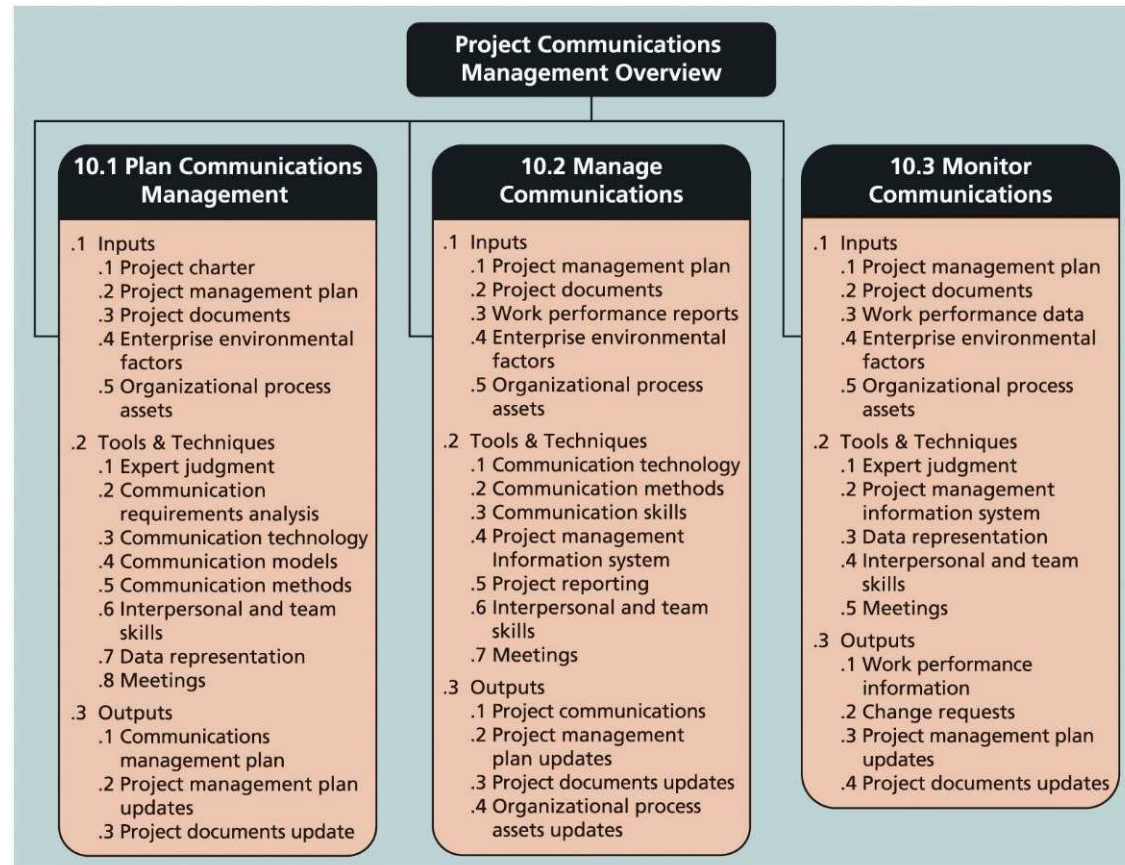# Project Communications Management

The Importance of Project Communications Management (1 of 2)

- Greatest threat to many projects is a failure to communicate
  - You cannot totally separate technical skills and soft skills when working on IT projects
  - For projects to succeed, every project team member needs both types of skills
- Main processes in project communications management
  - Planning communications management
  - Managing communications
  - Monitoring communications

The Importance of Project Communications Management (2 of 2)

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FIGURE 10-1 Project communications management overview

Keys to Good 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 and Informal Methods for Communicating

- Many people prefer informal communications
  - Several colleagues and managers want to know the people working on their projects and develop a trusting relationship with them
  - Oral communication also helps build stronger relationships among project personnel and project stakeholders
  - Effective creation and distribution of information depends on project managers and project team members having good communication skills

Distributing Information in an Effective and Timely Manner

- Important considerations
  - 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
  - Have short, frequent meetings
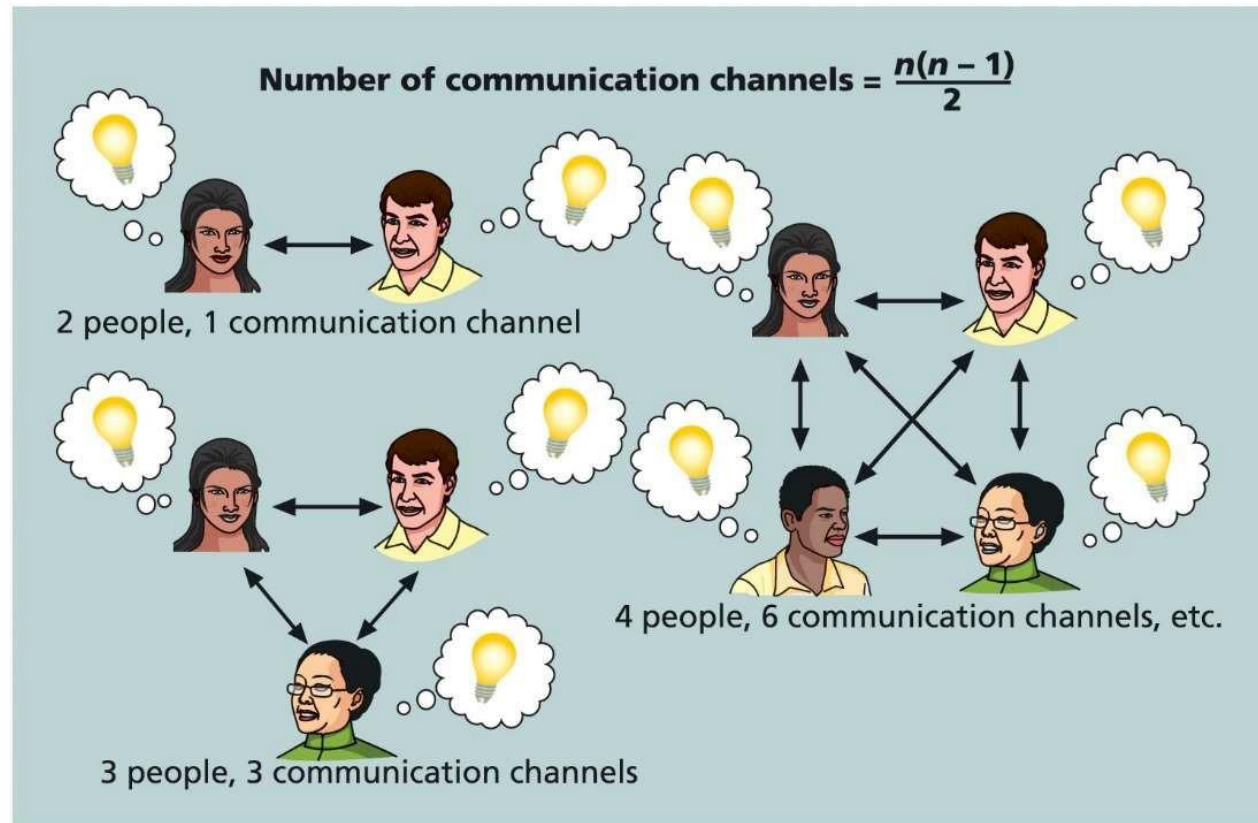
Setting the Stage for Communicating Bad News

- 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
- Project managers should know how a major problem might affect the bottom line of the organization
  - Use leadership skills to handle the challenge

Determining the Number of Communications Channels (1 of 2)

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

Determining the Number of Communications Channels (2 of 2)

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

2 people, 1 communication channel

3 people, 3 communication channels

4 people, 6 communication channels, etc.

FIGURE 10-2 The impact of the number of people on communication channels

Planning Communications Management (1 of 3)

- Every project should include some type of communications management plan
    - Guides project communications
    - 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

Planning Communications Management (2 of 3)

- Communications management plan contents
  - Stakeholder communications requirements
  - Information to be communicated, including format, content, and level of detail
  - Who will receive the information and who will produce it
  - Suggested methods or technologies for conveying the information
  - Frequency of communication
  - Escalation procedures for resolving issues
  - Revision procedures for updating the communications management plan
  - A glossary of common terminology

Planning Communications Management (3 of 3)

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.

Sample stakeholder communications analysis

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
  - Use of technology
  - Appropriate methods and media to use
  - Performance reporting

Using Technology to Enhance Creation and Distribution

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

Selecting the Appropriate Communication Methods 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 websites, 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
  - 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

- 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

Suggestions for Improving Project Communications

- Good communication is vital to the management and success of IT projects
  - Develop better communication skills
  - Run effective meetings
  - Use e-mail and other technologies effectively
  - Employ templates for project communications

Developing Better Communication Skills

- Most companies spend a lot of money on technical training for employees, even when employees might benefit more from communications training
  - Individual employees are 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

- Guidelines to help improve time spent at 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, Kanban Boards, and Collaborative Tools Effectively

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

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

- Guidelines to help use other communication tools more effectively
  - Make sure that your team is using a good tool
  - Be sure to authorize the right people to share your collaborative documents
  - Make sure that the right person can authorize changes to shared documents and that you back up files
  - Develop a logical structure for organizing and filing shared documents

Using Templates for Project Communications

- 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

Using Software to Assist in Project Communications (1 of 2)

- Many organizations are discovering how valuable project management software can be in communicating project information across the organization
  - Project management software can provide different views of information to help meet various communication needs
  - Often, one of the biggest communication problems on projects is providing the most recent project plans, Gantt charts, specifications, meeting information, and change requests to stakeholders in a timely fashion
  - Most project management software allows users to insert hyperlinks to other project-related files

Using Software to Assist in Project Communications (2 of 2)

- Many project management software products also provide tools to enhance communications
    - Portfolio management
    - Resource management
    - Project collaboration
- Even with all of the technology available, many organizations have problems communicating on global projects
    - Issues with timing, audio, and video
    - Differences in culture and language

Considerations For Agile/Adaptive Environments (1 of 2)

- Communications should be up to date, easily available, and reviewed regularly with stakeholders
  - 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

- Communication is among the more important factors for success in project management
  - Technology can aid in the communications process and be the easiest aspect of the process to address, it is not the most important
  - Improving an organization's ability to communicate is vital; often requires a cultural change in an organization that takes a lot of time, hard work, and patience

Chapter Summary (1 of 2)

- Failure to communicate is often the greatest threat to the success of any project, especially IT projects
    - Communication is the oil that keeps a project running smoothly
    - Project communications management involves planning communications management, managing communications, and controlling communications
- Project managers can spend as much as 90 percent of their time on communicating
    - There are several keys to good communications
- A communications management plan of some type should be created for all projects to help ensure good communications
    - Contents will vary based on the needs of the project

- Managing communication includes creating and distributing project information
  - Various methods for distributing project information include formal, informal, written, and verbal
- To improve project communications, project managers and their teams must develop their communication skills
  - Suggestions for improving project communications include learning how to run more effective meetings, how to use e-mail, instant messaging, texting, kanban boards, and collaborative software more effectively, and how to use templates for project communications
- New hardware and software continue to become available to help improve communications.