ICT Project Management

Chapter 9: Project Planning:- Communication Management

9.1. Project Communication

Project communication is the exchange of project-specific information with the emphasis on creating understanding between the sender and the receiver. Effective communication is one of the most important factors contributing to the success of a project.

Project communication includes general communication between team members but is more encompassing. It utilizes the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) for a framework, it is customer focused, it's limited in time, it is product focused with the end in mind, and it involves all levels of the organization.

Importance of Good Communications
1. The greatest threat to many projects is a failure to communicate.
2. Our culture does not portray IT professionals as being good communicators.
3. Research shows that IT professionals must be able to communicate effectively to succeed in their positions.
4. Strong verbal skills are a key factor in career advancement for IT professionals.

Communication is Key to Successful Project Management
If project staff do not know what their tasks are, or how to accomplish them, then the entire project will grind to a halt. If you do not know what the project staff are (not) doing then you will be unable to monitor project progress. And if you are uncertain of what the customer expects of you, then the project will not even get off the ground.

Maintaining open, regular and accurate channels of communication with all levels of project staff and stakeholders is vital to ensuring the smooth flow of instructions from customer to factory floor and sufficient warning of risks and changes to enable early assessment and preparation.

9.2. Project Communication Management

Project Communication Management is the knowledge area that employs the processes required to ensure timely and appropriate generation, collection, distribution, storage, retrieval and ultimate disposition of project information.

Project Communication is the responsibility of everyone on the project team. The project manager, however, is responsible to develop the Project Communication Management Plan with the input from the task managers and Project Development Team (PDT).

Project Communications Management Processes
1. Communications planning: Determining the information and communications needs of the stakeholders.
2. Information distribution: Making needed information available to project stakeholders in a timely manner.
3. Performance reporting: Collecting and disseminating performance information, including status reports, progress measurement, and forecasting.
4. Managing stakeholders: Managing communications to satisfy the needs and expectations of project stakeholders and to resolve issues.

9.3. Communications Planning

Every project should include some type of communications management plan, a document that guides project communications. Creating a stakeholder analysis for project communications also aids in communications planning.

Communications Management Plan Contents;

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

Stakeholder Communication requirements analysis

STAKEHOLDERS	DOCUMENT NAME	DOCUMENT FORMAT	CONTACT PERSON	DUE
Customer management	Monthly status report	Hard copy	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	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	11/1/2006
Software subcontractor	Software implementation plan	E-mail	Najwa Gates	6/1/2006

9.4. Information Distribution

Getting the right 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.

Proper information distribution makes information available to project stakeholders in a timely manner. Following the communication plan ensures that all members of the project team are aware of their responsibilities to communicate with external stakeholders. The more information stakeholders have regarding a project or deliverable, the less likely last minute conflicts, changes, or complaints will affect a project.

Important considerations include:
- Using technology to enhance information distribution.
- Formal and informal methods for distributing information.

Distributing Information in an Effective and Timely Manner
1. Don't bury crucial information.
2. Don't be afraid to report bad information.
3. Oral communication via meetings and informal talks helps bring important information—good and bad—out into the open.

KEY: 1 = EXCELLENT		2 = ADEQUATE		3 = INAPPROPRIATE		
HOW WELL MEDIUM IS SUITED TO:	HARD COPY	TELEPHONE CALL	VOICE MAIL	E-MAIL	MEETING	WEB SITE
Assessing commitment	3	2	3	3	1	3
Building consensus	3	2	3	3	1	3
Mediating a conflict	3	2	3	3	1	3
Resolving a misunderstanding	3	1	3	3	2	3
Addressing negative behavior	3	2	3	2	1	3
Expressing support/appreciation	1	2	2	1	2	3
Encouraging creative thinking	2	3	3	1	3	3
Making an ironic statement	3	2	2	3	1	3
Conveying a reference document	1	3	3	3	3	1
Reinforcing one s authority	1	2	3	3	1	2
Providing a permanent record	1	3	3	1	3	1
Maintaining confidentiality	2	1	2	3	1	3
Conveying simple information	3	2	1	1	2	3
Asking an informational question	3	2	1	1	3	3
Making a simple request	3	3	1	1	3	3
Giving complex instructions	3	3	3	2	1	2
Addressing many people	2	3	3 or 1*	2	3	1

Importance of Face-to-Face Communication

Research says that in a face-to-face interaction:

- 58 percent of communication is through body language.
- 35 percent of communication is through how the words are said.
- 7 percent of communication is through the content or words that are spoken.

Pay attention to more than just the actual words someone is saying.

A person's tone of voice and body language say a lot about how he or she really feels.

Encouraging More Face-to-Face Interactions

- Short, frequent meetings are often very effective in IT projects.
- Stand-up meetings force people to focus on what they really need to communicate.
- Some companies have policies preventing the use of e- mail between certain hours or even entire days of the week.

Understanding Group and Individual Communication Needs

1. People are not interchangeable parts.
2. As illustrated in Brooks' book The Mythical Man-Month, you cannot assume that a task originally scheduled to take two months of one person's time can be done in one month by two people.
   Nine women cannot produce a baby in one month!

Personal Preferences Affect Communication Needs

1. Introverts like more private communications, while extroverts like to discuss things in public.
2. Intuitive people like to understand the big picture, while sensing people need step-by-step details.
3. Thinkers want to know the logic behind decisions, while feeling people want to know how something affects them personally.
4. Judging people are driven to meet deadlines while perceiving people need more help in developing and following plans.

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 = n(n-1)/2
  where n is the number of people involved.

number of communications channels = $\frac{n(n-1)}{2}$

2 people, 1 communications channel

4 people, 6 communications channels, etc.

3 people, 3 communications channels
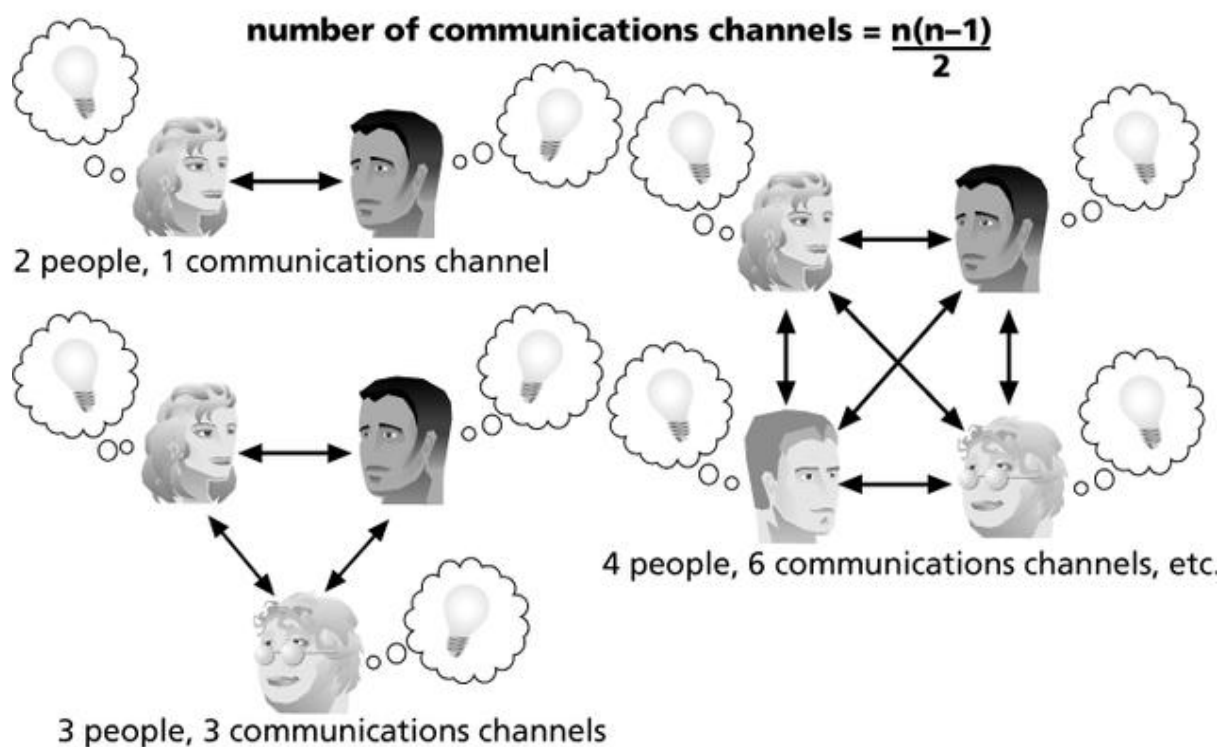
The Impact of the Number of People on Communications Channels

9.5. Performance Reporting

1. Performance reporting keeps stakeholders informed about how resources are being used to achieve project objectives.
2. Status reports describe where the project stands at a specific point in time.
3. Progress reports describe what the project team has accomplished during a certain period of time.
4. Forecasts predict future project status and progress based on past information and trends.

9.6. Managing Stakeholders

1. Project managers must understand and work with various stakeholders.
2. Need to devise a way to identify and resolve issues.

Two important tools include:

3. Expectations management matrix
4. Issue log

Expectations Management Matrix

MEASURE OF SUCCESS	PRIORITY	EXPECTATIONS	GUIDELINES
Scope	2	The scope statement clearly defines mandatory requirements and optional requirements.	Focus on meeting mandatory requirements before considering optional ones.
Time	1	There is no give in the project completion date. Every major deadline must be met, and the schedule is very realistic.	The project sponsor and program manager must be alerted if there are any issues that might affect meeting schedule goals.
Cost	3	This project is crucial to the organization. If you can clearly justify the need for more funds, they can be made available.	There are strict rules for project expenditures and escalation procedures. Cost is very important, but it takes a back seat to meeting schedule and then scope goals.
Etc.			

9.7. Tools and methods

Project team members use a variety of tools to organize and present project information.

1. **Project Fact Sheet:** The project fact sheet contains summary data for stakeholders outside the project team, and is typically posted on the project website.
2. **Filing Systems:** A filing system is a set of agreed-upon folder and file naming conventions used to classify project documents to make them easier to find. It is, essentially, a numbering scheme used to identify different types of documents and the folders where they are stored. All project records must be filed according to the following file systems
3. **Work Breakdown Structure:** The WBS is a deliverable-oriented grouping of project elements that organizes and defines the total scope of the project. Project communication relates to WBS elements. Team members use the WBS, OBS to create the communication plan.
4. **Resource Breakdown Structure:** The RBS is a standardized, hierarchical list of roles that is used to produce a project deliverable. Project team members use the RBS to determine what roles are needed to produce project-specific WBS elements and to identify who needs to receive certain communication products.
5. **Project Charter:** The project charter documents the agreement between the sponsor and the project manager over the key elements of a project and component. The charter helps the project manager guide the project team efficiently and effectively through the project development process.
6. **Organization Breakdown Structure (OBS):** The OBS describes the organization chart. It groups personnel into successively smaller units, each reporting to a single manager or supervisor.
7. **Performance Reporting:** Performance reporting involves the collection of all baseline data, and distribution of performance information to stakeholders. Performance Reporting should generally provide information on scope, schedule, cost, and quality. By analyzing deviations from plan (variances) a project manager can spot developing problems in time to take corrective action before they become serious.

Earned-value analysis translates both schedule and budget measures into dollar values and tracks them against the original planned expenditure of effort, again translated into its dollar value.

9.8. Communication Methods

Project team members use a variety of communication methods to deliver project information, including meetings, telephone calls, email, voicemail, and websites. Meetings in particular are often the most effective way to distribute information to project stakeholders. Before planning a meeting, the project manager or assigned team member should consider the communication objectives carefully and choose a meeting format that will meet the objectives.