# PMPP 201 Unit 8: Communications Knowledge Area

## Overview

Welcome to Unit 8 of PMPP 201. In this Unit, we will consider the tools that allow a project manager to form and develop their project teams. Arguably, the quality of the team is proportional to the quality of the project outcome.

This unit will consider the Knowledge Area of **Communications**.

About 90% of a project manager’s time is spent communicating. As a project manager, this is your primary job function. In high-functioning project teams, your only activity will be *facilitating*.

However, communication doesn’t ‘just happen’. Like most activities within a project, you need to have a written plan to have the most effective communication possible. This week’s focus is on developing that plan.

There are numerous communication theories that plot the path of communication. We will use the most common one, the Sender/Receiver model. One of the key elements has to do with the FACT that you, as project manager, need to navigate the personal filters (the encoding/decoding process) of the *receiver*.

In three more weeks, this unit will tie in closely to the unit on Stakeholder Management.

We target our assignments to prepare you for use in real-world project management. You will commonly perform work based on a given scenario or use samples/templates from the web. Plus, each week, you’ll be submitting a Weekly Recap Status Report that discusses lessons learned.

## Topics

This unit is divided into the following topics:

1. Communication Hinderance
   * Communication efforts take about 95% of a project manager’s time.
   * Hinderances to communication can range from simple challenges to project-killing catastrophic *bombs*.
2. Communication Technologies
   * Technology provides several tools (in communication theory, “Mediums”).
   * It is important to align the technology to the organization, project, and stakeholders.
3. Monitoring Communications
   * Once project work goes live, monitoring happens relentlessly throughout the remainder project work.
   * A project team must decide the methods of communication(s) for all monitoring efforts
4. Written Communication Plan
   * There are tremendous risks if project activity, in any phase, does not have a written plan for communication
   * Each section of your Project Communication Plan will contain content that is specific to the project, the enterprise factors, and to stakeholder needs.

## Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this unit, you should be able to:

* Consider the personal ‘filters’ (during ‘decoding’) of a communications recipient and determine hinderances to effective communication
* Select and use the proper technology to aid in communication efforts during project work
* Analyze the communication needs of your organization, project, and stakeholders and establish a more effective project *monitoring* system
* Develop a written Project Communication Plan

## Activity Checklist

Below is a checklist of learning activities you will benefit from in completing this unit. You may find it useful for planning your work.

It is important to complete ALL Personal Activity PRIOR to FAR Centre sessions.

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| 🗹 | **Activities** | **Expected Time Commitment** |
|  | **Personal Activity 8.0.1:** Watch Instructor Video (PowerPoint file included for reference). | 30 minutes |
|  | **Personal Activity 8.0.2:** Read All In One (AIO), chapter 10. | 60 minutes |
|  | **Personal Activity 8.0.3:** Watch AIO Video “Comm Model” by Phillips. | 10 minutes |
|  | **Personal Activity 8.0.4:** Watch Web Video “Communications Models: Basic SMCR Model” by Patricia Jenkinson | 5 minutes |
|  | **Personal Activity 8.0.5:** Watch Web Video “Project Management: Creating a Communications Plan” by Project Management Videos | 7 minutes |
|  | **Personal Activity 8.0.6:** Watch Web Video “Project Communications Plan: Key to Effective Communications in Projects” by Project Management Videos | 6 minutes |
|  | **Personal Activity 8.0.7:** Watch Web Video “How to Create a Communications Plan” by D&D | 12 minutes |
|  | **FAR Centre Activity 8.1.1:** Form a ring of all students on one side of the classroom. The facilitator is to take one student to the other side (or outside) of the room and secretly read a (provided to the Facilitator) statement to the student. (The student MUST NOT be able to read the statement.) The student is to write down EXACTLY what they heard. The Facilitator is to sit down. The next student in the circle joins the first and repeats the process. The statement is read and the new student writes it down. This process is repeated until all students have participated. | 60 minutes |
|  | **FAR Centre Activity 8.1.2**: The final student in the above process is to read their written version and it is then compared to the Facilitator’s original. There should be discussion as to how the differences happened… | 15 minutes |
|  | **FAR Centre Activity 8.2.1**: Form groups of 3 to 5. Scenario: Your project team is mixed with older and younger members. Older members prefer phone calls to be notified of project problems, while the younger members prefer texts. With your project being the manufacturing of new aviation parts, the LAW REQUIRES written communication (usually email). Consider AIO pages 401 and 402, namely Figure 10-3. Also consider a web search for “Multi-generational preferred communication methods”. Then, Establish 3 to 5 points (one per group member) that explains how your team would overcome the generational communication challenges. | 30 minutes |
|  | **FAR Centre Activity 8.2.2:** Proceeding by group, each person is to share their point and the details, taking about 1 minute each. | 15 minutes |
|  | **FAR Centre Activity 8.3.1:** Return to your teams. Using the scenario above, and AIO pages 404 to 406, create 4 charts in Excel that you think are the most important (fabricate the data) for this scenario. | 30 minutes |
|  | **FAR Centre Activity 8.3.2:** Share your results with the class. This should take 2 to 3 minutes per group. | 10 minutes |
|  | **FAR Centre Activity 8.4.1:** Rejoin your teams. Perform a web search for “Sample Project Communication Plan”. Consider the web file in the Resource section, too (scroll to the sample by resumetem – boxed in red). Determine the best column headers that you would use to create a Project Communication Plan for the above scenario. | 20 minutes |
|  | **FAR Centre Activity 8.4.2:** Share your results with the class, justifying your choices. | 20 minutes |
|  | **Assessment 8.1:** Consider the scenario from Week 5, then web search for ‘Sample Project Communication Plan’, (one is offered in Resources Section/Web Link) then write a Communication Plan:   * AIO pages 399 and 400 may offer additional topics * You will have to fabricate specific data (e.g. Names, Titles, and preferred method(s) of communication) * Be sure to include a Dashboard plan, describing charts included and why * You are welcome to use the template offered in the Resources Section Web Link. (scroll down to the version offered by resumetem, boxed in red).   Your plan should be 300 to 500 words, minimum. | Tbd |
|  | **Assessment 8.2: Far Centre Participation:** Yourdiscussion and presentation participation will be considered by Facilitator and an evaluation will be submitted weekly to the Instructor. Plus, you will submit your Weekly Recap Status Report (using the template provided). | Tbd |

## Resources

Purchased Resources (textbooks, DVD):

* All In One (AIO), (Phillips), Chapter 10
  + AIO Video, “Comm Model” (from CD that comes with the textbook)

Provided Resources (files/weblinks):

* Web File: “How to Write an ‘F’ Paper” by Joseph Pattison
* Web Video: “Communications Models: Basic SMCR Model” by Patricia Jenkinson
* Web Video: “Project Management: Creating a Communications Plan” by Project Management Videos
* Web Video: “Project Communications Plan: Key to Effective Communications in Projects” by Project Management Videos
* Web Video: “How to Create a Communications Plan” by D&D
* Web Link: “Communication Plan Template Project management” by resumetem

The most recent PMPP Textbook List, including ISBN’s, for all PMPP courses can be found in Moodle.

## Notes on ALL Learning Activities

Note that the learning activities in this course are ungraded, unless specified. All learning activities are designed to help you succeed in their assessments in this course, so you are strongly encouraged to complete them.

## Personal Activity:

The following activities are to be completed **before** your FAR Centre weekly session. Be sure to complete them to be fully prepared. Your familiarity with the topics and concepts will greatly help you participate with confidence during FAR Centre Activities.

#### Personal Activity 8.0.1: Watch Instructor Recorded Video

The weekly video is a preview of the topics to be studied for this unit. They are usually 15 to 30 minutes and have a supplemental PowerPoint file. You may find this gives you an edge in retaining the content you are ‘about to read’.

* Watch the video here: [link to file added when available].
* Find the supplemental PowerPoint file here: [link to file added when available].

#### Personal Activity 8.0.2: Read All In One (AIO), Chapter 10

Communication failures can kill a project. And, for some high-impact projects, these failures could even lead to an organization’s demise.

Having a communication plan is better than no plan. Having a *written* communication plan is WAY better. This chapter focuses on the development of a written Project Communication Plan, including the possible components (each and every communication plan will vary depending on the organizational enterprise factors and the project itself.

#### Personal Activity 8.0.3: Watch Web Video: “Comm Model”

This video discusses the most common communication theory, with a sender and a receiver/decoding and encoding; and so on…

#### Personal Activity 8.0.4: Watch Web Video “Communications Models: Basic SMCR Model”

This video allows another view of the predominate communication theory that is used in project management circles.

#### Personal Activity 8.0.5: Watch Web Video “Project Management: Creating a Communications Plan””

This video starts to bring to light the components that are likely to include in every communication plan. Take notes to start to formulate your list of possible components. (Not all components will be used every time because project vary.)

#### Personal Activity 8.0.6: Watch Web Video “Project Communications Plan: Key to Effective Communications in Projects”

This video allows another view of the components of a communication plan. Again, take notes to add to your list.

#### Personal Activity 8.0.7: Watch Web Video “How to Create a Communications Plan”

This video goes right to the core of developing your plan. Take more notes. Using your total list of components will help, as well as AIO pages 300 and 400.

## Topic 1: Communication Hinderance

Due to the very nature to our communication efforts, with the encoding and decoding, there are *filters* that have to be navigated. But with any filter, some items pass and others don’t… there is ALWAYS some decay. This can be compounded when the information is passed from filter to filter to filter to filter…

This exercise is designed to reveal how much content could be lost in just a few *generations*.

This is just one version of communication challenges. Imagine all of the potential factors that can reduce, slow, or stop proper communication… and the impact during a project; especially a critical project.

#### FAR Centre Activity 8.1.1: Communication Decay Exercise

#### Form a ring of all students on one side of the classroom. The facilitator is to take one student to the other side (or outside) of the room and secretly read a (provided to the Facilitator) statement to the student. (The student MUST NOT be able to read the statement.) The student is to write down EXACTLY what they heard. The Facilitator is to sit down.

#### The next student in the circle joins the first and repeats the process. The statement is read and the new student writes it down. This process is repeated until all students have participated.

#### FAR Centre Activity 8.1.2: Classifying Equipment and Supplies

The final student in the above process is to read their written version and it is then compared to the Facilitator’s original. There should be discussion as to how the differences happened…

## Topic 2: Communication Technologies

Technology plays a huge part of our society today. But there are generational differences when it comes to the use of technology. Namely, different generations have different technology (communication) preferences.

As a project manager, you need to discern and denote the technology communication preferences for each stakeholder; AND this list of preferences needs to be in line with the organizational AND project specific needs.

#### FAR Centre Activity 8.2.1: Overcoming Generational Differences

Form groups of 3 to 5. Scenario: Your project team is mixed with older and younger members. Older members usually prefer phone calls to be notified of project problems, while the younger members likely prefer texts. With your project being the ‘manufacturing of new aviation parts’, the LAW REQUIRES written communication (usually email). Consider AIO pages 401 and 402, namely Figure 10-3. Also consider a web search for “Multi-generational preferred communication methods”.

Then, Establish 3 to 5 points (one per group member) that explains how your team would overcome the generational communication challenges.

#### FAR Centre Activity 8.2.2: Org Chart for Traditional-Style Enterprise

Proceeding by group, each person is to share their point and the details, taking about 1 minute each.

## Topic 3: Monitoring Communications

Once a project proceeds out of the planning phase (and ‘goes live’), there needs to be a *monitoring* and *controlling* system in place to keep the project proceeding in the desired direction.

Monitoring is the data collection and reporting mechanism in this process. (*Controlling* are the decisions that come from stakeholders observing the *monitoring* reporting.)

The most common format to report data is in the form of a chart. A collection of charts, making up a *dashboard*, are the most common method to display the chosen charts (the stakeholders choose what charts they want to see).

#### FAR Centre Activity 8.3.1: Communicating the Monitoring via a Dashboard

Return to your teams. Using the scenario above, and AIO pages 404 to 406, create 4 charts in Excel that you think are the most important for this scenario.

You will have to completely fabricate the data to make the charts.

#### FAR Centre Activity 8.3.2: Share Your Results

Share your results with the class and why you selected these charts.

## Topic 4: Written Communication Plan

In this segment, you will consider the components of a written project communication plan and begin to formulate a plan template for your own use. Your list of components should be well populated from prior work this week… this allows you to have ease in completing this segment.

#### FAR Centre Activity 8.4.1: Components of a Communication Plan

Return to your groups. Using the scenario above, perform a web search for “Sample Project Communications Plan”. Then, as a group, determine the best column headers to use (if you were to create a Communication Plan) for this scenario.

#### FAR Centre Activity 8.4.2: Present Your Results

Share your results and your justifications with the group.

## Unit 8 Summary

In this unit, you have had the opportunity to learn about…

1. Every project requires plenty of communication. So much that it may consume 90 to 95% of a project manager’s time.
2. A well put together team will require the project manager to (just) focus on facilitating… being a conduit for all the project communication.
3. Good communication doesn’t just happen accidentally. It requires a knowledge of what constitutes proper communication techniques… and, of course, using them.
   1. Understanding communication theory will help.

## Assessments

### *Assessment 8.1: Written Assignment*

Consider the scenario from Week 5, then web search for ‘Sample Project Communication Plan’, (one is offered in Resources Section/Web Link) then write a Communication Plan:

* You will have to fabricate specific data (e.g. Names, Titles, and preferred method(s) of communication)
* Be sure to include a Dashboard plan, describing charts included and why
* You are welcome to use the template offered in the Resources Section Web Link. (scroll down to the version offered by resumetem, boxed in red).

You will upload this into Moodle for grading.

### *Written Assignment Grading Criteria:*

The grading of the Written Assignment will be based on the PMPP Standard Rubric:

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| **Syntax and Spelling:** | |  |  |
|  | Emerging (0 to 6 points) | Developing (7 to 8 points) | Mastering (9 to 10 Points) |
|  | Student appears to not have checked for spelling and grammatical errors. Sentence structure is difficult to follow. Basic composition rules may not be followed. APA formatting has errors. | There are limited minor errors in spelling or grammar. The content may not flow smoothly and may be disjointed in thought and application. APA formatting is adequate. | There is either no errors or just a minor error in spelling or grammar. The content flows well and are a solid example of proper composition elements of style. APA formatting is exemplary. |
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| **Thorough Answers to Assignment:** | |  |  |
|  | Emerging (0 to 21 points) | Developing (22 to 30 points) | Mastering (31 to 35 Points) |
|  | Student may have simply just answered the assignment demonstrating limited knowledge of the content, lacked depth, and offered limited (or no) sources. Major points of the assignment are not developed. | Student answered the minimum of the assignment and offered undeveloped use of sources. They may need to cultivate some portion(s) of the assignment more in order to head toward mastery. | Student has clearly mastered the assignment content and properly used sources to thoroughly prove their thesis Content is clear and concise, without being too wordy; finishing with a great conclusion. |

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| **Personalization/Examples:** | |  |  |
|  | Emerging (0 to 21 points) | Developing (22 to 25 points) | Mastering (26 to 30 Points) |
|  | Student offers shallow or no personal examples to support their thesis. | Student shows personalization, but may be offering 'someone else's story' or one that doesn’t fit the assignment. Application of the content may not be thoroughly explained (to fit their thesis). | Student offers are least one strong example from personal experience, and fits well with their thesis and conclusion. Impact on faith may be included in the answer. |
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| **Professional Presentation:** | |  |  |
|  | Emerging (0 to 9 points) | Developing (10 to 12 points) | Mastering (13 to 15 Points) |
|  | Paper is offered in an acceptable presentation but lacks consistent formatting. Paragraphs are too large. Word choice may not be appropriate for the ‘business style’ required for this course. Overall appearance detracts from the content. | Paper is better than an ‘acceptable’ presentation. Paragraph size is appropriate (limited to 4 sentences each) and word choice is fitting. Overall appearance is on the brink of greatness. | Paper is very professional looking. Paragraphs are well formulated. Excellent word choice and appearance add to the overall content. Total appearance is exceptional. |

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| **Sources:** | |  |  |
|  | Emerging (0 to 5 points) | Developing (6 to 8 points) | Mastering (9 to 10 Points) |
|  | Student use of citation(s) does not comply with the assignment minimums; and sources are (just) from textbooks. | Student uses minimum quantity of required citations, but a majority are from the textbook(s). | Sources are rarely from textbooks and often from creative sources. |

### *Assessment 8.2: FAR Centre* *Participation*

You are expected to complete your reading assignments prior to class. Then during class, opening (with honesty and respect) join in on class discussions, small group discussions, and presentations.

Plus, you will submit a Weekly Recap Status Report (uploaded onto Moodle), using the template provided. You can score up to 100 points for this.

### *FAR Centre Participation Grading Criteria:*

Using the TWU general guide to grading found in the syllabus, the Facilitator will provide a score (and any applicable feedback) to the Instructor, namely, an evaluation of each student’s participation in the weekly sessions. Since these cannot be made up, attendance is mandatory.

For the Facilitator feedback, scoring is based on the below rubric.

* Attendance: 0 points for an absence, 10 for being late, and 25 for full attendance
* Attentiveness, up to 25 points
* Quality of class & small group discussions, up to 25 points
* Quality of presentations, up to 25 points
  + In the event of group presentations, the group will share the same score

Plus, you will submit a Weekly Recap Status Report (uploaded onto Moodle). You can score up to 100 points for this.

## Checking your Learning

Before you move on to the next unit, you may want to check to make sure that you are able to:

* Discern how personal filters function within the decoding and encoding processes of communication, and be able to adjust your communication as a project manager to increase the amount of informational transfer to the communication recipient.
* Select the most appropriate technology tools to achieve proper communication within your project.
* Analyze the communication needs of your organization, project, and stakeholders and establish a more effective project *monitoring* system
* Build and develop a written Project Communication Plan.