

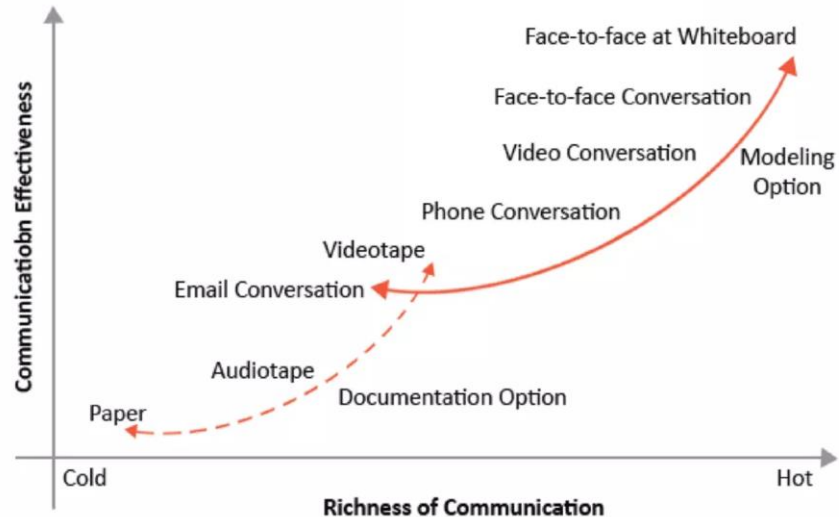


Communication and Collaboration in Agile

Project Communication

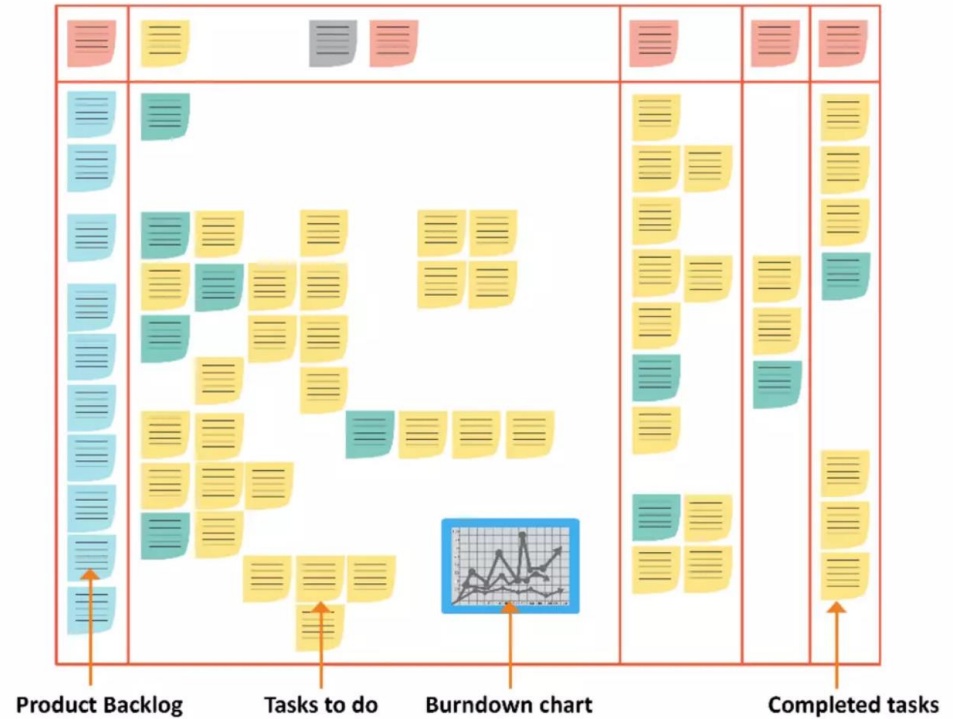
Every project manager quickly learns that the most valuable technique for project success is communication. However, there are many different types of communication and not all of them are as effective at communicating ideas.

Agile emphasizes that the most effective communication occurs face-to-face.



Task Board

The image represents an example of task board which is used as information radiator during project implementation.





Big Visible Charts

These are a part of the information radiator family and are an integral part of Extreme Programming (XP).

- They provide information to the team and non-team audience, easily and without a lot of context.
- These charts are casual, usually hand-drawn, big, and showcase important project information
- It's working when:
 - people stop and read the charts;
 - team members don't complain about updating them; and
 - they reflect the reality of the project.



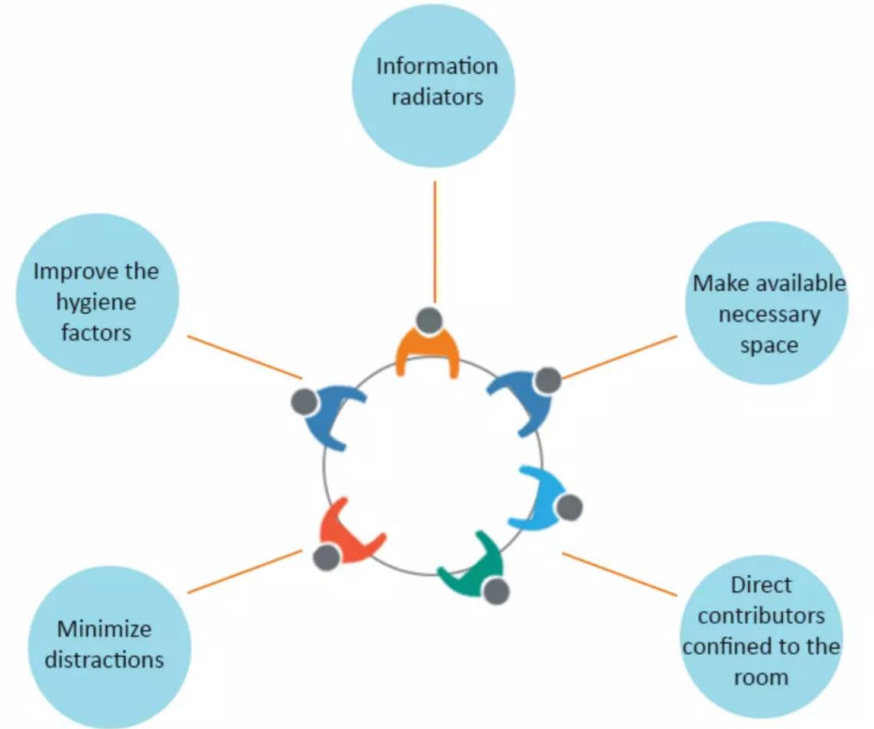
Effective information radiators

Effective information radiators should be:

- **Simple:** Brief and concise.
- **Stark:** Errors should not be masked, rather should be used to improve the work and performance.
- **Current:** Information displayed should be the latest.
- **Transient:** Once the problem has been rectified, it should be taken off from the chart.
- **Influential:** Empowers the team to take decisions.
- **Highly visible:** Easy to see and understand.
- **Minimal in number:** Not so many that they drown out other information.

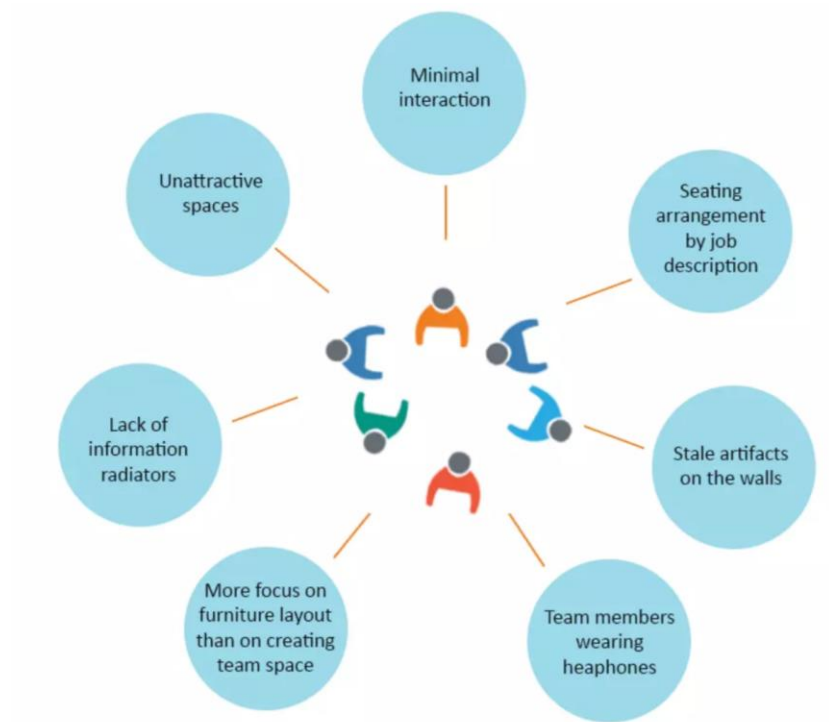
Team space

Team space is sometimes referred to as a **“war room”**. This involves getting the entire team together in one room and working on factors that foster communication as well as motivation leading to higher productivity.



Signs of Bad Team

Bad team spaces can lead to chaotic and unproductive team output.



Co-located vs. Distributed Teams

Two types of teams can be identified.

Co-located Team



- Team members seated together in a room, creating a “war room”
- Issues resolved informally in a timely manner
- Incidental interaction leads to productivity
- Team decides which roles to adopt based on sprint goals
- Team leverage tactile, low cost solutions

Distributed Team



- Teams distributed geographically, either locally or globally
- Formal logging of knowledge
- Structured use of processes
- Explicit role definition via tasks
- Exploiting technology for collaboration

Osmotic communication

Osmotic communication occurs when information is overheard in the background of the team room and some of it is absorbed via osmosis.

Co-located Team



- Team members to be seated in a war room so as to overhear useful information
- Caves and Commons pattern: 'Caves': for phone calls, short meetings, or for team members to concentrate
- 'Commons': open, shared workspaces for the team where osmotic communication occurs

Distributed Team



- Use of live video conferencing
- Use of group chat Instant Messaging
- When sending mail, choose the recipient(s) and CC the rest of the team
- Forums or corporate information hubs



Daily stand-up meetings

Daily stand-up meetings share progress on the sprint or iteration. Team members stand to keep the meeting focused and short. The stand-up is where each team member makes a commitment on what they will complete for the rest of the team to hear.

- Scrum specifies that the meetings should be timeboxed to 15 minutes.
- Only 'committed' team members are involved, with each participant answering 3 questions:
 - What did you do yesterday?
 - What will you do today?
 - What's in your way?



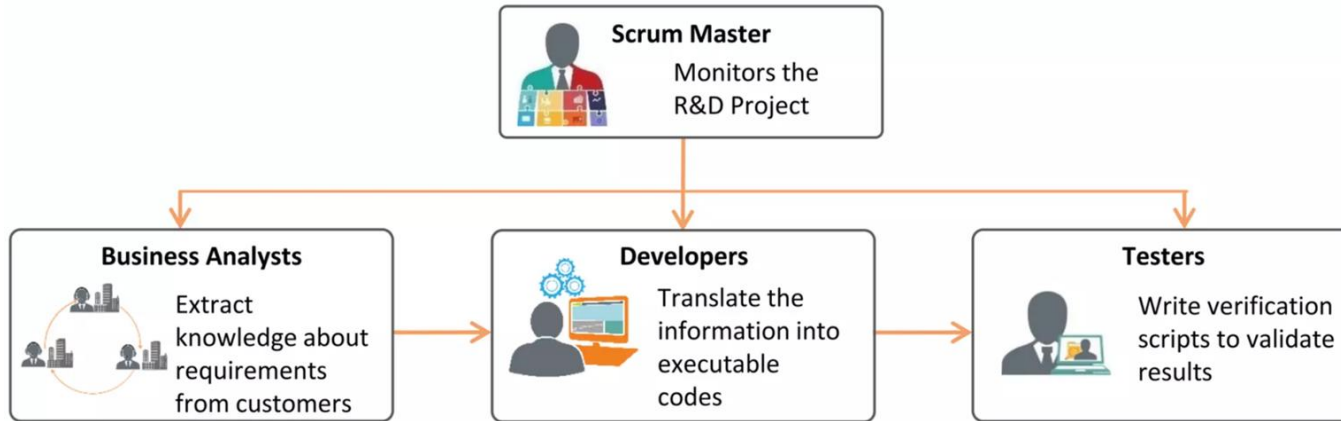
Agile Tooling

Multiple Open source tools are available are:

- Agile specific project management tools (e.g. XPlanner)
- Continuous integration build tools (e.g. CruiseControl)
- Automated testing tools (e.g. JUnit, Fitnesse)
- Agile software configuration management tools (e.g. Subversion)

Communication Gap - Example

Natasha Lisovskii, the Scrum Master at Nutri Worldwide was monitoring an R&D project of developing a new Customer Relationship Management software package. Despite following Agile methodology, the project was behind schedule. The graphic below shows how the team members were working in silos and communicating through emails and physical documents.



List the changes that the Agile coach should implement to reduce the communication gap within the team.

Communication Gap Example - Explanation

Listed are some of the recommended changes to help the team overcome the issues faced:



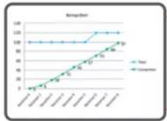
Ensure daily stand up meetings are conducted.



Use minimal documentation and increase face to face communication.



Use Kanban/Task board to track the progress of the user stories.



Use Burnup and Burndown charts to show the progress of the sprint and release.



Introduce video and audio conferencing facilities.

Real Life Example

Tony Orlando, the Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Fairfax was asked about the primary reason behind project failures. The reason cited was the contradictory goals of different stakeholders working on the same project. The graphic below showcases the challenge faced.

Lack of communication between different stakeholders

Developer



Wants to write good and clean codes

Marketing, Sales, and Finance Personnel



Want the product to succeed

Customer



Demands a good user experience

Thank You