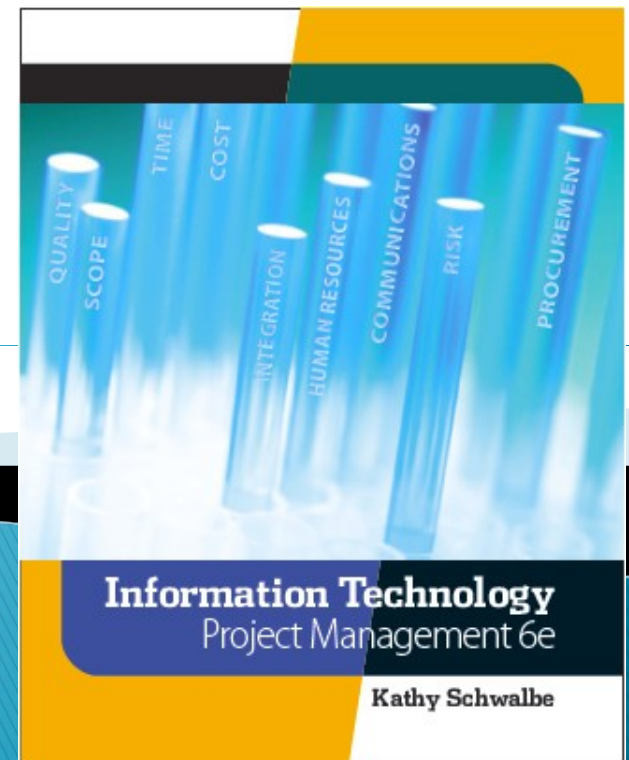# Chapter 10: Project Communications Management

Information Technology Project Management, Sixth Edition

Note: See the text itself for full citations.

Information Technology
Project Management 6e

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Project Communications Management Processes

- **Identifying stakeholders**: identifying everyone involved in or affected by the project and determining the best ways to manage relationships with them

- **Planning communications**: determining the information and communications needs of the stakeholders

- **Distributing information**: making needed information available to project stakeholders in a timely manner

- **Managing stakeholder expectations**: managing communications to satisfy the needs and expectations of project stakeholders and to resolve issues

- **Reporting performance**: collecting and disseminating performance information, including status reports, progress measurement, and forecasting

Figure 10-1. Project Communications Management Summary

Initiating
Process: **Identify stakeholders**
Outputs: Stakeholder register, stakeholder management strategy

Planning
Process: **Plan communications**
Outputs: Communications management plan, project document updates

Executing
Process: **Distribute information**
Outputs: Organizational process assets updates

Process: **Manage stakeholder expectations**
Outputs: Organizational process assets updates, change requests, project management plan updates, project document updates

Monitoring and Controlling
Process: **Report performance**
Outputs: Performance reports, organizational process assets updates, change requests

Project Start   **Project Finish**

Identifying Stakeholders

► Recall that the ultimate goal of project management is to meet or exceed stakeholder needs and expectations from a project, so you must first identify who your particular project stakeholders are

► Two key outputs of this process include:

  ◦ **Stakeholder register**: a public document that includes details related to the identified project stakeholders (see Table 3-4 for an example)

  ◦ **Stakeholder management strategy**: an approach to help increase the support of stakeholders throughout the project; often includes sensitive information

Table 10-1. Stakeholder Management Strategy

Name	Position	Internal/External	Level of interest	Level of influence	Potential management strategies
John Huntz	Project Manager for largest project under Peter	Internal	High	High	John does a great job, but he often upsets other PMs with his harsh approach. Keep him in line and remind him he is part of a bigger team.
Carolyn Morris	VP Telecommunications, Peter's boss	Internal	High	High	Carolyn is the first woman VP at our company and still likes to prove herself. Keep her informed of key issues and never surprise her!
Subbu Thangi	Dept. Head State of Oregon	External	Low	High	Subbu is in charge of a lot of state issues, like getting permits to install fiber-optic lines. He has a lot on his plate, but he doesn't seem concerned with our projects. Schedule a short, special meeting with him to increase visibility and discuss key issues.
Tom Morgan	CEO of major Telecomm. Customer	External	Medium	High	Tom is the sponsor of several of our projects. Give him the status on all of them at once to use his time efficiently.

Planning Communications

- 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 (see Table 10-2 for an example)

Table 10-2. Sample Stakeholder Analysis for Project Communications

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.

Communications Management Plan Contents

- Stakeholder communications requirements

- Information to be communicated, including format, content, and level of detail

- The people who will receive the information and who will produce it

- Suggested methods or technologies for conveying the information

Communications Management Plan Contents (continued)

- Frequency of communication

- Escalation procedures for resolving issues

- Revision procedures for updating the communications management plan

- A glossary of common terminology

Distributing Information

- 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

- Important considerations include:

  - Using technology to enhance information distribution

  - Formal and informal methods for distributing information

Distributing Information in an Effective and Timely Manner

- Don't bury crucial information

- Don't be afraid to report bad information

- Oral communication via meetings and informal talks helps bring important information—good and bad—out into the open

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

Personal Preferences Affect Communication Needs

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

Other Communication Considerations

- Rarely does the receiver interpret a message exactly as the sender intended

- Geographic location and cultural background affect the complexity of project communications

  ◦ Different working hours

  ◦ Language barriers

  ◦ Different cultural norms

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 = $\underline{n(n-1)}$

$$2$$

where n is the number of people involved

Figure 10-2. The Impact of the Number of People on Communications Channels

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

2 people, 1 communications channel

3 people, 3 communications channels

4 people, 6 communications channels, etc.
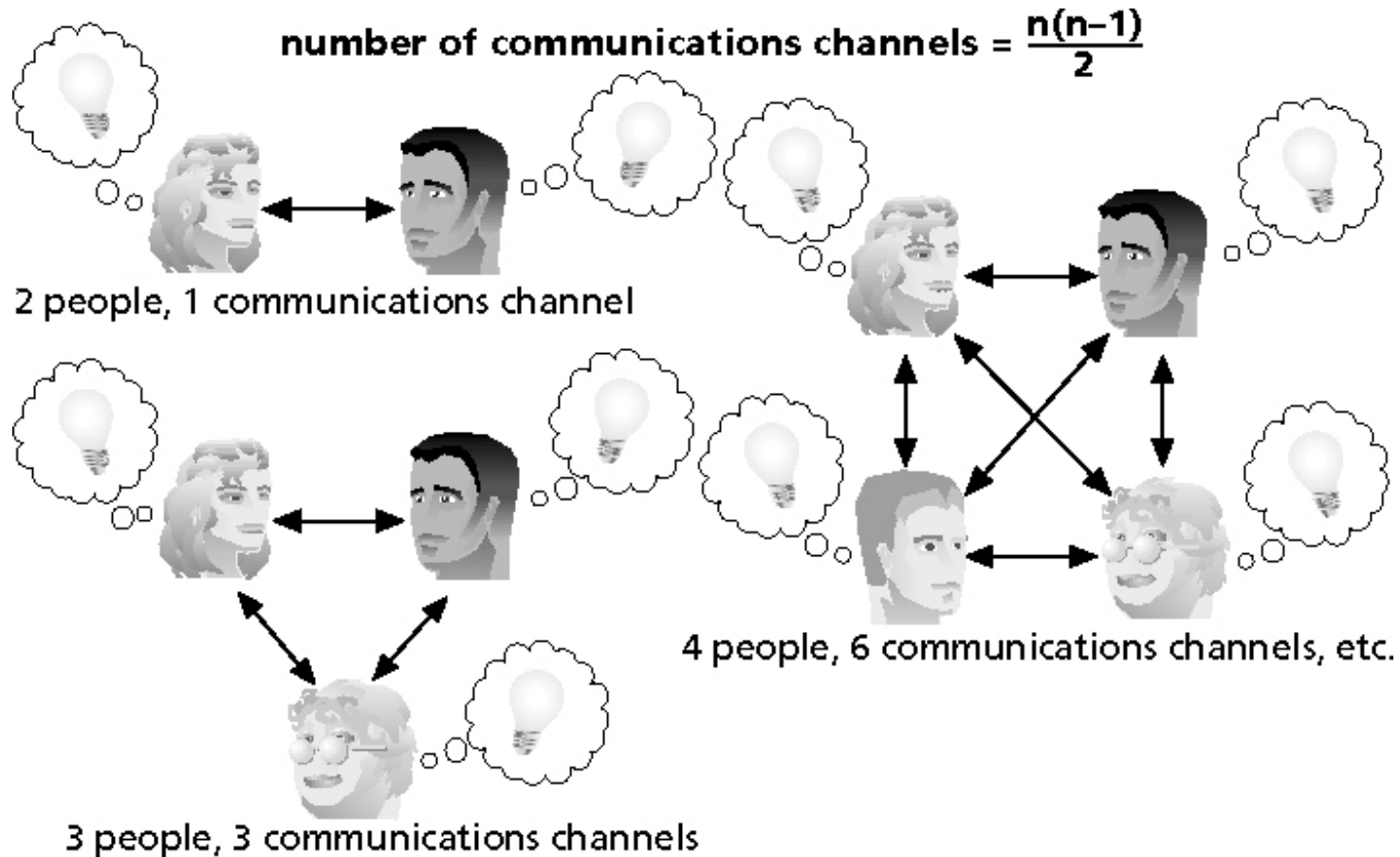
Managing Stakeholders

- Project managers must understand and work with various stakeholders

- Need to devise a way to identify and resolve issues

- An **expectations management matrix** can help clarify expectations

Table 10-3. 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.
Quality	6	Quality is important, and the expectation is that we follow our well-established processes for testing this system.	All new personnel are required to complete several in-house courses to make sure they understand our quality processes. All corporate quality standards must be followed.
Customer Satisfaction	4	Our customer expects us to act professionally, answer questions in a timely manner, and work	All presentations and formal documents provided to the customer must be edited by a tech
ROI Projections	5	The business case for this project projected an ROI of 40% within two years after implementation.	Our finance department will work with the customer to measure the ROI. Meeting/exceeding this projection will help us bring in future business with this and other customers.
Etc.			

Reporting Performance

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

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

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

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

Suggestions for Improving Project Communications

- Manage conflicts effectively

- Develop better communication skills

- Run effective meetings

- Use e-mail and other technologies effectively

- Use templates for project communications

Conflict Handling Modes

1. **Confrontation**: directly face a conflict using a problem-solving approach

2. **Compromise**: use a give-and-take approach

3. **Smoothing**: de-emphasize areas of difference and emphasize areas of agreement

4. **Forcing**: the win-lose approach

5. **Withdrawal**: retreat or withdraw from an actual or potential disagreement

6. **Collaborating**: decision makers incorporate different viewpoints and insights to develop consensus and commitment

Conflict Can Be Good

▸ Conflict often produces important results, such as new ideas, better alternatives, and motivation to work harder and more collaboratively

▸ **Groupthink**: conformance to the values or ethical standards of a group; groupthink can develop if there are no conflicting viewpoints

▸ Research suggests that task-related conflict often improves team performance, but emotional conflict often depresses team performance

Running Effective 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

▶ Build relationships

Using E-Mail, Instant Messaging, and Collaborative Tools Effectively

- Make sure that e-mail, instant messaging, or collaborative tools are an appropriate medium for what you want to communicate

- Be sure to send information to the right people

- Use meaningful subject lines, limit the content of e-mails to one main subject, and be as clear and concise as possible

- Be sure to authorize the right people to share and edit your collaborative documents

Sample Collaborative Tools

▶ A **SharePoint portal** allows users to create custom Web sites to access documents and applications stored on shared devices

▶ **Google Docs** allow users to create, share, and edit documents, spreadsheets, and presentations online

▶ A **wiki** is a Web site designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify Web page content

Table 10-5. Sample Template for a Monthly Progress Report

I. **Accomplishments for Month of January (or appropriate month):**

- Describe most important accomplishments. Relate to project's Gantt chart.
- Describe other important accomplishments, one bullet for each. If any issues were resolved from the previous month, list them as accomplishments.

II. **Plans for February (or following month):**

- Describe most important items to be accomplished in the next month. Again, relate to the project's Gantt chart.
- Describe other important items to accomplish, one bullet for each.

III. **Issues:** Briefly list important issues that surfaced or are still important. Managers hate surprises and want to help the project succeed, so be sure to list issues.

IV. **Project Changes (Date and Description):** List any approved or requested changes to the project. Include the date of the change and a brief description.

Table 10-6. Final Project Documentation Items

I.	Project description
II.	Project proposal and backup data (request for proposal, statement of work, proposal correspondence, and so on)
III.	Original and revised contract information and client acceptance documents
IV.	Original and revised project plans and schedules (WBS, Gantt charts and network diagrams, cost estimates, communications management plan, etc.)
V.	Design documents
VI.	Final project report
VII.	Deliverables, as appropriate
VIII.	Audit reports
IX.	Lessons-learned reports
X.	Copies of all status reports, meeting minutes, change notices, and other written and electronic communications

Using Software to Assist in Project Communications

- There are many software tools to aid in project communications

- Today many people telecommute or work remotely at least part-time

- Project management software includes new capabilities to enhance virtual communications

- New tools, such as instant messaging and blogs, can enhance project communications

Chapter Summary

▶ The goal of project communications management is to ensure timely and appropriate generation, collection, dissemination, storage, and disposition of project information

▶ Main processes include:

  ◦ Identify stakeholders

  ◦ Plan communications

  ◦ Distribute information

  ◦ Manage stakeholder expectations

  ◦ Report performance