

Tutorial 10: Project Communication Management

Learning Objective:

- *Understand the importance of good communications on projects and the need to develop soft skills, especially for IT project managers and their teams*
- *Review key concepts related to communications*
- *Explain the elements of planning project communications and how to create a communications management plan*
- *Describe how to manage communications, including communication technologies, media, and performance reporting*
- *Discuss methods for controlling communications to ensure that information needs are met throughout the life of the project*
- *List various methods for improving project communications, such as running effective meetings, using various technologies effectively, and using templates*
- *Describe how software can enhance project communications management*

Practice Exercises:

1. Review the following scenarios, and then write a paragraph for each one describing what media you think would be most appropriate to use and why. See Table 10-2 (in the textbook) for suggestions. (4pts)
 - a. Many of the technical staff on the project come in from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., while the business users always arrive before 9:00 a.m. The business users have been making comments. The project manager wants to have the technical people come in by 9:00, although many of them leave late.
 - b. Your company is bidding on a project for the entertainment industry. You know that you need new ideas on how to put together the proposal and communicate your approach in a way that will impress the customer.
 - c. Your business has been growing successfully, but you are becoming inundated with phone calls and e-mails asking similar types of questions.
 - d. You need to make a general announcement to a large group of people and you want to make sure they get the information.

TABLE 10-2 Media choice table

Key: 1 = Excellent, 2 = Adequate, 3 = Inappropriate						
How Well Medium Is Suited to:	Hard Copy	Phone Call	Voice Mail	E-mail	Meeting	Web Site
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

=> a. I think that effective communication is the most important requirement for a project to succeed, however the project manager has to understand the needs of the team members to build a good workplace and receive from them what is expected to. In this case the project manager is trying to make the team committed to the project and at the same time deliver a general agreement to the group, so according to the table 10-2 (Schwalbe, p. 394) the items assessing commitment and building consensus would be suitable to transmit the idea of starting and ending working hours. In either way, scheduling a meeting would be the most appropriate type of media and a phone call would be adequate. A meeting is usually better, even though not the most convenient way because finding a time that is suitable for everybody sometimes is a problem. A phone call is not enough to show how important what the person wants to express is. The project manager is also trying to mediate a conflict between business users and technical staff to establish the most suitable time to everybody without leaving anything misunderstood. The other types of media would be inappropriate just because they would not show strong communication for this matter.

b. In this case, there are two different tasks to be executed; the first one is to put the ideas together to develop the proposal and the second one is to demonstrate to the client the following approaches and present them in a way to impress him. For the first task, confidentiality is important since a person needs to be careful when handling information that involves the future

of a project, so a meeting, hard copy and phone call would be appropriate means of communication for this phase. In a meeting a person could collect the information needed to create the proposal, the phone call would be the way to clarify doubts and some extra needs that may occur but it would eventually need some formal paper documenting the proposal, therefore a hard copy would be also necessary. For the second task when the person tries to persuade the client with his offer, it is important to have the interaction face to face because it is a way to create empathy and win the situation, sometimes a person gets more than he thought he would, it is also a way to accelerate the transference of information (Levin, 2005). If the client has some doubts, a meeting would be the simplest, easiest and quickest way to raise and clarify the doubts. A phone call, website or hard copy would not be appropriate since the person would be dealing with complex instructions although a report would be a good way to keep the client informed about how things are going.

c. When a business starts growing, some of the activities performed in a daily basis become redundant to the company, so it is important that some changes occur to keep the company processes updated and easy to be handled, perhaps it is necessary additional employees or a system that performs and organizes most of the activities to avoid phone calls and emails with similar enquiries that make some employee allocate their time whilst they could be performing more important tasks for the company. This is a matter of building consensus for what should be done in the company among all the departments not to overload anyone with unnecessary work. Since the main objective is to change some routines, a good type of media would be a meeting where everybody involved could exchange information, give new ideas and share knowledge, therefore essential information would be reached by the right people at the right time. Phone calls and emails are also good but just after the meeting to add up some things that were left out.

d. When a person needs to address some information to a large number of people and ensure they all get the message, the best way is to public on a website or send emails, internet postings are effective ways to transfer information among people, however, it is important to know how to use this means because poor writing often leads to misunderstandings and confusion (Schwalbe, p.407). The advantages of using a website as means of communication are that the information can be updated at any time, the information is available at any time the staff wants to access and the website can be linked to other subjects to create new opportunities and transmit different ideas at the same time. The other types of media such as phone calls, meetings and voice mails would be inappropriate when the purpose is to transmit the idea to a large number of people. Imagine how long a person would take if he had to make 10 or 100 calls (depending on the number of people that need to receive the same information) to transmit the same idea.

2. How many different communication channels does a project team with six people have?
How many more communication channels would there be if the team grew to 10 people?
(1pst)

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

Therefore:

With 6 team members -

$$\text{communication channels} = (6 \cdot (6-1))/2 = 30/2 = 15$$

With 10 team members -

$$\text{communication channels} = (10 \cdot (10-1))/2 = 90/2 = 45$$

This model of representing communication channels provides a clear visual and mathematical representation of the different communication paths available within a team environment.

3. Research new software products that assist in communications management for large projects. Write a short paper summarizing your findings. Include Web sites for software vendors and your opinion of some of the products. (2pts)

\Rightarrow Teamwork Projects is a great project management software for the project management power user. Teamwork Projects includes all the tools you'll need to track the development of a project. The app is quite flexible and includes various intuitive features such as Task Management, Milestones (e.g. you can link task lists to Milestones), Messaging, File Storage, Time Tracking tools, and more. Teamwork also helps project teams visualize the project using a marked calendar, gantt chart and set-up reporting. File management support is accessible with [DropBox](#), [Google Drive](#) and Box.com.

4. Research the topic of understanding body language. (3pts)

- 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?
- Perform a role play of common project scenarios, and have people take turns saying something that does not match their body language. For example, someone might say that work is going well on a particular task when it is not.

- ☒ Some common body movements that can help you understand how people are really feeling

- Hand gestures or nodding or shaking the head;
- Posture, or how you stand or sit, whether your arms are crossed, and so on;
- Eye Contact, where the amount of eye contact often determines the level of trust and trustworthiness;
- Para-language, or aspects of the voice apart from speech, such as pitch, tone, and speed of speaking.

Deliverables:

- You should answer INDIVIDUALLY four questions above in a Word file.
- Name your file with the syntax: PMA_StudentID_Your Fullname.docx and submit your work on the course website before the due date. For example: PMA_0601040095_Vu Van Anh.docx.
- The plagiarism will be fiercely punished by Hanoi University's policies and there is no exception.