Who’s Who in Project Life

And why they keep talking to you.

Job titles vary between organisations. One person may cover several roles. Ask what each person is responsible for on **this** Project.

The Project Manager

What they do: Keeps the Project organised, coordinates work and tracks progress, issues and decisions.

Why they might need you: They may need information, estimates, updates or a decision from your Business area.

Why you might need them: They can clarify priorities, deadlines, dependencies and what you are actually being asked to deliver.

Ask: “What do you need from me, and by when?”

The Project Sponsor

What they do: Provides senior backing and helps secure decisions, priorities and resources.

Why they might need you: They may need to understand the Business impact or resolve something beyond your authority.

Why you might need them: They can help resolve competing Business priorities or decisions that are beyond your authority.

Ask: “Who can make this decision if it affects our day-to-day work?”

The Business Analyst

What they do: Explores how work happens now, what needs to change and what the solution must support.

Why they might need you: They need your real-world knowledge, including awkward exceptions and workarounds.

Why you might need them: They can help translate your experience, concerns and ideas into requirements the Project can work with.

Ask: “Would it help if I showed you how this works in practice?”

The Subject Matter Expert (SME)

What they do: Brings specialist knowledge of a process, service, system or rule. You may be the SME.

Why they might need you: They need accurate detail, examples and warnings about what could go wrong.

Why you might need them: They can explain specialist rules, processes or constraints you do not know; if you are the SME, seek another expert when the question is outside your area.

Ask: “Am I advising on this, or am I expected to approve it?”

The Business Representative or Ambassador User

What they do: Represents the needs and experience of people who will use or be affected by the change.

Why they might need you: They may ask you to test ideas, review proposals and gather colleagues’ views.

Why you might need them: They can help you understand how a proposed change affects other colleagues and bring their views into the discussion.

Ask: “Who else should we involve before we say this will work?”

The Technical or Delivery Team

What they do: Designs, builds, configures or integrates the technology and other changes.

Why they might need you: They need clear examples, constraints and timely feedback—not just a wish list.

Why you might need them: They can explain what is feasible, demonstrate options and identify technical limitations before commitments are made.

Ask: “Can we walk through a real example together?”

The Tester or Test Lead

What they do: Checks whether the proposed solution behaves as expected and meets agreed needs.

Why they might need you: They may need realistic scenarios, test data and help spotting practical problems.

Why you might need them: They can help you turn real Business situations into useful tests and explain how problems will be recorded and followed up.

Ask: “What should happen when things do not go to plan?”

The Change, Training or Communications Lead

What they do: Helps people understand, prepare for and adopt the change.

Why they might need you: They need to know who is affected, what people must learn and what may worry them.

Why you might need them: They can help you prepare colleagues, find training materials and communicate what is changing and when.

Ask: “What will colleagues need to know before this goes live?”

Three things to establish early

Who can decide? Advice is not approval. **Who should be consulted?** You may not represent everyone. **Who owns the next action?** Clarify commitments.