RACI matrix and stakeholder management for engineering teams

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Many delays on technical projects are not technical. A decision waits because nobody knows who makes it, or a team is surprised by a change it should have heard about weeks ago. A RACI matrix and a simple stakeholder map fix most of that in an hour.

TL;DR The short version

- Many delays on technical projects come from unclear ownership, not technical problems.
- A RACI matrix names who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed, with exactly one Accountable per row.
- Map stakeholders by influence and impact, keep the Consulted list small, and record decisions with their reasons.

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What RACI stands for

- **Responsible:** does the work.
- **Accountable:** owns the outcome and makes the final call. Exactly one per decision or deliverable.
- **Consulted:** gives input before the decision; two-way.
- **Informed:** told after the decision; one-way.

An example

- Choose the database: architect A, tech lead R, security C, product manager I.
- Production release: engineering manager A, on-call engineer R, support lead I.
- API change for partners: product manager A, backend team R, partner team C, customer success I.

Rules that keep it useful

- One A per row. Two accountable people means none.
- Keep C small. Every consulted person is a meeting and a delay.
- If someone is R for everything, you have found a bottleneck.
- Put the matrix where people work, such as the project page or repository, not in a slide deck.

Mapping stakeholders

List everyone affected by the project and place them on two axes: how much influence they have and how much the outcome affects them. High influence and high interest: involve closely. High influence, low interest: keep satisfied with short updates. Low influence, high interest: keep informed. The rest: monitor.

Communicating technical decisions

Write decisions down with their reasons and the options you rejected, as a short decision record. Stakeholders who were not in the room can see why, and you avoid reopening settled questions. See architecture decisions that are expensive to undo.

> Related credential: Certified Technical Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

Sources and further reading

1. IICTP. TPBOK, People Leadership in Engineering. iictp.org/standards/tpbok.

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