

Chapter 10: Project Communications Management

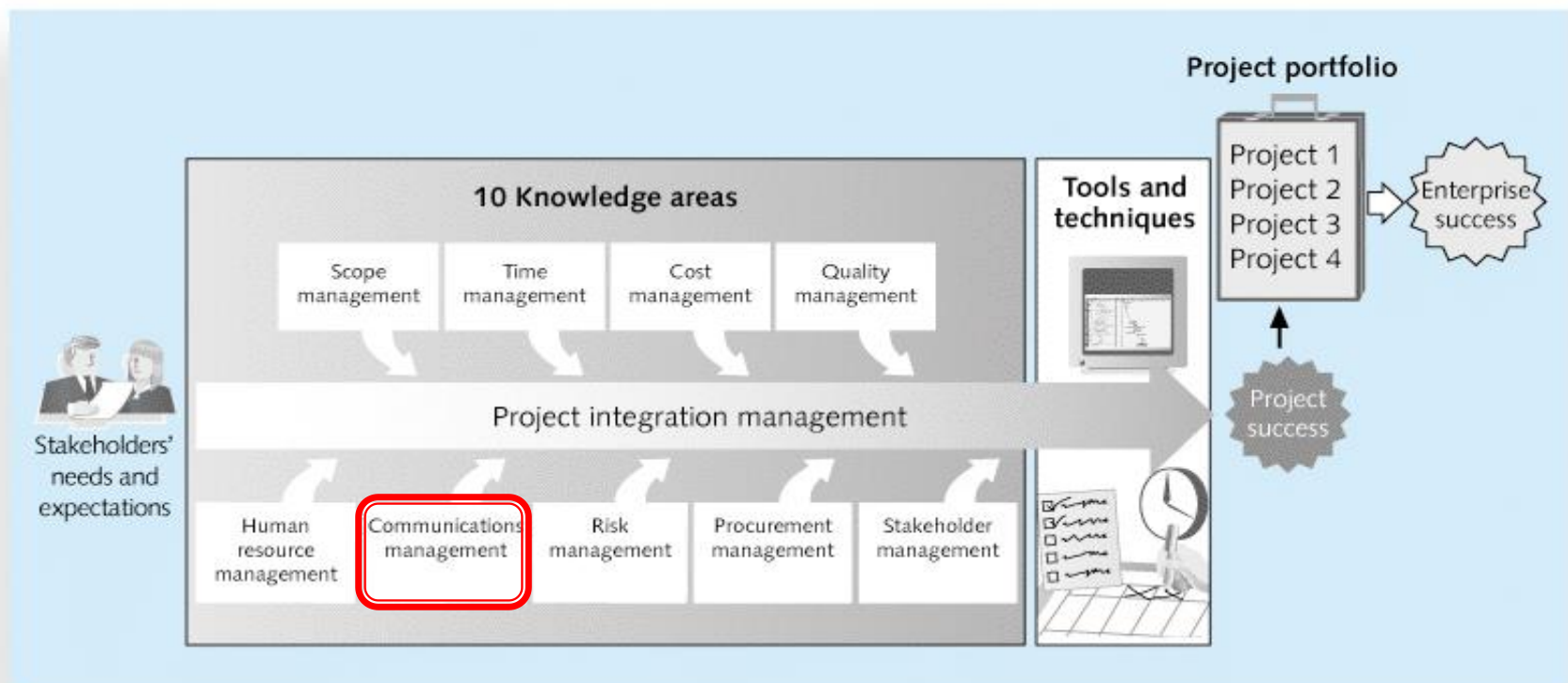
Information Technology Project
Management, Seventh Edition



Information Technology
PROJECT MANAGEMENT | 7e

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Learning Objectives

- ▶ Understand the importance of good communications on projects and the need to develop soft skills, especially for IT project managers and their teams
- ▶ Review key concepts related to communications
- ▶ Explain the elements of planning project communications and how to create a communications management plan

Project Communications Management Processes

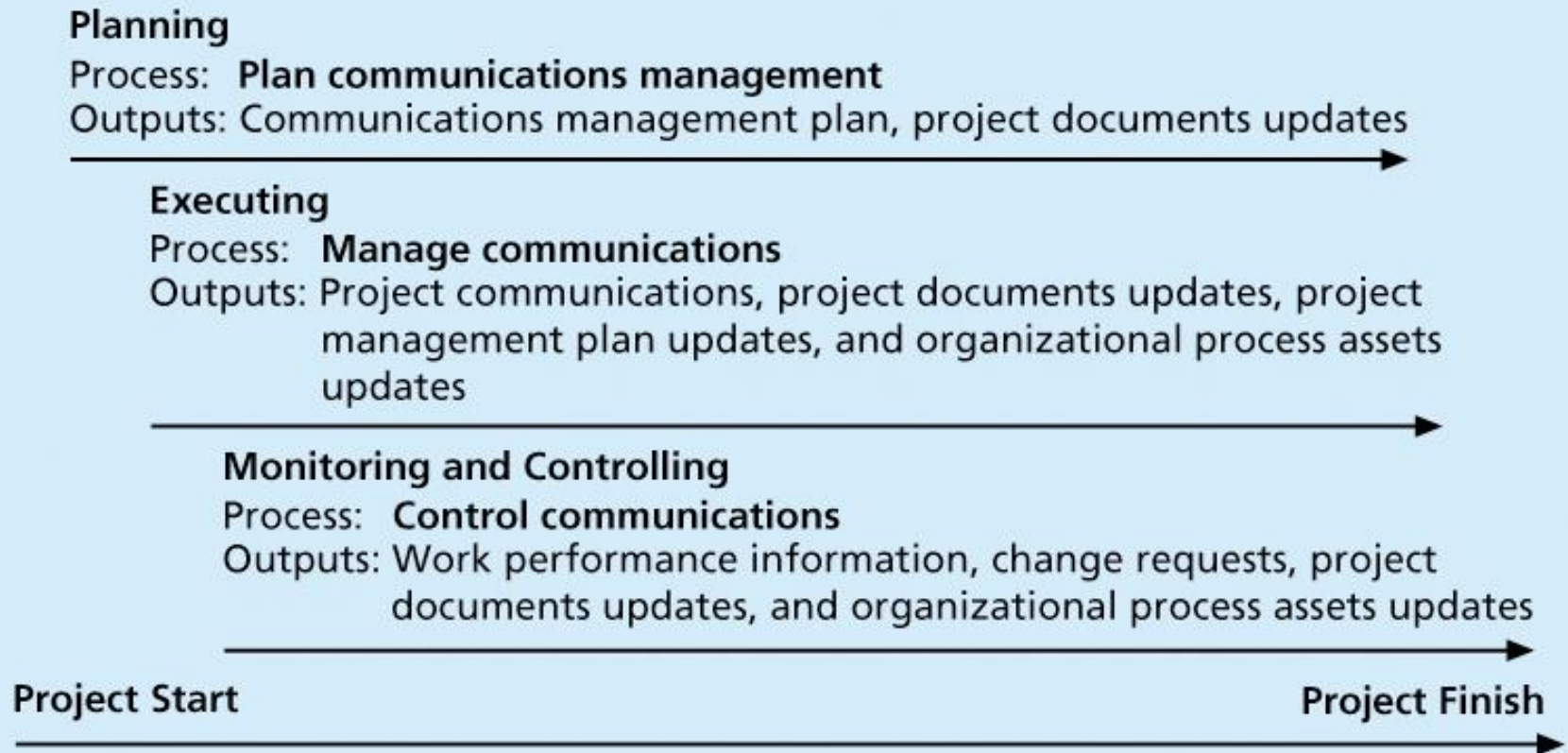
10.1.Planning communications management:

Determining the information and communications needs of the stakeholders

10.2.Managing communications: Creating, distributing, storing, retrieving, and disposing of project communications based on the communications management plan

10.3.Controlling communications: Monitoring and controlling project communications to ensure that stakeholder communication needs are met

Figure 10-1. Project Communications Management Summary



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Communication Type	Owner	Frequency	Agenda
Scrum Meeting	Project Manager	Daily	Update from everyone on – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was done yesterday? • What is the plan for tomorrow? • What are your obstacles?
Project Team Meeting	Project Manager	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the project progress. • Discuss upcoming milestones. • Review the risk and issues log. • Discuss upcoming leave plans. • Any other business.
Project Status Report	Project Manager	Weekly	Status update on the key project parameters Schedule, Budget, Risks, Issues and Benefits.
Project Update Meeting	Project Manager	Weekly	60 mins one-on-one meeting with Project Sponsor for a full project update.
Project Control Meeting	Project Sponsor & Project Manager	Monthly	Status update on the key project parameters Schedule, Budget, Risks, Issues and Benefits. And seek guidance on decisions required.
Quality Assurance Report	Quality Assurance Manager	Daily	A list of defects count, open/close status published on a daily basis after testing is commenced.

Keys to Good Communications

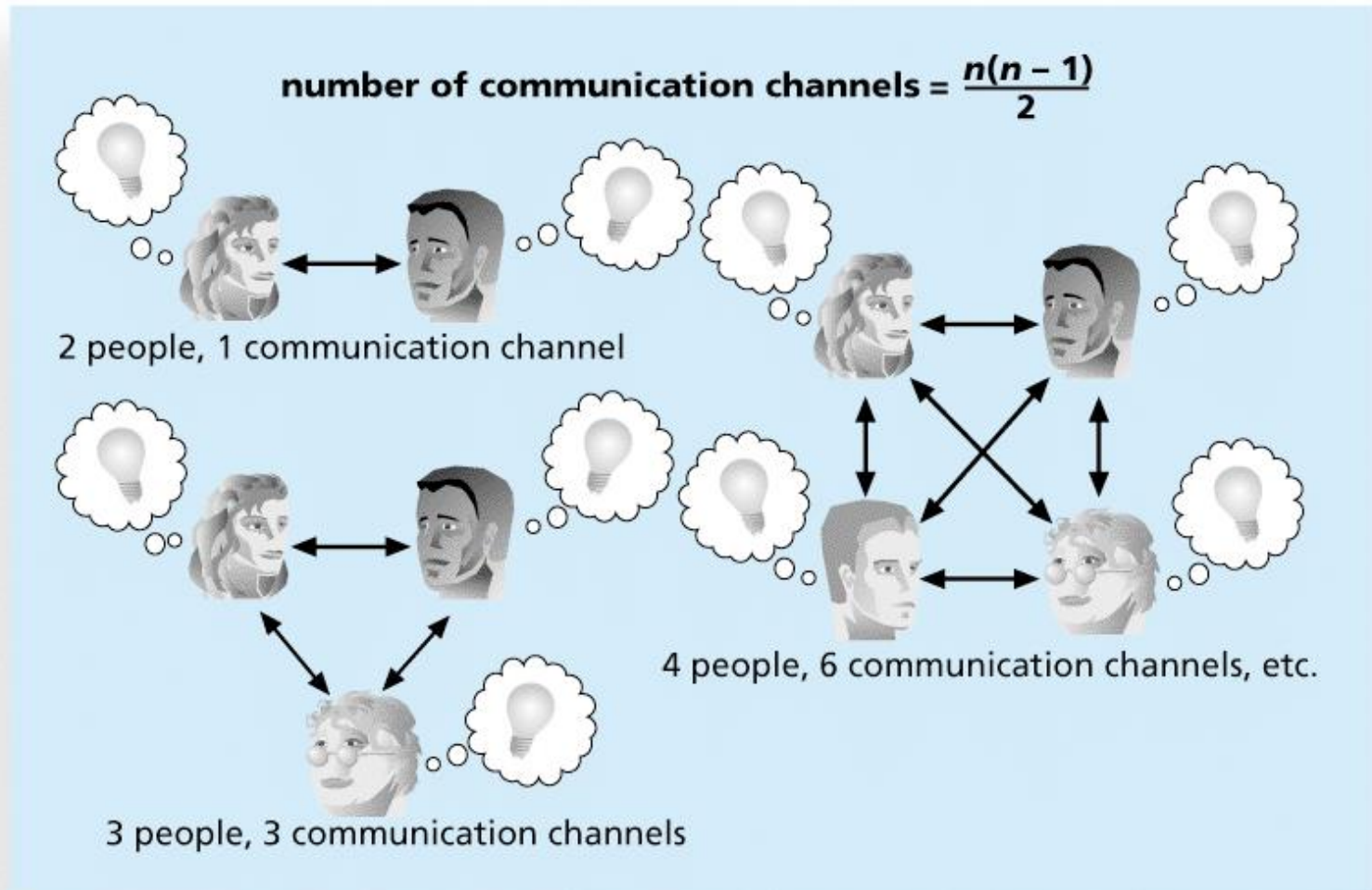
- ▶ Project managers say they spend as much as 90 percent of their time communicating
- ▶ Need to focus on group and individual communication needs
- ▶ Use formal and informal methods for communicating
- ▶ Distribute important information in an effective and timely manner
- ▶ Set the stage for communicating bad news
- ▶ Determine the number of communication channels

Determining the Number of Communications Channels

- ▶ As the number of people involved increases, the complexity of communications increases because there are more communications channels or pathways through which people can communicate.
- ▶ Number of communications channels = $\frac{n(n-1)}{2}$

where n is the number of people involved

Figure 10-2. The Impact of the Number of People on Communications Channels



10.1.Planning Communications Management

- Every project should include some type of **communications management** plan, a document that guides project communications
- ▶ The communications management plan varies with the needs of the project, but some type of written plan should always be prepared
- ▶ For small projects, the communications management plan can be part of the team contract
- ▶ For large projects, it should be a separate document

Communications Management

Plan Contents

1. Stakeholder communications requirements
2. Information to be communicated, including format, content, and level of detail
3. Who will receive the information and who will produce it
4. Suggested methods or technologies for conveying the information
5. Frequency of communication
6. Escalation procedures for resolving issues
7. Revision procedures for updating the communications management plan
8. A glossary of common terminology

Table 10-1. Sample Stakeholder Analysis for Project Communications

Stakeholders	Document Name	Document Format	Contact Person	Due
Customer management	Monthly status report	Hard copy and meeting	Tina Erndt, Tom Silva	First of month
Customer business staff	Monthly status report	Hard copy	Julie Grant, Sergey Cristobal	First of month
Customer technical staff	Monthly status report	E-mail	Li Chau, Nancy Michaels	First of month
Internal management	Monthly status report	Hard copy and meeting	Bob Thomson	First of month
Internal business and technical staff	Monthly status report	Intranet	Angie Liu	First of month
Training subcontractor	Training plan	Hard copy	Jonathan Kraus	November 1
Software subcontractor	Software implementation plan	E-mail	Najwa Gates	June 1

Comments: Put the titles and dates of documents in e-mail headings and have recipients acknowledge receipt.

10.2.Managing Communications

- ▶ Managing communications is a large part of a project manager's job
- ▶ Getting project information to the right people at the right time and in a useful format is just as important as developing the information in the first place
- ▶ Important considerations include the use of technology, the appropriate methods and media to use, and performance reporting

Using Technology to Enhance Creation and Distribution

- ▶ Technology can facilitate the process of creating and distributing information, when used properly
- ▶ It is important to select the appropriate communication method and media

Classifications for Communication Methods

- ▶ *Interactive communication*: Two or more people interact to exchange information via meetings, phone calls, or video conferencing. Most effective way to ensure common understanding
- ▶ *Push communication*: Information is sent or pushed to recipients without their request via reports, e-mails, faxes, voice mails, and other means. Ensures that the information is distributed, but does not ensure that it was received or understood
- ▶ *Pull communication*: Information is sent to recipients at their request via Web sites, bulletin boards, e-learning, knowledge repositories like blogs, and other means

Reporting Performance

Performance reporting keeps stakeholders informed about how resources are being used to achieve project objectives

- **Status reports** describe where the project stands at a specific point in time
- **Progress reports** describe what the project team has accomplished during a certain period of time
- **Forecasts** predict future project status and progress based on past information and trends

10.3. Controlling Communications

- ▶ The main goal of controlling communications is to ensure the optimal flow of information throughout the entire project life cycle
- ▶ The project manager and project team should use their various reporting systems, expert judgment, and meetings to assess how well communications are working. If problems exist, the project manager and team need to take action, which often requires changes to the earlier processes of planning and managing project communications
- ▶ It is often beneficial to have a facilitator from outside the project team assess how well communications are working

Suggestions for Improving Project Communications

- ▶ Develop better communication skills
- ▶ Run effective meetings
- ▶ Use e-mail and other technologies effectively
- ▶ Use templates for project communications

Developing Better Communication Skills

- ▶ Most companies spend a lot of money on technical training for their employees, even when employees might benefit more from communications training
- ▶ Individual employees are also more likely to enroll voluntarily in classes to learn the latest technology than in classes that develop soft skills
- ▶ As organizations become more global, they realize they must invest in ways to improve communication with people from different countries and cultures
- ▶ It takes leadership to improve communication

Running Effective Meetings

- ▶ Determine if a meeting can be avoided
- ▶ Define the purpose and intended outcome of the meeting
- ▶ Determine who should attend the meeting
- ▶ Provide an agenda to participants before the meeting
- ▶ Prepare handouts and visual aids, and make logistical arrangements ahead of time
- ▶ Run the meeting professionally
- ▶ Set the ground rules for the meeting
- ▶ Build relationships

Using E-Mail, Instant Messaging, Texting, and Collaborative Tools Effectively

- ▶ Make sure that e-mail, instant messaging, texting, or collaborative tools are an appropriate medium for what you want to communicate
- ▶ Be sure to send information to the right people
- ▶ Use meaningful subject lines and limit the content of emails to one main subject, and be as clear and concise as possible
- ▶ Be sure to authorize the right people to share and edit your collaborative documents

Sample Collaborative Tools

- ▶ A **SharePoint portal** allows users to create custom Web sites to access documents and applications stored on shared devices
- ▶ **Google Docs** allow users to create, share, and edit documents, spreadsheets, and presentations online
- ▶ A **wiki** is a Web site designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify Web page content

Using Templates for Project Communications

- ▶ Many technical people are afraid to ask for help
- ▶ Providing examples and templates for project communications saves time and money
- ▶ Organizations can develop their own templates, use some provided by outside organizations, or use samples from textbooks
- ▶ Recall that research shows that companies that excel in project management make effective use of templates

Lessons Learned Reports

- ▶ The project manager and project team members should each prepare a **lessons-learned report**
 - A reflective statement that documents important things an individual learned from working on the project
- ▶ The project manager often combines information from all of the lessons-learned reports into a project summary report

Project Archives

- ▶ It is also important to organize and prepare project archives
- ▶ **Project archives** are a complete set of organized project records that provide an accurate history of the project
- ▶ These archives can provide valuable information for future projects as well

Chapter Summary

- ▶ The goal of project communications management is to ensure timely and appropriate generation, collection, dissemination, storage, and disposition of project information
- ▶ Main process include:
 - Plan communications management
 - Manage communications
 - Control communications