What Is A RACI Chart? How This Project Management Tool Can Boost Your Productivity

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10–12 minutes

The RACI chart has long been a popular tool amongst project managers around the world. Also referred to as the RACI matrix, it's used to clarify employee roles and responsibilities for each task, milestone and decision that takes place throughout a project.

The chart is designed to ensure clear communication and smooth workflows across all parts of a team. RACI charts can help prevent that sinking feeling when a major decision-maker comes at the end of a project and complicates things with a large number of changes because they weren't consulted throughout the project.

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A RACI chart, also called a RACI matrix, is a type of [responsibility assignment matrix](#) (RAM) in project management. In practice, it's a simple spreadsheet or table that lists all stakeholders on a project and their level involvement in each task, denoted with the letters R, A, C or I. Once these roles are defined, assignments can be attributed to the roles and work can begin.

R, A, C, I stands for:

- Responsible

- Accountable

- Consulted

- Informed

Here's what each designation means:

Responsible

Responsible designates the task as assigned directly to this person (or group of people). The responsible person is the one who does the work to complete the task or create the deliverable. Every task should have at least one responsible person and could have several.

Responsible parties are typically on the project team and are usually developers or other creators.

Accountable

The accountable person in the RACI equation delegates and reviews the work involved in a project. Their job is to make sure the responsible person or team knows the expectations of the project and completes work on time. Every task should have only one accountable person and no more.

Accountable parties are typically on the project team, usually in a leadership or management role.

Consulted

Consulted people provide input and feedback on the work being done in a project. They have a stake in the outcomes of a project because it could affect their current or future work.

Project managers and teams should consult these stakeholders ahead of starting a task to get input on their needs, and again throughout the work and at the completion of a task to get feedback on the outcome.

Not every task or milestone needs a consulted party, but the project manager should consider all possible stakeholders when creating the RACI chart and include as many consulted parties as is appropriate. You should limit this to only necessary input, however. For example, one consulted party per affected team is generally considered best practice to avoid clogging the process with too much input.

Consulted parties may be individuals on the project team who aren't working on a given task but whose work will be affected by the outcome. They're also often teammates outside of the project team—even in different departments—whose work will be affected by the outcomes of the project.

Informed

Informed folks need to be looped into the progress of a project but not consulted or overwhelmed with the details of every task. They need to know what's going on because it could affect their work, but they're not decision makers in the process.

Informed parties are usually outside of the project team and often in different departments. They might include heads or directors of affected teams and senior leadership in a company.

When Should You Use a RACI Matrix?

The framework of a RACI chart is useful for almost any project, although some teams might find it more useful than others

For example, I know in creating this article that I'm the responsible party, because I'm doing the work of writing. My editor is accountable for assigning and reviewing the work. And they likely have consulted and informed others around them, such as a managing editor and an SEO specialist.

But this project is fairly simple. It only takes a few steps and includes a handful of stakeholders. A formal RACI chart comes in handy for complex and long-lasting projects that include lots of stakeholders, tasks and milestones, especially if work is overlapping.

For example, a company's website redesign would require design, copy and development teams to work on tasks concurrently. Each task would affect work in sales, marketing, finance and business development. Structural changes, timelines and major costs would require input and approval from senior management.

Needs are easily overlooked and requirements dropped in such complex projects.

A project manager typically creates a RACI chart to avoid missing those important details and ensure clear communication throughout the project.

Using RACI with Other Project Management Methodologies

Agile is a very popular type of project management, especially for tech workers. While RACI is applicable to agile project management, schools of thought vary on whether it is necessary for an agile context.

Additionally, the Scrum and Scrumban [project management methodologies](#) build project ownership (accountability) into their framework and are designed to facilitate regular communication among project teams and outside stakeholders. That makes a RACI chart seem redundant for this method and possibly a poor use of a project manager's time.

However, additional communication and clarification—in a systematic fashion—tend to be more of a benefit than a drawback for any project, so some SCRUM project managers find RACI useful for clarifying roles for individual projects or their overall process.

Example RACI Chart (and How To Use It)

RACI CHART EXAMPLE

Project tasks	Senior Analyst	Project Manager	Head of Design	SVP Finance	SEO Lead	Sales Director	Senior Management
Phase 1: Research							
Econometric model	R	I	I	A	C	I	I
Strategic framework	A	I	I	R	I	I	C
Risk factors	R	I	I	A	I	I	I
Phase 2: Structure							
Product specs	I	A	R	I	C	C	C
Design wireframe	I	C	R	I	C	I	C
User journey	I	C	R	I	C	C	C
User experience testing	I	C	R	I	C	C	C
Evaluation framework	I	R	C	I	C	I	C
Development backlog	I	R	C	I	C	I	C
Delivery roadmap	C	R	A	C	C	C	I

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To create a RACI chart, list all of a project's tasks down the left-hand column and stakeholders across the top row. For each task, enter an R, A, C or I to assign a level of involvement for each stakeholder in each task.

For example, in the matrix above:

- The senior analyst is responsible for completing the work in the econometric model.

- The SVP finance is accountable for that task—they assign it to the senior analyst and review the work.

- The team will consult the SEO lead for input before and feedback after the task.

- The team will inform the project manager, head of design, sales director and senior management of the project's progress.

Color coding tasks can be useful to see at a glance whether any team member is responsible for too many tasks within a project and to make sure you've assigned at least one Responsible and one *Accountable* party for each task.

Breaking the chart down by project phases also lets you see how many tasks anyone is responsible for within a certain timeframe, which can help distribute work evenly and avoid overwhelm.

Pros and Cons of RACI

From a [project management](#) perspective, things like more organization and clearer communication are generally better, so the benefits of using a RACI chart on a project far outweigh the drawbacks in most cases. With that in mind, teams should be cognizant of the initial time investment of creating a RACI chart and the rigidity of the roles.

Pros

- Maintain clear and open communication with all stakeholders.

- Avoid overwhelming team members with tasks or unnecessary information.

- Avoid "too many cooks" offering input on any task.

- Help stakeholders prepare for a project's future impact on their work.

Cons

- You might spend time unnecessarily creating the chart for simple projects.

- Roles are rigid and might not fully illustrate a team member's stake in a project.

  You might see additional drawbacks using a RACI chart for your project if your team succumbs to some common pitfalls, including:

- Stakeholders will be confused if they don't understand the differences among the terms, especially Responsible versus Accountable and Consulted versus Informed.

- It's a formality and a waste of time if no one references it after approval.

RACI Matrix Alternatives

Some teams find the roles designated through the RACI model aren't the right fit for their projects. You might find better options in these less common alternatives—all use a chart with tasks and stakeholders like RACI, but they use different terms in an attempt to more clearly define

roles.

RASCI

This alternative to RACI uses the RACI model plus S for Supportive. This is someone who participates in doing the work of a task by supporting the responsible parties.

CARS

This model designates stakeholders as:

- Communicate: These are the consulted and informed parties.

- Approve: This is the decision maker.

- Responsible: This person does the work.

- Support: These parties support the responsible person in doing the work.

RAS

This model simplifies CARS with just the Responsible, Approve and Support roles. It eliminates communication outside the project team, which would need to be accounted for another way in the project management method.

DACI

This model includes these roles similar to RACI:

- Drivers: The people who do the work.

- Approvers: The decision makers.

- Contributor: People who are consulted on the task.

- Informed: People who are informed of the project's progress.

CLAM

In this model, stakeholders are assigned these actions:

- Contribute: People who are consulted and who do the work.

- Lead: People who delegate work and manage a task.

- Approve: Decision makers.

- Monitor: People who are kept in the loop on a project's progress.

Bottom Line

Projects can be complex, confusing and chaotic. That's why we rely on team members with the [project management skills](#) necessary to reign in the disparate pieces of a project and focus directly on keeping them organized as a project progresses.

A RACI chart is one tool that helps project managers keep a project on track.

By listing all stakeholders and assigning a level of involvement for each task, the chart helps teams communicate clearly and keep the right people in the loop.