MASTER OF COMPUTER SCIENCE/
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

MCS4204- Software Project Management

Topic 7: Project Communication Management

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Project Communication

- It is the exchange of project-specific information with the emphasis on creating understanding between the sender and the receiver.
- Effective communication is important for the success of a project.
- Timely and accurate information should be provided to all stakeholders.
- Project information might need to be prepared in a variety of ways.
- Team members need to receive feedback from the stakeholders.
- For some members, soft skills are needed just as much or even more than technical skills.

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Project Communication Management Processes

1. *Planning communications management*

   determines the **information** and communications **needs of the stakeholders**. **Who** needs **what** information? **When** will they need it? **How** will the information be given to them?

2. *Managing communications*

   involves creating, distributing, storing, retrieving, and disposing of project communications based on the communications management plan.

3. *Controlling communications*

- involves monitoring and controlling project communications to ensure that stakeholder communication needs are met.

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Project Communication …contd.

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

    Executing
    Process: **Manage communications**
    Outputs: Project communications, project documents updates, project management plan updates, and organizational process assets updates

        Monitoring and Controlling
        Process: **Control communications**
        Outputs: Work performance information, change requests, project documents updates, and organizational process assets updates

Project Start   **Project Finish**

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Keys to Good Communications

1. Focusing on group and individual communication needs
2. Identifying formal and informal methods for communicating
3. Distributing important information in an effective and timely manner
4. Setting the stage for communicating bad news
5. Determining the number of communication channels (N). $N = n(n-1)/2$

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Dimensions of Communication Activities

- **Internal** - Focus on stakeholders within the project and within the organization.
- **External** - Focus on external stakeholders such as customers, vendors, other projects and organizations, government, the public, and environmental advocates.
- **Formal** - Reports, formal meetings (both regular and ad hoc), meeting agendas and minutes, stakeholder briefings, and presentations.
- **Informal** - General communications activities using emails, social media, websites, and informal ad hoc discussions.

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Dimensions of Communication …contd.

- **Official** - Annual reports; reports to regulators or government bodies.

- **Unofficial** - Communications that focus on establishing and maintaining the profile and recognition of the project and building strong relationships between the project team and its stakeholders using flexible and often informal means.

- **Written and oral** - Verbal (words and voice inflections) and nonverbal (body language and actions), social media and websites, and media releases.

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Skills Required for Effective Communication

- Strong active listening
- Proficient writing
- Fluent speaking ability
- Questioning and exploring ideas
- Setting and managing expectations of stakeholders
- Motivating the team to provide encouragement
- Coaching the team to enhance performance
- Conflict resolution
- Ability to Summarize and reiterate
- Identify the next most efficient step

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5Cs of Written Communications

- Correct grammar and spelling
- Concise expression and elimination of excess words.
- Clear purpose and expression directed to the needs of the reader
- Coherent, logical flow of ideas
- Controlling the flow of words and ideas

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Trends & Emerging Practices in Project Communications Management

- Inclusion of stakeholders in project reviews
- Inclusion of stakeholders in project meetings
- Increased use of social computing
- Multifaceted approaches to communication

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PLANNING COMMUNICATION

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Components of a Communication Management Plan

1. Stakeholder communications requirements
2. Information to be communicated, including format, content, and level of detail
3. Who will receive the information and who will produce it
4. Suggested methods or technologies for conveying the information
5. Frequency of communication
6. Escalation procedures for resolving issues
7. Revision procedures for updating the communications management plan
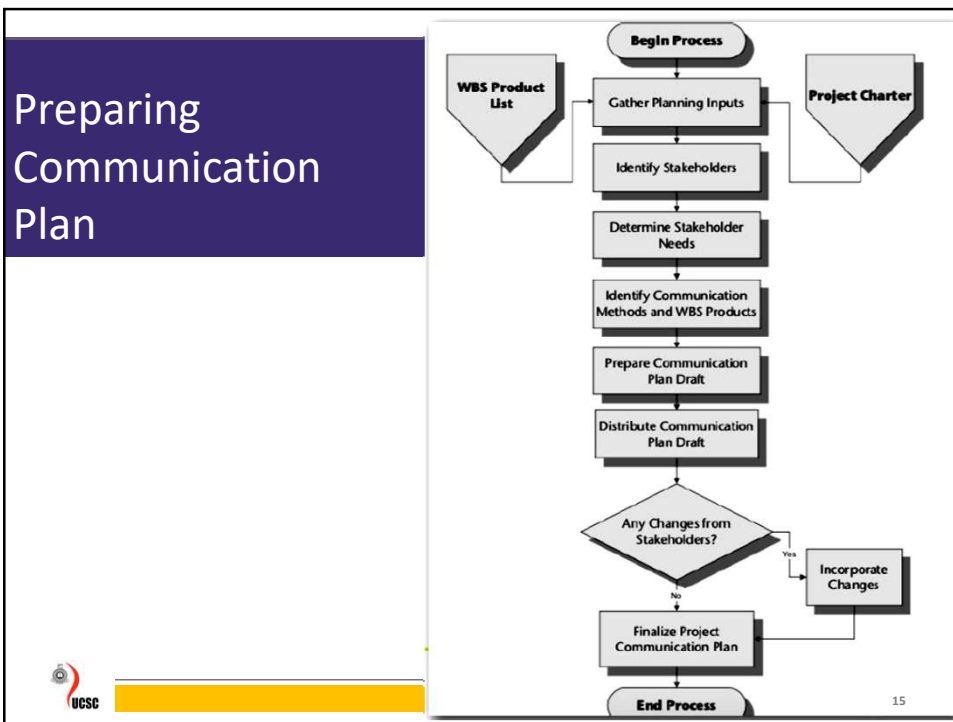8. A glossary of common terminology

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Preparing Communication Plan

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Stakeholder Communications Analysis

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

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Project Communication Plan

Goal: The goal of this communication plan is to make sure stakeholders are updated throughout the project. Communicating frequently about the status of tasks, team accomplishments, milestones, etc. will help us stay on track and meet project deadlines.

Project name: Redesign the picking process.

Stakeholder	Deliverable	Frequency	Owner	Priority	Preferred way to deliver	Notes and attachments
Norma Perry	Timeline update/milestone review	As milestones have been completed	Blake Stevens	Medium priority - report to Norma within 1-2 weeks of completing a milestone	Email	Include Gantt chart and note reason for missed deadlines
Mickey Neilands	Weekly status report	Weekly - Monday @ 9 am	Blake Stevens	High priority- must provide weekly report	Conf. call	Mickey can help with special requests if needed
Laney Christmas	Status update	Weekly	Blake Stevens	Low priority - would like to be updated weekly, but this request is flexible	In-person meeting	Mainly interested in status of each task and timeline
Project team	Timeline review/update	Daily by EOD	Project team	High priority	Email	All team members are required to send update by EOD
Project team	List of blockers	As needed	Project team	Medium priority	Team meeting	Must meet with team when major blockers arise

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MANAGING COMMUNICATION

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Managing Communication

Getting project information to the right people at the right time and in a useful format.

1. Use technology to enhance information creation and distribution
   - Project Management System or via e-mail, instant messaging, websites, telephones, cell phones, texting, and other technologies to communicate
2. Select the appropriate communication methods and media
3. Report performance

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Selecting the Appropriate Communication Methods and Media

1. *Interactive communication*: Two or more people interact to exchange information via meetings, phone calls, or video-conf. This is the most effective way to ensure common understanding.
2. *Push communication*: Information is sent or pushed to recipients without their request via reports, e-mails, faxes, voice mails, and other means. It ensures that the information is distributed but does not ensure that it was received or understood.
3. *Pull communication*: Information is sent to recipients at their request via websites, bulletin boards, e-learning, knowledge repositories like blogs and wikis, and other means.

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Determining Media Preferences

How Well Medium Is Suited to:	Hard Copy	Phone Call	Voice Mail	E-mail	Meeting	Website
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

Key: 1 = Excellent, 2 = Adequate, 3 = Inappropriate

*Depends on system functionality

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Managing Communication > Report performance

- To keep 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
  - **Status reports -** describe **where the project stands** in terms of the triple constraints: scope, time, and cost.
- **Forecasts:** predict future project status and progress based on past information and trends – Can use **Earned Value Management**
- Conduct **Status Review** meetings

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CONTROLLING COMMUNICATION

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Controlling Communications

To ensure the optimal flow of information throughout the entire project life cycle.

- INPUTS: Project management plan, Project communication plan, Issue logs, Work performance data, and Organizational process assets.

- TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS: various reporting systems, expert judgment, and meetings

- OUTPUT: Update project communication plan, work performance information, change requests, project documents, and organizational process assets.

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Suggestions for Improving Project Communications

- **Develop Better Communication Skills**
  - Communication skills training, including role-playing activities to learn concepts such as building rapport, Strategies to build personal relationships and trust
- **Running Effective Meetings**
  - A well-run meeting can be a vehicle for fostering team building and reinforcing expectations, roles, relationships, and commitment to the project. But a poorly run meeting can have a detrimental effect on a project.
- **Use e-Mail, Instant Messaging, Texting, Kanban Boards, and Collaborative Tools Effectively**

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A Guideline to help improve time spent at meetings

1. Determine if a meeting can be avoided.
2. Define the purpose and intended outcome of the meeting.
3. Determine who should attend the meeting.
4. Provide an agenda to participants before the meeting.
5. Prepare handouts and visual aids and make logistical arrangements ahead of time.
6. Run the meeting professionally.
7. Set the ground rules for the meeting.
8. Build relationships.

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Exercise:

1. How to use emails more effectively as a communication tool?

2. Compare features of collaborative working and content sharing platforms such as MS SharePoint and GoogleDoc.

3. Study existing project management software such as Trello, Asana, ClickUp and Jira, and understand the facilities they provide for effective communication.

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