

*Value Delivery Management  
Project Management Series*

WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT  
from **your sponsor?**

*[www.yourprojectsponsor.com](http://www.yourprojectsponsor.com)*

# Ownership

It's their project - you're just managing it for them. If the business doesn't get what it expects from the project (and you've delivered your part), then it is down to the Sponsor.

Unfortunately, many Sponsors are appointed to rather than 'own' the project. The project comes into existence somehow, and then someone says, "We need a Sponsor" and the search for a suitable executive commences. A candidate is identified, approached and confirmed. This is not the path to 'ownership'.

Meanwhile, the Sponsor sees their designation as logical and possibly self-preserving (better me in control than someone else) - but ownership is another matter. This is just one of the 101 things they are accountable for; they'll do their best, but ...

For you as Project Manager this is not good enough. You want ownership and commitment. As the old observation about an egg and bacon breakfast goes, the chicken has contributed, but the pig is committed. You need pig-like commitment.

So how do you achieve this?

Sit down with your Sponsor and discuss what they think the project is all about, what they are trying to achieve and what they see as the major challenges.

Are they on the right planet? If they have a totally different view to you, then "Houston, we have a problem!" You need to sort out which of you is right before you go any further.

(If you cannot get time with your Sponsor, mark Governance as "red" on your project report until you do meet.)

The key point is to understand where they are coming from and how important the project is to them - ie their levels of understanding and ownership.

What you need is a Sponsor who will make time to address the key issues, enthusiastically and continuously champion the project, track and monitor the business attitude towards the project and take pre-emptive action if support is waning, and be alive to any threats to the project's success.

Not someone who says, in effect, "*How are things going? Anything you need me to do?*"

If you rate their level of ownership as 'medium' or below, interested to not interested enough to take action, take them through the exercise of defining the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for the project.

CSFs are defined as things outside the control of the project (and you) that need to go right for the project to succeed. CSFs can include, obtaining the right resources, the necessary funding, no new product launches ... or whatever. Its important to ensure these are issues that you, as project manager, cannot control (albeit you may have a role).

Then ask the Sponsor to rate the likelihood of each CSF and

how each likely CSF will be managed. Remind them, "*I can't do it, by definition, so this falls to you and the Steering Committee to manage.*"

At this point they may resign as project sponsor, put their head in the sand and ignore the challenge (in which case it is time for you to resign from the project), or they may see the light and realize that they have to own the project and its outcomes.

Without their ownership of their project

- you're unlikely to meet business expectations however well you manage the project (because they control the business acceptance) - resulting in "another unsatisfactory project"
- you will be held accountable for aspects of the project you cannot control - not good for your career
- and, if things go wrong, you're on your own.

Don't just expect ownership, demand it!

**TO LEARN HOW TO GET YOUR SPONSOR TO WORK FOR YOU, GO TO [WWW.YOURPROJECTSPONSOR.COM](http://WWW.YOURPROJECTSPONSOR.COM) FOR A FREE AUDIO.**

## Others in this series

What should you expect from your Project Team?

What should you expect from your Steering Committee?

What should you expect from your Project Leadership Team?

What should you expect from your Consultants?

What should you expect from your Vendors?

What should you expect from your PMOs?

What should you expect from your Users?