INFO 6245 Planning & Managing Information Systems Development

Module 9

Project Communications Management

Topics of Discussion

- Communications Management
- Good Communications
- Planning Communications Management
- Managing Communications
- Monitoring Communications

Importance of Communications

Greatest threat to many projects is a failure to communicate

Many problems in other knowledge areas, such as an unclear scope or unrealistic schedules, indicate problems with communication

Technical jargon can often complicate matters and create confusion; The gap between users and developers increases as technology advances

For IT projects to succeed, every project team member needs both technical skills and soft skills

PMI Summary

1. **Planning communications management** involves determining the information and communications needs of the stakeholders. Who needs what information? When will they need it? How will the information be given to them? The outputs of this process include a communications management plan, project management plan updates, and project documents updates.

2. **Managing communications** involves creating, distributing, storing, retrieving, and disposing of project communications based on the communications management plan. The main outputs of this process are project communications, project management plan updates, project documents updates, and organizational process assets updates.

3. **Monitoring communications** involves ensuring that stakeholder communication needs are met.

Project Communications Management Overview

10.1 Plan Communications Management

.1 Inputs
  .1 Project charter
  .2 Project management plan
  .3 Project documents
  .4 Enterprise environmental factors
  .5 Organizational process assets

.2 Tools & Techniques
  .1 Expert judgment
  .2 Communication requirements analysis
  .3 Communication technology
  .4 Communication models
  .5 Communication methods
  .6 Interpersonal and team skills
  .7 Data representation
  .8 Meetings

.3 Outputs
  .1 Communications management plan
  .2 Project management plan updates
  .3 Project documents update

10.2 Manage Communications

.1 Inputs
  .1 Project management plan
  .2 Project documents
  .3 Work performance reports
  .4 Enterprise environmental factors
  .5 Organizational process assets

.2 Tools & Techniques
  .1 Communication technology
  .2 Communication methods
  .3 Communication skills
  .4 Project management Information system
  .5 Project reporting
  .6 Interpersonal and team skills
  .7 Meetings

.3 Outputs
  .1 Project communications
  .2 Project management plan updates
  .3 Project documents updates
  .4 Organizational process assets updates

10.3 Monitor Communications
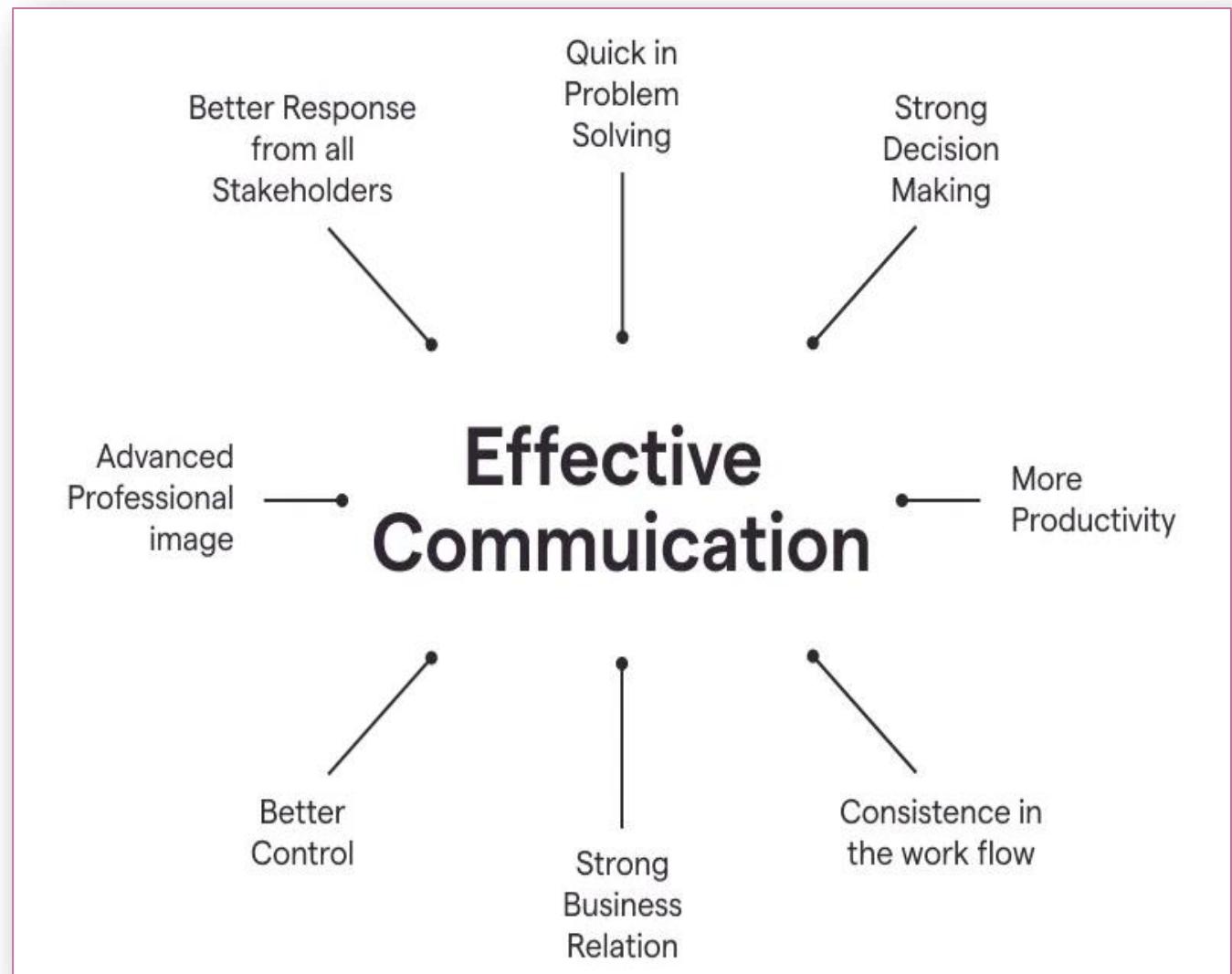
.1 Inputs
  .1 Project management plan
  .2 Project documents
  .3 Work performance data
  .4 Enterprise environmental factors
  .5 Organizational process assets

.2 Tools & Techniques
  .1 Expert judgment
  .2 Project management information system
  .3 Data representation
  .4 Interpersonal and team skills
  .5 Meetings

.3 Outputs
  .1 Work performance information
  .2 Change requests
  .3 Project management plan updates
  .4 Project documents updates

Effective Communications

Benefits of Effective Communications

- Project managers say they spend as much as 90 percent of their time communicating
  - Several important concepts can help
    - 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

Formal & Informal Communications

- Project managers must be good at nurturing relationships through good communication.

- Team members use informal discussions about the project to develop trusting relationships.

- Oral communication helps build stronger relationships among project personnel and project stakeholders. People like to interact with each other to get a true feeling for how a project is going.

- Effective creation and distribution of information depends on project managers and project team members having good communication skills.

- Communicating includes many different dimensions such as writing, speaking, and listening, and project personnel need to use all these dimensions in their daily routines.

Basis	Formal Communication	Informal Communication
Origin	Deliberately Structured	Spontaneous and Unstructured
Nature	Well Planned, Systematic and Authorized	Unplanned, unsystematic and unauthorized
Flow	Prescribed through chain of command	Unofficial channels not Prescribed
Flexibility	Rigid	Flexible
Authority	Official Channel	Unofficial
Purpose	To achieve Business Objectives	To satisfy personal needs
Speed	Time taking	Fast
Accuracy	Accurate, Legal and Authentic	Often Distorted, may be Rumors and Gossips
Form	Oral and Written	Usually Oral
Source	Can be traced	Cannot be traced

Distributing Information

Include detailed technical information that affects critical performance features of products or services

Document any changes in technical specifications that might affect product performance

Report bad news in a timely manner, with clear and concise explanation

Oral communications through short, frequent meetings or informal talks help bring important information into the open

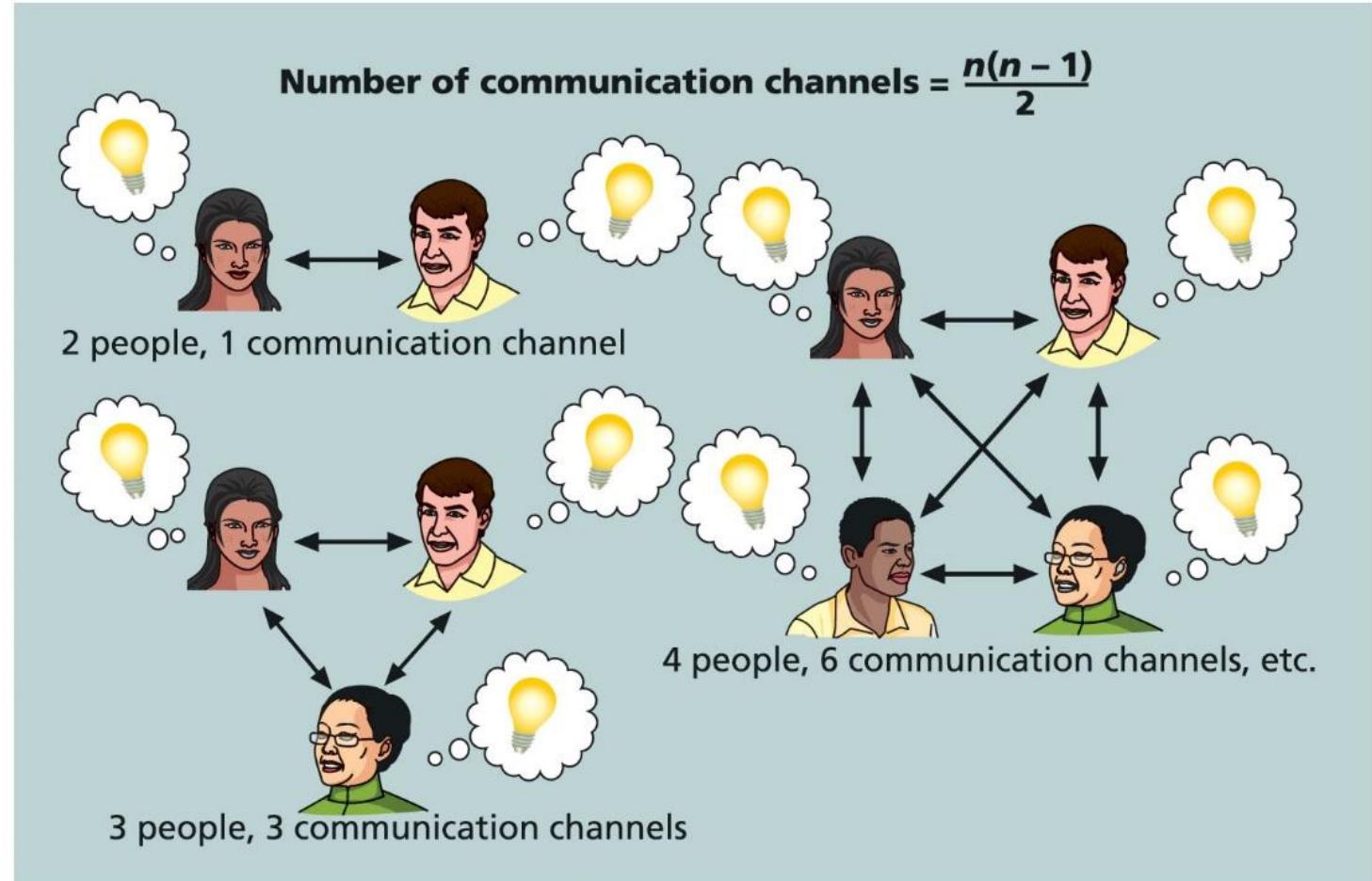# Communicating Bad News

It is important to put information in context, especially if it's bad news

If there is a problem, know how it will affect the whole project and the organization

Recommend steps to take to mitigate a problem

PMs should know how a major problem might affect the bottom line of the organization

PMs should use leadership skills to handle the challenge

Communication Channels

- As the number of people involved increases, the complexity of communications increases

- More communications channels or pathways through which people can communicate

- Number of communications channels, where n is the number of people involved:

$$\frac{n * (n - 1)}{2}$$

Number of communication channels = $\frac{n(n-1)}{2}$

2 people, 1 communication channel

3 people, 3 communication channels

4 people, 6 communication channels, etc.

Planning
Communications
Management

Communications Management Plan

- Every project should include some type of communications management plan

- It helps guide the project communications and varies with the needs of the project

- For small projects, the communications management plan can be part of the team contract

- For large projects, it should be a separate document

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

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
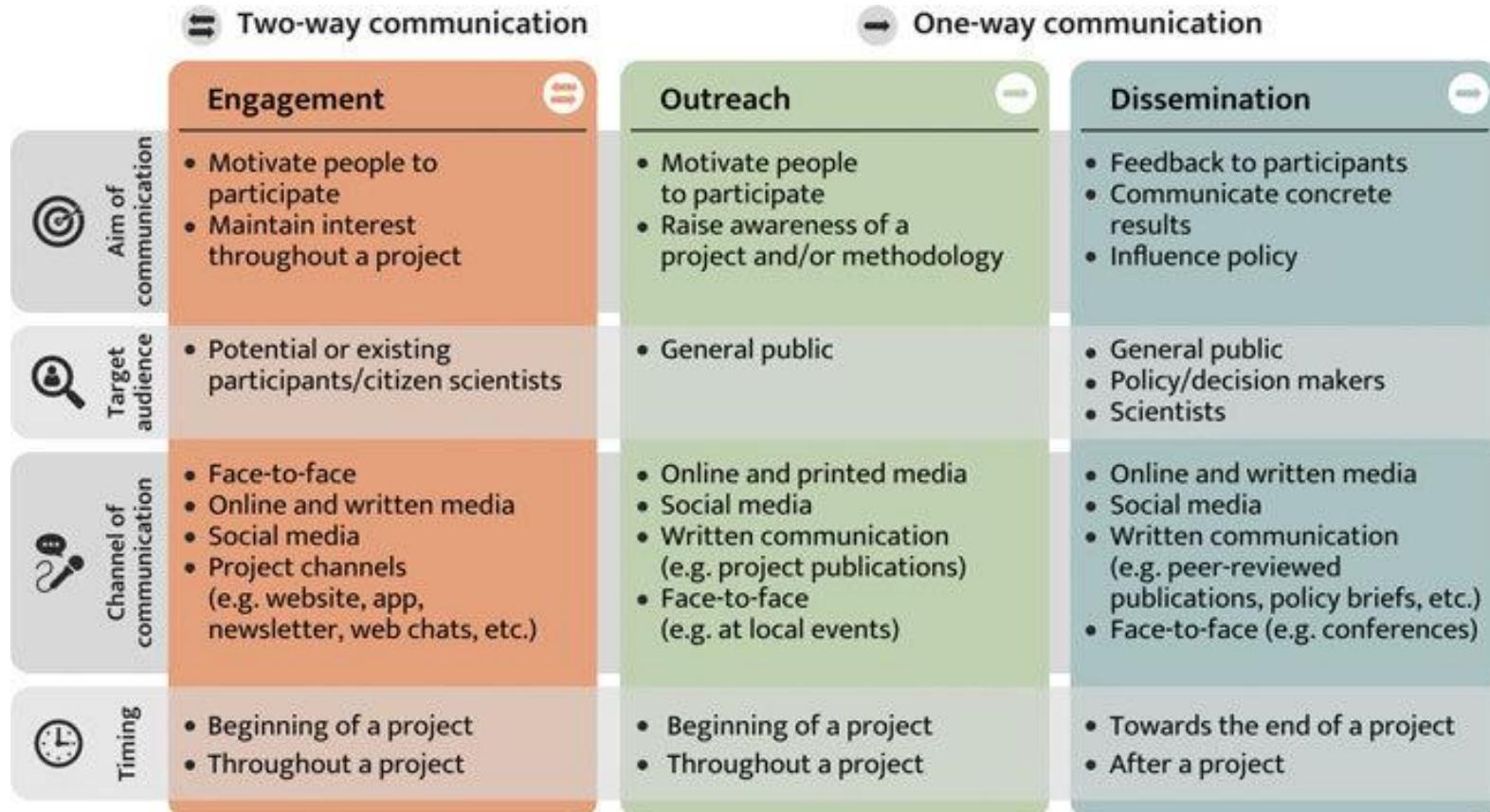8. A glossary of common terminology

**Managing
Communications**

Using Technology

- 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

- Technology can facilitate the process of creating and distributing information, when used effectively

- Email, Instant Messaging, Websites, Phone calls, Texts are all common mediums that most people and businesses rely on

- Project Management Information System can help create, store, organize, and distribute project documents
  - Performance reporting

Project Communications

	Two-way communication	One-way communication	
	Engagement ⇄	**Outreach** ⊖	**Dissemination** ⊖
Aim of communication	• Motivate people to participate • Maintain interest throughout a project	• Motivate people to participate • Raise awareness of a project and/or methodology	• Feedback to participants • Communicate concrete results • Influence policy
Target audience	• Potential or existing participants/citizen scientists	• General public	• General public • Policy/decision makers • Scientists
Channel of communication	• Face-to-face • Online and written media • Social media • Project channels (e.g. website, app, newsletter, web chats, etc.)	• Online and printed media • Social media • Written communication (e.g. project publications) • Face-to-face (e.g. at local events)	• Online and written media • Social media • Written communication (e.g. peer-reviewed publications, policy briefs, etc.) • Face-to-face (e.g. conferences)
Timing	• Beginning of a project • Throughout a project	• Beginning of a project • Throughout a project	• Towards the end of a project • After a project

Communication Media

- **Interactive communication:** Two or more people interact to exchange information via meetings, phone calls, or video conferencing. This method is usually the 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. This method 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 websites, bulletin boards, e-learning, knowledge repositories like blogs and wikis, and other means.

How Well Medium Is Suited to:	Hard Copy	Phone Call	Voice Mail	E-mail	Meeting	Website
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 or 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	2
Reinforcing one's authority	1	2	3	3	1	1
Providing a permanent record	1	3	3	1	3	3
Maintaining confidentiality	2	1	2	3	1	3
Conveying simple information	3	1	1	1	2	3
Asking an informational question	3	1	1	1	3	3
Making a simple request	3	1	1	1	3	3
Giving complex instructions	3	3	2	2	1	2
Addressing many people	2	3 or 1*	2	2	3	1

Key: 1 = Excellent, 2 = Adequate, 3 = Inappropriate

Communication Methods

Verbal
- Use a strong, confident speaking voice
- Use active listening
- Avoid Filler words
- Avoid industry jargon when appropriate

Non-Verbal
- Notice how your emotions feel physically
- Be intentional about your non-verbal communications
- Mimic non-verbal communications you find effective

Visual
- Ask others before including visuals
- Consider your audience
- Only add visuals if they add value
- Make them clear and easy to understand

Written
- Strive your simplicity
- Don't rely on tone
- Take time to review your written communications
- Keep a file of writing you found effective or enjoyable

Reporting Performance

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

Progress reports describe what the project team has accomplished during a certain period of time

Status reports describe where the project stands at a specific point in time

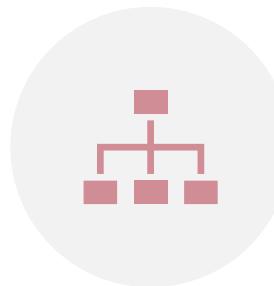Forecasts predict future project status and progress based on past information and trends

Monitoring Communications

Monitoring Communications

Main goal of monitoring communications is to ensure the optimal flow of information throughout the entire project life cycle

The project manager and project team should use expert judgment, project management information systems, data representation, interpersonal and team skills, 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

Improving Project Communications

7 C's for Communication Skills

Clear
Be clear about the goal and purpose of your message

Coherent
Make sure your message flows well and laid out logically

Concise
Keep to the point and keep your message short and simple

Complete
Ensure the recipient has everything they need to understand

Concrete
Be clear, not fuzzy! Provide detail, but not too much detail

Courteous
Your message should be polite, friendly, professional and open

Correct
Make sure your message is accurate and grammatically correct

How to Communicate Well

- 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

Listen
Listening is a gift.

Make eye contact
It demonstrates respect.

Mirror
It builds trust.

Be diplomatic
Keep your cool.

Ask questions
It shows you care.

Be straight
People can smell BS.

Sense of humor
Because things go wrong.

Emotional intelligence
Observe. Think. Respond.

Assume positive intent
Most people mean well.

Be congruent
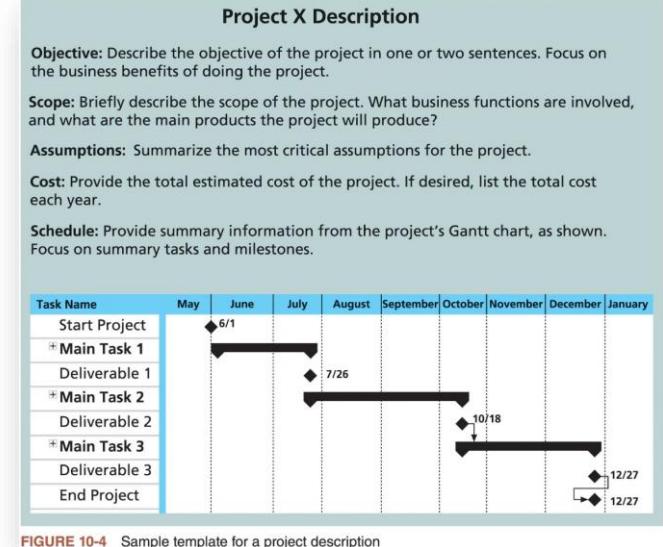Words, non-verbals and emotions. Aligned.

Effective Meetings

1 → **2** → **3** → **4** → **5** → **6** → **7** → **8**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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

Guidelines for Emails

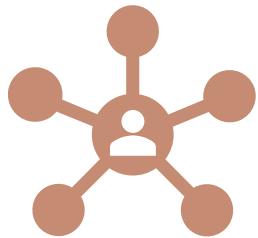|	
Check	Be sure to send information to the right people
Use	Use meaningful subject lines and limit the content of emails to one main subject
Clarify	Be as clear and concise as possible
Reread	Reread your e-mail before you send it
Limit	Limit the number and size of e-mail attachments
Delete	Delete e-mail that you do not need to save or that does not require a response
Protect	Make sure the virus protection software is up to date
Respond	Respond to e-mail quickly
File	If you need to keep e-mail, file each message appropriately

Using Preset Templates

- Many people are afraid to ask for help
  - Providing examples and templates for project communications saves time and money
  - Finding, developing, and sharing relevant templates and sample documents are important tasks for many project managers
- The project manager and project team members should prepare a lessons-learned report
  - Reflective statement that documents important information they have learned from working on the project
- Project teams can use one of the many software products available to assist in project communications through the Web
  - Vary considerably in price and functionality

FIGURE 10-4   Sample template for a project description

Source: Atlassian

FIGURE 10-6   Jira agile reporting

Global or Distributed Projects

Many projects involve people who do not work in close proximity to each other

Effectively planning for good project communications and using appropriate technology become even more important in these situations

Even with all the technology available, many organizations have problems communicating on global projects

Issues with timing, audio, and video

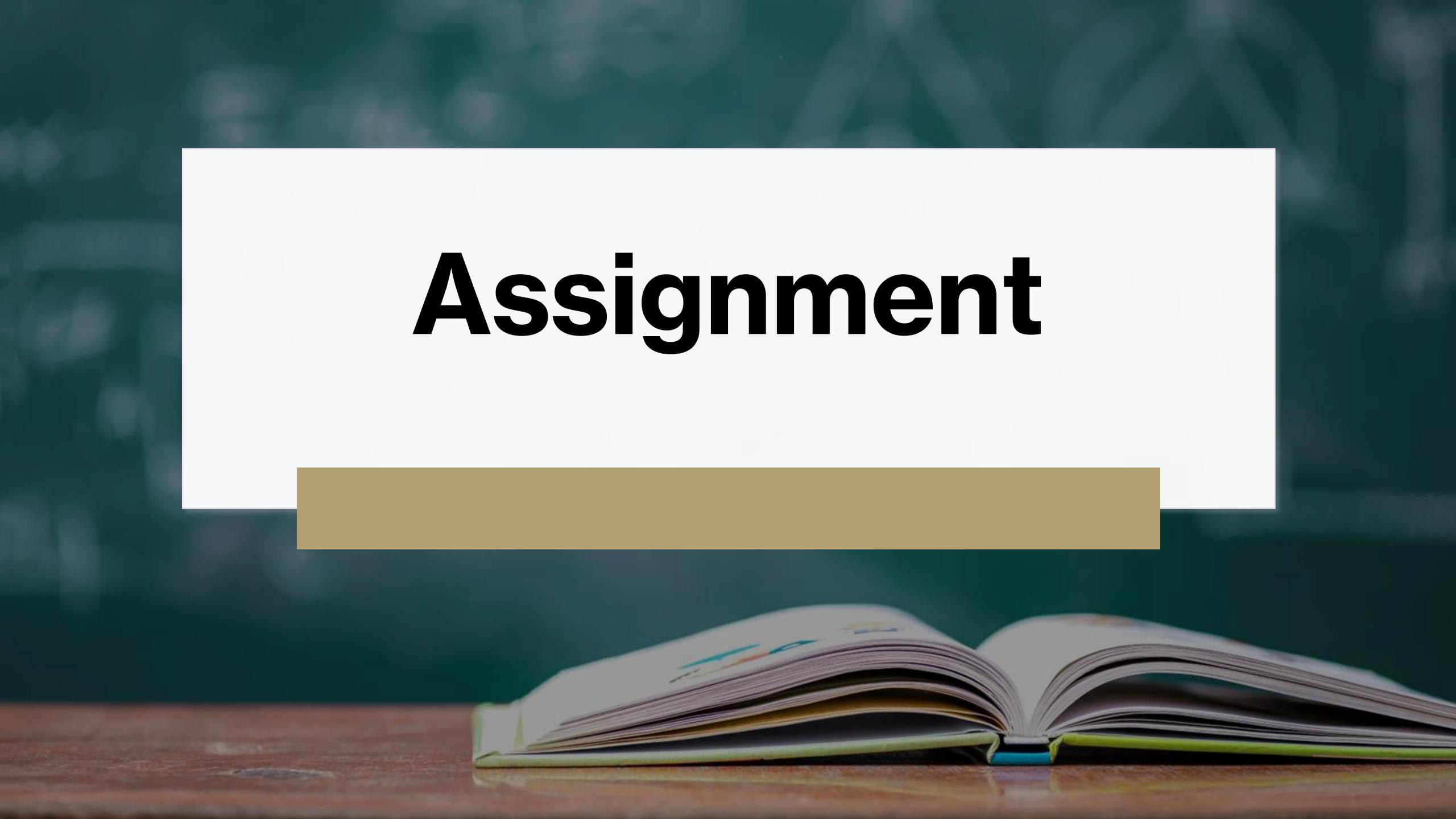Differences in culture and language

In-Class Group Exercise

Communications Plan

- Use the template provided in the discussion board

- Create a communications plan for your team project for the following deliverables

    1) Project Proposal

    2) Weekly Status

    3) Customer Issue Escalation

    4) Monthly Cost & Schedule Review

    5) Interpersonal conflict within team members

    6) Product Launch Announcement

- Identify the following for each: 1) Intended Audience, 2) Preferred communication channel / format, 3) Frequency of Communications, 4) Owner

- Consider all stakeholders for the project – team members, organizational leadership, customers

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Assignment

ASSN#8

- **Textbook Chapter 10, Exercise 1, Page 459**

- Research the topic of understanding body language.
    - What are some common body movements that can help you understand how people are really feeling?
    - What does it mean if someone looks up a lot when talking versus looking down or side to side?
    - What does it mean when people cross their arms, touch their noses, or make other common gestures with their bodies?

- Do not need to conduct the role-play scenario.

- Document your research in a short paper and submit as your assignment.