

ACI Annual Conference Environmental Seminar Social License to Operate

October 4, 2015

Mary Ellen Eagan, HMMH

What is Social License to Operate (SLO)?

“The Social License has been defined as existing when a project has the ongoing approval within the local community and other stakeholders, ongoing approval or broad social acceptance and, most frequently, as ongoing acceptance.”

Source: <http://sociallicense.com/definition.html>

Gaining social license



Indirect Measurement: Physical Indicators

LEVEL OF SOCIAL LICENSE	SYMPTOMS/INDICATORS
WITHHELD / WITHDRAWN	Shutdowns, blockades, boycotts, violence / sabotage, legal challenges
ACCEPTANCE / TOLERANCE	Lingering/recurring issues & threats, presence of outside NGOs, watchful monitoring
APPROVAL / SUPPORT	Company seen as good neighbour, pride in collaborative achievements
PSYCHOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION	Political support, co-management of projects, united front against critics

What are the principal challenges to gaining the Social License?

- The airport sees gaining a Social License in terms of a series of tasks or transactions (in effect making a deal), while the community grants the License on the basis of the quality of the relationship – a cultural mismatch that risks failure.
- The airport confuses
 - Acceptance for Approval
 - Co-operation for Trust
 - Technical Credibility with Social Credibility

What are the principal challenges to gaining the Social License? (cont)

- The airport
 - Fails to understand the local community (Social Profile) and the local 'rules of the game' and so is unable to establish social legitimacy
 - Delays stakeholder engagement
 - Fails to allocate sufficient time for relationship building
 - Undermines its own credibility by failing to give reliable information or, more commonly, failing to deliver on promises made to the community.
 - Fails to respect and listen to the community
 - Under-estimates the time and effort required to gain SLO
 - Over-estimates (or, worse, assumes) the quality of the relationship with the community

Discussion

Mary Ellen Eagan
meagan@hmmh.com
www.hmmh.com