

Plan Communications Management: Tools and Techniques

The first tool is ¹communication requirements analysis, which is an analytical technique to determine the information needs of the project stakeholders. This is done through:

- Stakeholder register
- Communication channels
- Organizational charts
- Project organization and stakeholder responsibility, relationships, and interdependencies
- Internal and external information needs
- Legal requirements
- Development approach

This next one is a favorite for the exam. It's also important for the project manager to be aware of the number of communication channels for the project.

There is a simple formula for figuring out the number of communication channels: $n(n-1)/2$, where n is the number of stakeholders.

For example, a project with 5 stakeholders would look like this: $5(5-1)/2 = 5(4)/2 = 20/2 = 10$ communication channels.

Understanding how many communication channels there are helps the project manager determine how many stakeholders to communicate with, how to communicate with them, how much detail to use, how often to communicate, and who will send the communication.

Tip: When reading a question about communication channels, remember if it reads like this:

- A project with 15 stakeholders—the project manager is already included in the stakeholder count. The total number of stakeholders would be 15.
- A project manager has a team of 15—the project manager isn't included in the stakeholder count but needs to be included. The total number of stakeholders would be 16 (team of 15 + PM=16).

The next tool is ²communication technology, a set of specific methods used to transfer information among project stakeholders. Factors that affect the choice of communication technology include:

- Urgency and need for information
- Availability and reliability of technology
- Ease of use
- Project environment
- Sensitivity and confidentiality of the information

Another tool is called ³communication models, which represents the communication process between a sender and a receiver. This is another favorite for the exam. You'll need to understand the communication models. Let's discuss the basic communication model, which has three components:

- The sender encodes the message.
- The sender transmits the message.
- The receiver decodes the message.

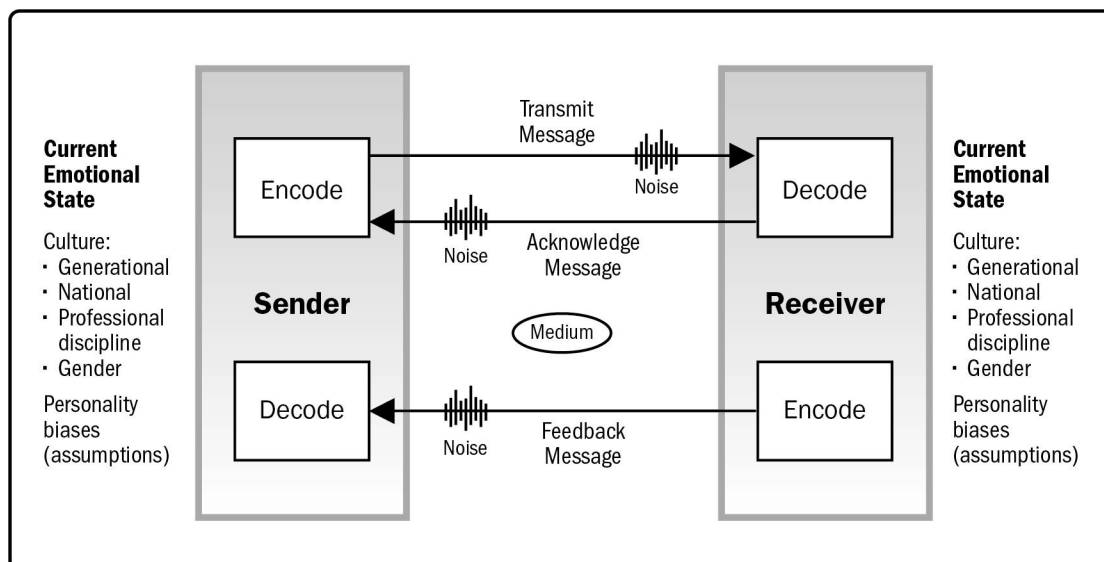
The next model is an interactive model, which is similar to the basic model, but has more components. Let's take a look at what the model looks like in the following figure.

1. On the left is the ⁴sender, who has four responsibilities:
2. Encoding the message
3. Selecting the type of communication method (medium)
4. Transmitting the message
5. Confirming with the receiver the message was understood

On the right side is the ⁴receiver, who has three responsibilities:

1. Decoding the message
2. Acknowledging the message was received
3. Providing feedback or responding that the message was understood

You'll notice in the following figure that there is "noise" in the middle where the message is being transmitted. Noise may come from physical noise like office noises or equipment or from cultural noise like language differences. That's why it's important to make sure the person receiving the message fully understands what the message is and replies with their understanding.



⁵**Figure 10-4 (Guide).** Communication Model for Cross-Cultural Communication

The fourth tool is called ‘communication methods, which is used to transfer information among project stakeholders. Several communication methods are important to recognize for the exam, including:

- Interactive is when multiple parties communicate directly with each other. Examples might be phone calls or instant messaging.
- Push communication is when communications are sent directly to the stakeholders. This might be through emails, voicemails, or letters.
- Pull communication is when the information is posted somewhere, like the company intranet. Stakeholders then “pull” that information when they are ready to review it. This is really good when the communication needs to go to large numbers of people.

There are different approaches to consider when thinking of communications:

- Interpersonal: information exchanged between individuals, generally face-to-face
- Small group: groups of three to six people
- Public: a single person addressing a group of people
- Mass: usually no relationship between the speaker and large groups of people
- Networks and social computing

The project manager needs to analyze each of these methods to see which is best to communicate to stakeholders. The project manager may use all of them depending on the information that needs to be disseminated.

You may also see the following communication types on the exam:

- Active listening is where the sender and receiver take actions to make sure the message is understood.
- Effective listening is when the receiver gives the sender his or her full attention and observes verbal and nonverbal cues and provides feedback.
- Feedback can be conveyed by nodding, eye contact, hand gestures, acknowledging comments, and asking questions.
- Nonverbal is conveyed by body language, eye movement, and silence.
- Paralingual is done by listening to the pitch of a person’s voice.

¹These definitions are taken from the Glossary of Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide)* – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute Inc., 2017.

²Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide)*– Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute, Inc., 2017, Pages 370–371.

³Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide)* – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute, Inc., 2017, Page 371.

⁴Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide)* – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute, Inc., 2017, Pages 371–372.

⁵Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide)* – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute, Inc., 2017, Figure 10-4, Page 373.

⁶Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide)* – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute, Inc., 2017, Pages 374.