Assignment:

Managing Communications

Plan for Project Communications

You are the project manager of a software development project. This project will create software that will be used by 257 sales representatives within your organization. Martin, the sales manager, is apprehensive about the project and wants you to keep him posted on all aspects of the project. Your sponsor, Charlie, agrees that he and Martin should have status reports every week to keep them abreast of the project. Many of the salespeople would also like to know what's happening with the project, as the software will help them improve their sales and commissions.

Your project will also work with six vendor-based contract developers that will help your team develop the code for the software. The six developers are not physically located in your building but are in the United States and in India. You've also hired a freelance writer to work with your ten-person project team to write the help system content for the application.

1. Given this information, how many communication channels do you, the project manager, have in this project?

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2. Your project is going well, and Charlie asks for a change to the project scope. Charlie would like to incorporate some database hooks to the project. As part of this change, you'll need to add four database administrators to the project. How many more communication channels will you have with these four additional project team members?

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3. What approach will you use to communicate regularly with Charlie and Martin?

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4.   What approach will you use to communicate with the sales
     representatives?

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5.   What challenges will you have communicating with the project team?

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6.   In the space provided next draw and identify all of the parts of the
      communications model for someone sending an email.

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Distribute Project Information

You are the project manager of the JHY Project for your organization. This
project will replace all of the computers in your organization with laptops and new
monitors for 125 employees in your firm. Your project has 164 stakeholders,
including the new laptop users that need information on a regular basis about
your project. Your project sponsor is Jeff Ferro, the firm COO, and he's asked
that you keep him and Linda Skyne, the CIO, informed about the project status,
phases of the project, and overall status for project performance.

1.   Based on this information, what type of project information do you think Jeff
      Ferro and Linda Skyne will need in your project?

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2.   Your project team has twelve members, six of whom are located in another office in a different time zone. What communication challenges are presented with virtual teams and time zones?

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3.   How would you address the challenges of the project team communicating with one another if they're not co-located?

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4. Your project team is using a mobile phone that provides text messaging, access to a project management information system, and voice services for coordinating the installations and delivery of the laptops and monitors to the 125 users in your company. Some of the installations, however, are in remote parts of the U.S., and the mobile phone devices don't work in these areas. How would you address the limitations of a mobile device in these areas?

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5. Your project is nearly 60 percent done, and you've completed an earned value management analysis of the project. Your earned value for the project is $25,500, and your CPI is 0.98. Your SPI, however, is a low 0.84 because of some vendor delays. How would you communicate this information to Jeff Ferro and Linda Skyne?

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Lab Solution: Planning Project Communications

1. Given this information, how many communication channels do you, the project manager, have in this project?

   First you'll need to find the number of stakeholders: you the project manager, 257 sales representatives, Martin the sales manager, Charlie the sponsor, six contract-based developers, a freelance writer, and a ten-person project team. This project has 277 stakeholders. Using the formula $n(n-1) / 2$, where n represents the stakeholders, you'll find that $277(276) / 2$ equals 38,226 communication channels.

   If you forgot to include the project manager as one of the communication channels, you've forgotten the hub of communications. Without the project manager, there are 37,950 communication channels.

2. Your project is going well, and Charlie asks for a change to the project scope. Charlie would like to incorporate some database hooks to the project. As part of this change, you'll need to add four database administrators to the project. How many more communication channels will you have with these four additional project team members?

   To find out how many more communication channels you'll have with the four additional team members, you'll use the formula $n(n-1) / 2$, where n is the number of stakeholders: 39,340 communication channels. Then you'll need to find the difference of the newly added communication channels and the original communication channels: 39,340 minus 38,226, for 1,114 additional communication channels.

3. What approach will you use to communicate regularly with Charlie and Martin?

   Charlie and Martin should receive weekly status reports. There are many approaches to satisfying this requirement: regular scheduled reports in your project calendar, automating the process with a project management information system, making a weekly assignment to create the report, and other solutions. Whatever approach you took, you should define the contents of the status report, create the weekly report in the same design each week, and keep a log of the reports for your records, too.

4. What approach will you use to communicate with the sales representatives?

    The sales representative likely don't need weekly status reports. You could query Charlie or Martin to see what preference they have on sharing project information with the sales team. Another approach could be to have the salespeople use pull communications by accessing project information through a project web site.

5. What challenges will you have communicating with the project team?

    Many of the project team members are geographically dispersed, so that will create challenges for timely and easy communication. You can schedule conference calls, e-mails, and even travel to make certain all members of the project team communicate accurately and often enough. With virtual teams, it's easy for some project team member to "hide" from the project action and not be included in project status meetings and other communication. The project manager needs to communicate just as effectively with virtual teams as with co-located teams.

6. In the space provided next draw and identify all of the parts of the communications model for someone sending an email.

Lab Solution: Distributing Project Information

1. Based on this information, what type of project information do you think Jeff Ferro and Linda Skyne will need in your project?

    Typically these types of stakeholders will want regular performance reports and status reports about the project. You should clarify with both stakeholders how often they'd like performance reports and what type of conditions and information they want you to report to them.

2. Your project team has twelve members, six of which are located in another office in a different time zone. What communication challenges are presented with virtual teams and time zones?

    Team members in differing time zones can feel frustrated when project meetings and phone calls are always adjusted for the project manager's local time. It's best to establish some communication ground rules as to when meetings, phone calls, and other communications are expected to happen. It may be ideal to find a time of day to communicate when all time zones are in the working hours.

3. How would you address the challenges of the project team communicating with one another if they're not co-located?

    Nonverbal communication is so important, but it's not always feasible. You should communicate with your project team the importance of communicating effectively and accurately. You and the project team will need to confirm with one another the messages of the communication to ensure that both parties understand what's been communicated. Miscommunications can be costly, be frustrating, and delay the project work.

4. Your project team is using a mobile phone that provides text messaging, access to a project management information system, and voice services for coordinating the installations and delivery of the laptops and monitors to the 125 users in your company. Some of the installations, however, are in remote parts of the U.S., and the mobile phone devices don't work in these areas. How would you address the limitations of a mobile device in these areas?

    The availability of technology is a challenge when using these types of devices as central to project communications. The project team may need to revert to landline telephone calls or, if available, use a network-based Internet connection rather than a WiFi-based connection. The project team will need to document their experiences using the devices and what the limitations of the devices may be when access to e-mail, voice mail, and text messages aren't available in all areas they'll be traveling to as part of the project.

5. Your project is nearly 60 percent done, and you've completed an earned value management analysis of the project. Your earned value for the project is $25,500, and your CPI is 0.98. Your SPI, however, is a low 0.84 because of some vendor delays. How would you communicate this information to Jeff Ferro and Linda Skyne?

    The CPI is performing well, as 0.98 equates to losing two cents on every dollar. As the project manager, you'll likely have to account for tiny variances, as it may have been a fluctuation in project costs that aren't likely to repeat. The SPI, however, is more serious, as it's a reflection of the project being considerably late. The vendor may have been late with their responsibilities, but you'll need to provide information about the lateness and what corrective actions, if any, you'll take to remedy the problem.