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New architectural, Strategic and Design Approaches to the Future of Human Space Flight (1)

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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES: LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES AS
APPLIED TO FUTURE HUMAN SPACE EXPLORATION

Abstract

In budget-constrained, politically dynamic environments it is becoming increasingly more difficult to maintain stakeholder support and enthusiasm for human space exploration. Generally, NASA's stakeholders can be broadly defined as the general public, policymakers, international space agencies, industry partners, and academia. Within each of these groups lies a spectrum of levels of awareness regarding NASA's human space exploration initiatives, resulting in varying levels of support for the agency. This discrepancy makes it imperative that NASA successfully engage with its stakeholders on all levels to ensure program sustainability. With Mars being the horizon destination for human explorers, NASA will need to establish a long-term engagement strategy to ensure stakeholders across-the-board are invested, financially and emotionally, in NASA's missions. Previous programs and missions have been successful in maintaining stakeholder support. The sustainability of the International Space Station Program is the result of decades of successful strategic engagement with international partners, the general public, and U.S. policymakers through calculated stakeholder-specific approaches. In the shorter term, the Mars Science Laboratory garnered unprecedented public support primarily utilizing social media and non-traditional engagement strategies. Alternatively, there are programs that have waivered in their ability to establish and maintain stakeholder support, ultimately resulting in cancellation. This paper will examine the best practices and lessons learned of both successful and ineffective stakeholder engagement strategies with the objective of providing a path forward for NASA's current human spaceflight initiatives.