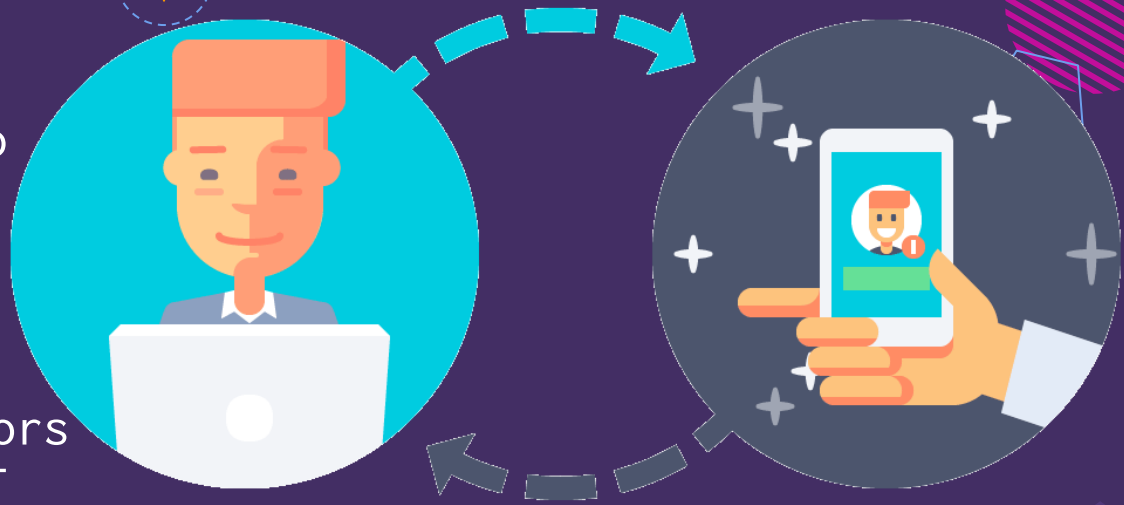
Project Communication Management

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMMUNICATIONS



- The greatest threat to many projects is a failure to communicate
- Our culture does not portray IT professionals as being good communicators
- Research shows that IT professionals must be able to communicate effectively to succeed in their positions
- Strong verbal skills are a key factor in career advancement for IT professionals

PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

- **Communications planning:** determining the information and communications needs of the stakeholders
- **Information distribution:** making needed information available in a timely manner
- **Performance reporting:** collecting and disseminating performance information
- **Managing stakeholders:** Managing communications to satisfy the needs and expectations of project Stakeholders and to resolve issues

01. COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

- 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

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN CONTENTS

- A description of a collection and filing structure for gathering and storing various types of information
- A distribution structure describing what information goes to whom, when, and how
- A format for communicating key project information
- A project schedule for producing the information
- Access methods for obtaining the information
- A method for updating the communications management plans as the project progresses and develops
- A stakeholder communications analysis.

SAMPLE STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS FOR PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS

Table 10-1: Sample Stakeholder Communications Analysis

Stakeholders	Document Name	Document Format	Contact Person	Due
Customer Management	Monthly status report	Hard copy	Tina Erndt, Tony Silva	First of month
Customer Business Staff	Monthly status report	Hard copy	Julie Grant, Jeff Martin	First of month
Customer Technical Staff	Monthly status report	E-mail	Evan Dodge, Nancy Michaels	First of month
Internal Management	Monthly status report	Hard copy	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	11/1/2004
Software Subcontractor	Software implementation plan	E-mail	Barbara Gates	6/1/2004

02. INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION

- 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

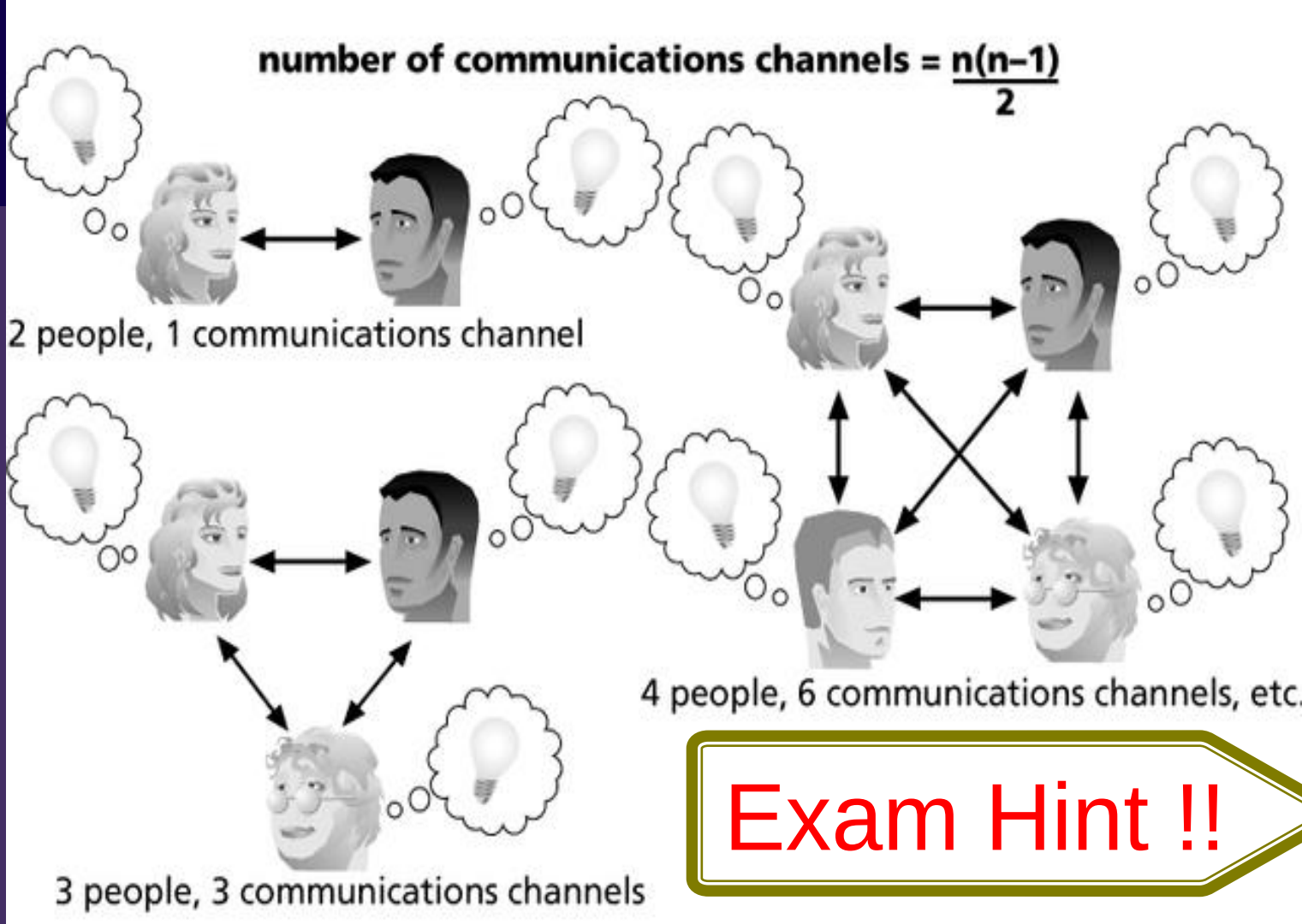
- Short, frequent meetings are often very effective in IT projects.
- Stand-up meetings force people to focus on what they really need to communicate.
- Some companies have policies preventing the use of e-mail between certain hours or even entire days of the week.

MEDIA CHOICE TABLE

KEY: 1 = EXCELLENT 2 = ADEQUATE 3 = INAPPROPRIATE

How well medium is suited to:	Hard Copy	Telephone 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/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	1
Reinforcing one s authority	1	2	3	3	1	2
Providing a permanent record	1	3	3	1	3	1
Maintaining confidentiality	2	1	2	3	1	3
Conveying simple information	3	2	1	1	2	3
Asking an informational question	3	2	1	1	3	3
Making a simple request	3	3	1	1	3	3
Giving complex instructions	3	3	3	2	1	2
Addressing many people	2	3	3 or 1*	2	3	1

THE IMPACT OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ON COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS



Exam Hint !!

03. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

- 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
- Project forecasting predicts future project status and progress based on past information and trends
- Status review meetings often include performance reporting

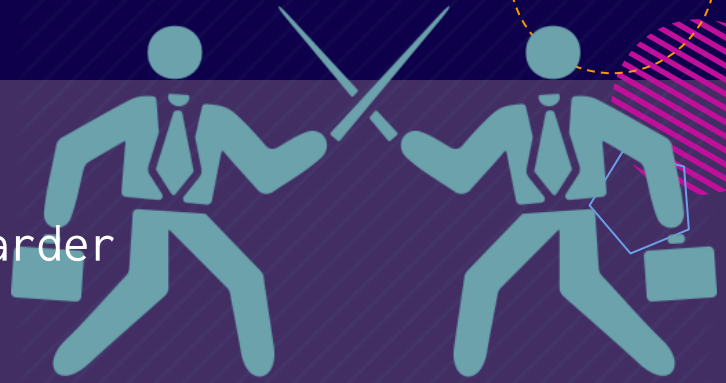
04. MANAGING STAKEHOLDERS:

- Managing communications to satisfy the needs and expectations of project Stakeholders and to resolve issues

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS

- Manage conflicts effectively
- Develop better communication skills
- Run effective meetings
- Use e-mail effectively
- Use templates for project communications

CONFLICT CAN BE GOOD



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

- Groupthink can develop if there are no conflicting viewpoints

- Research by Prof. Karen Jehn(Professor of Management- The University of Melbourne) suggests that task-related conflict often improves team performance, but emotional conflict often depresses team performance

Exam Hint !!

DEVELOPING BETTER COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Companies and formal degree programs for IT professionals often neglect the importance of developing speaking, writing, and listening 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

- 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, visual aids, and make logistical arrangements ahead of time
- Run the meeting professionally
- Build relationships

USING E-MAIL EFFECTIVELY

- Make sure that e-mail is an appropriate medium for what you want to communicate
- Be sure to send the e-mail to the right people
- Use meaningful subjects
- Limit the content to one main subject, and be as clear and concise as possible
- Limit the number and size of attachments
- Delete e-mail you don’t need, and don’t open it if you question the source
- Make sure your virus software is up to date
- Respond to and file e-mails quickly
- Learn how to use important features

PROJECT WEB SITES

- Many project teams create a project Web site to store important product documents and other information.

- Can create the site using various types of software.

USING SOFTWARE TO ASSIST IN PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS

- There are many software tools to aid in project communications.
- Today more than 37 percent of 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.

SUMMARY

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

- Main process include:
  - Communications planning
  - Information distribution
  - Performance reporting
  - Managing stakeholders

END