. They attend important meetings. They ask thoughtful-sounding questions.

Then you notice patterns in their language:

- Vague endorsements: "This looks like a step in the right direction." "I think we're aligned on the broad strokes."
- Conditional support: "You have my backing, assuming we can address the governance concerns." "I'm comfortable moving forward once we've clarified the stakeholder matrix."
- Strategic deferrals: "We should probably wait until after the budget cycle." "I'd like to see what the board thinks first."
- Ambiguous objections: "I'm not sure this captures the full picture." "There might be some sensitivities here we haven't considered."

Each statement sounds reasonable. Taken together, they form a pattern: engagement without commitment, influence without accountability.

The Political Operator rarely says no. They also rarely say yes. They maintain maximum optionality. This positions them to claim credit if the project succeeds or distance themselves if it fails.

You hesitate to challenge them. They hold perceived power. Pressing for specifics feels risky. What if you damage the relationship? So you accommodate the ambiguity and hope it resolves itself.

It won't.

Why It Derails:

The Political Operator forces you to build alignment on quicksand.

Lack of Definition leads to Lack of Framing

Strategic documents depend on clear stakeholder positions. A lack of commitment on key requirements or direction leaves you with horrible choices:

- Frame the project narrowly and risk their objection that you "think too small"
- Frame the project broadly and absorb their criticism that you "overcomplicated things"
- Frame the project around their vague language and watch your project become meaningless

You choose the third option most often. Your project goals include phrases like "strategic alignment," and "stakeholder engagement". You tell yourself this buys you flexibility. What it actually buys you is future conflict.

They weaponize your documentation against you.

Six weeks into implementation, the Political Operator surfaces concerns. Strong ones.

"I never agreed to this approach." "This doesn't reflect what we discussed."

You pull up meeting notes showing their participation. You reference their comments. They respond: "I raised questions. You must have misunderstood my concerns." Or: "I assumed you'd come back to me before finalizing this."

They're rewriting history. Your documentation, filled with their ambiguous language, fails you. The lack of specificity that protected them now

exposes you.

Worse, their political capital means others believe their version.

You are now in a misalignment crisis. What seemed concrete, now begins to feel like failure.

The cognitive burden here is insidious. You're doing the emotional labor of navigating political dynamics. And you are doing the intellectual labor of strategic synthesis. The Political Operator makes you responsible for decoding their unstated positions and predicting their future objections.

Prompt:

WHO: Act as a senior stakeholder strategist with 15+ years of experience navigating political dynamics in complex, multi-stakeholder environments. You specialize in identifying when influential stakeholders are engaging strategically rather than substantively. They use ambiguity to maintain optionality while avoiding accountability.

WHY: I'm synthesizing stakeholder input for a project, and I need to identify stakeholders who may be operating politically. These stakeholders use vague language, shift positions, avoid concrete commitments, or defer decisions in ways that protect their influence while preventing real alignment. I need to surface this pattern now. Otherwise, I'll build project goals around ambiguity that will collapse under scrutiny later.

WHAT: Review the meeting notes, emails, etc that are attached. Identify any stakeholders showing signs of political positioning: non-specific endorsements, conditional support, strategic deferrals, ambiguous objections, or patterns of avoiding direct answers. Pay attention to language that sounds engaged while remaining uncommitted. For each Political Operator, analyze what they might be protecting (reputation, budget, decision authority, external relationships) and why they're choosing ambiguity over clarity.

HOW: Return your analysis in this structure:

- Stakeholder name and role
- Specific language patterns that signal political positioning (quote directly from notes, highlighting vague or conditional phrasing)
- What they're likely protecting (e.g., reputation with external partners, budget authority, decision-making control, ability to claim credit or avoid blame)
- Strategic risk if this ambiguity continues into your charter
- Two clarifying questions designed to force specificity without triggering defensiveness. Questions that make continued ambiguity socially awkward

Pattern Differentiation Matrix

Pattern	Primary Behavioral Signal	Core Motivation/Driver	Impact on Project Manager
Disconnected Contributor	Polite presence without meaningful participation	Doesn't see personal relevance to their role	Forces PM to guess stakeholder needs or fill gaps with assumptions
Political Operator	Active engagement using deliberately vague language	Protecting reputation/position while maintaining influence	Forces PM to build strategy around ambiguity that later becomes weaponized

Key Distinction Summary:

- **Disconnected Contributor** = doesn't care (disinterest)
- **Political Operator** = cares about self-protection (strategic ambiguity)

Prompt Builder

Use this template to build your own:

- **WHO:** Who should the AI act as? (*e.g., stakeholder strategist, software PM*)
- **WHY:** Why do you need this analysis?
- **WHAT:** What should it analyze or identify?
- **HOW:** How should the AI respond? (*summary, questions, risks, etc.*)

Here is a challenge for you.

Can you create a SINGLE prompt that accomplishes what both prompts do separately?


Bigger Challenge:

Can you identify other types of patterns and write a prompt to identify them?


What to Do Next


Still staring at this PDF and not sure what to do with it?

I can help you with that.

-  **Try a Free 30-Minute Pattern Decoder Audit**
Bring one stakeholder doc. We will run it through one of the prompts and discuss the analysis together
- [Pattern Decoder Audit](#)

2 Additional Ways to Go Further:

-  **Join the Intentional Intelligence Newsletter**
One practical insight per week to help you use GenerativeAI intentionally.

<https://www.getintentional.net>
-  **Explore 1:1 Training & Support**

I work with PMs who execute brilliantly but feel stuck writing strategic documents that never feel sharp. Whether you're mid-project or planning your next one, I help you use Generative AI to:
 - Surface clarity from chaos
 - Write project outcomes
 - Match up stakeholder resistance to project outcomes and produce a plan to overcome that resistance
 - Present with confidence to leadership
 - Let's talk. 30 mins. And see if this is right for you. Schedule below.
 - [Let's See If This Fits](#)