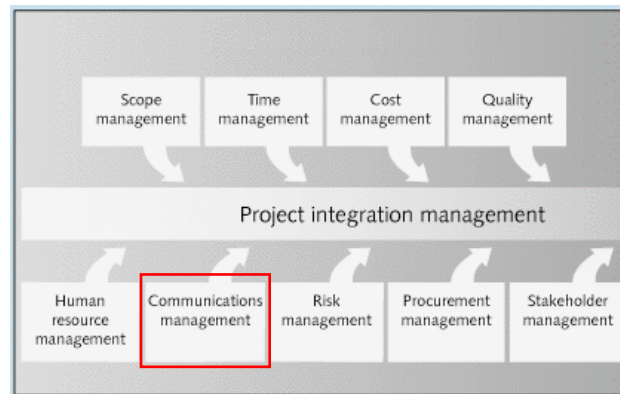# Project Communications Management

Importance of Good Communications

- Projects are always based on team work that cannot be efficient without interaction
- IT professionals are usually not good communicators
- Analysis of failed projects shows that IT professionals need to be able to communicate effectively to interact with
  - clients to collect system requirements
  - team members working on the same task
  - suppliers of development tools, APIs and hardware
  - company executives
- Besides technical skills, good communication is important to explain technical terms and issues to non-technical project stakeholders
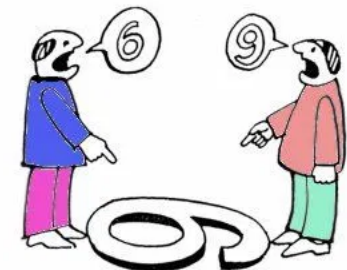
Keys to Good Communications

- When people communicate, they try to establish common understanding with someone
- Abilities to speak and listen are equally important
- Communication may take place via several channels Research says that in a face-to-face interaction:
  - 58% of communication is through body language
  - 35% of communication is through how the words are said
  - 7% of communication is through the content or words that are spoken
- The communications process is rarely "error free" meaning that what the listener may have a different interpretation of what the speaker said

Keys to Good Communications

- Communication is an essential tool in the field of project management
- Project managers say they spend as much as 90% of their time communicating that negatively affects other project management activities
- In general, communication becomes more complex when
  - the project team size increases
  - you work on a multidiscipline project
- Managers need to determine the number and most suitable ways of communication
  - face-to-face meetings
  - emails
  - reports
  - . . . .
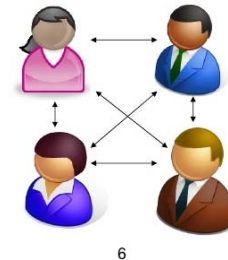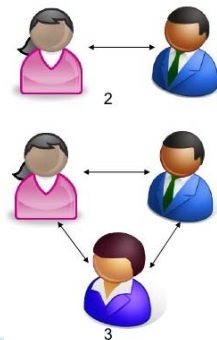
•Type of information
•Team size
•Professional background
•Time difference

Personal Preferences Affect Communication Needs

▸ People have different personality traits that often affect their communication preferences

  ◦ 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

Determining the Number of Communications Channels

▸ As the number of people involved increases, the complexity of communications increases because there are more possible communications channels or pathways through which people can communicate.

▸ Number of communications channels = $\dfrac{n(n-1)}{2}$

where n is the number of people involved

Figure 10-2. The Impact of the Number of People on Communications Channels
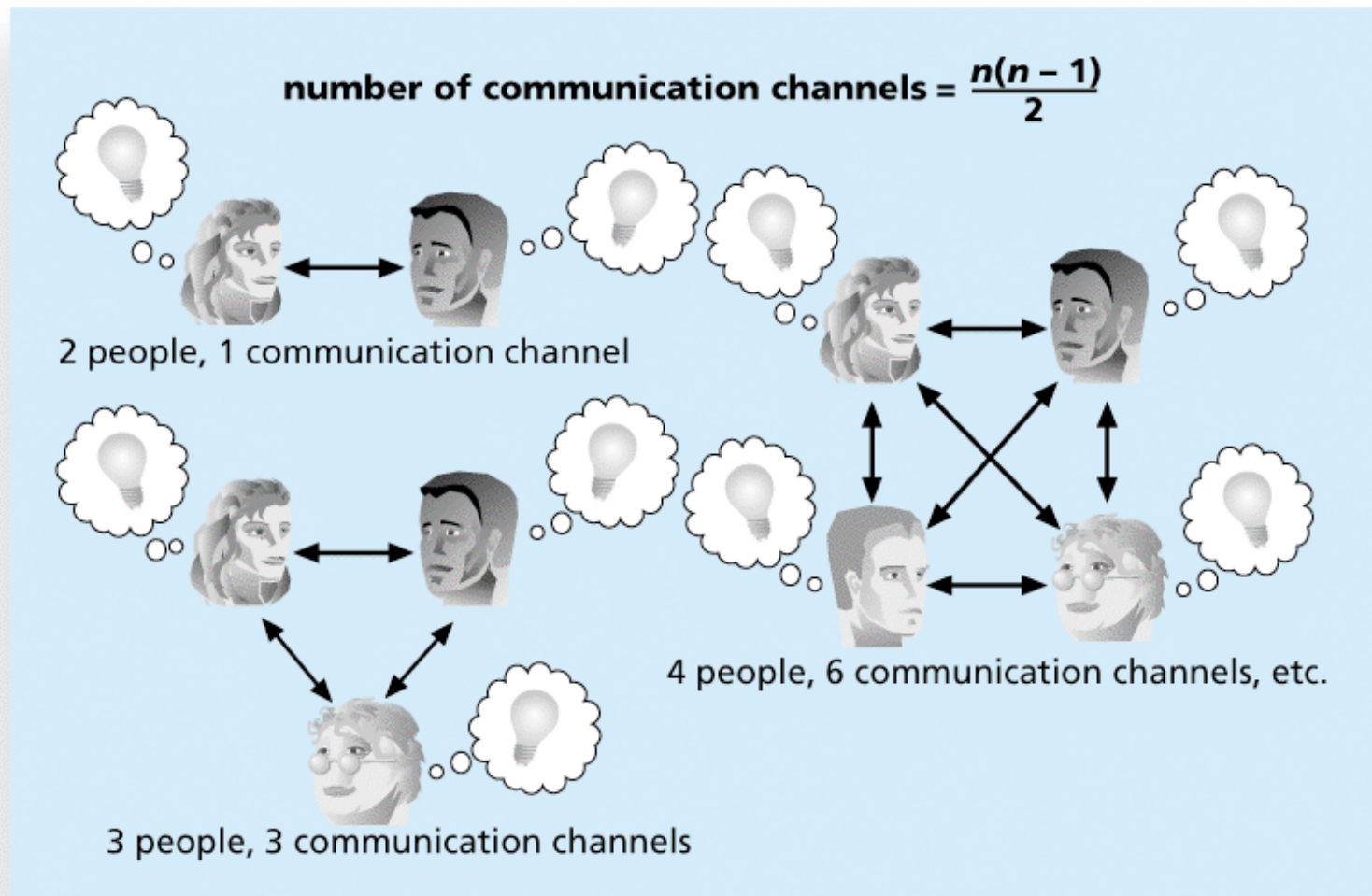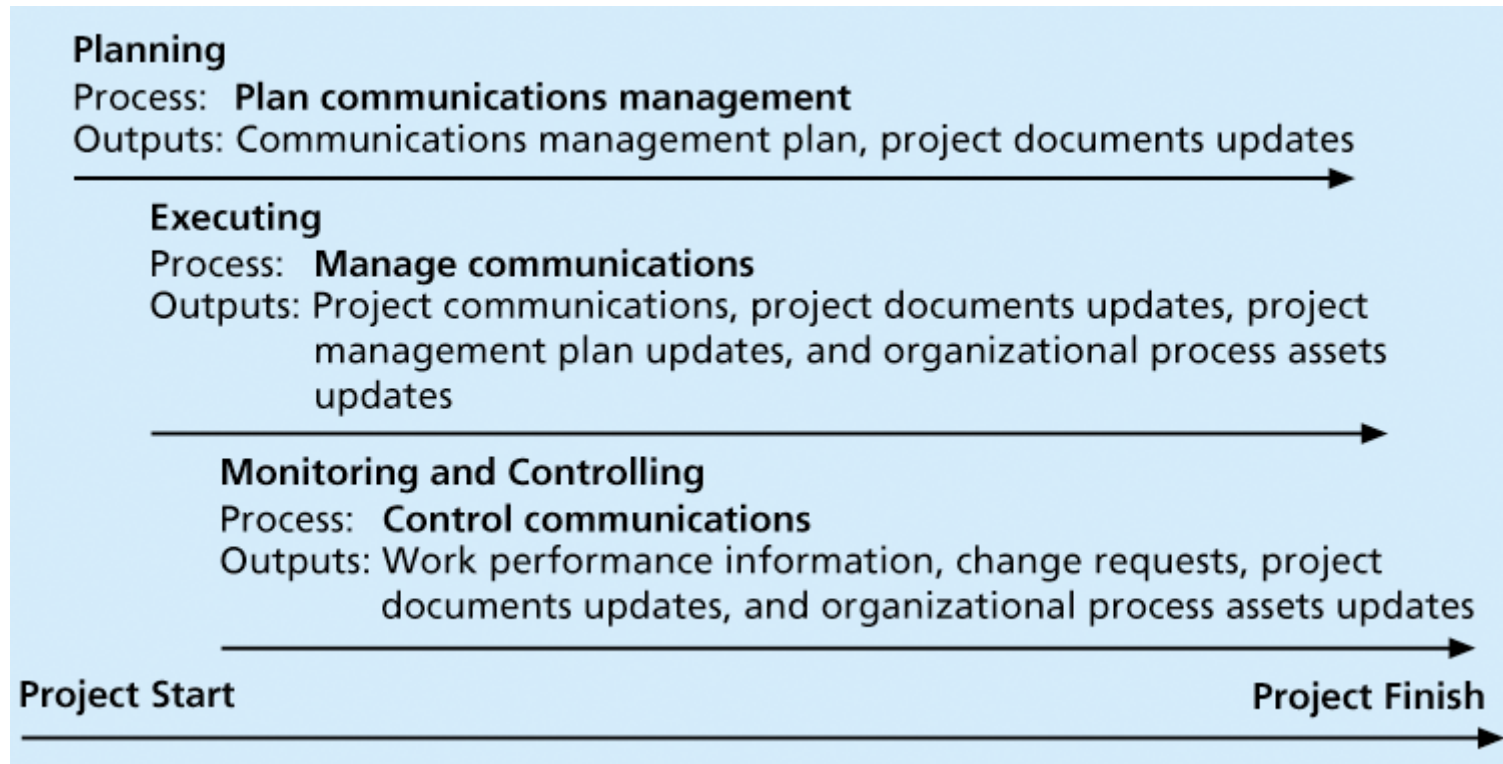
Figure 10-1. Project Communications Management Summary

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**

Planning Communications Management
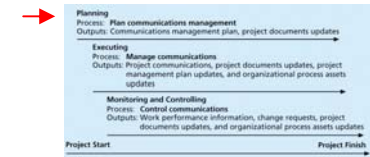
- Communications Management Plan is a document that will guide project communications
- The plan should lay out exactly what will be sent, to whom, how, when, and who is responsible
  - Audience
  - Objectives
  - Type of messages
- You need to understand communication preferences and expectations of stakeholders
- If you over-communicate, stakeholders may stop paying attention
- If you under-communicate, it can lead to miscommunication
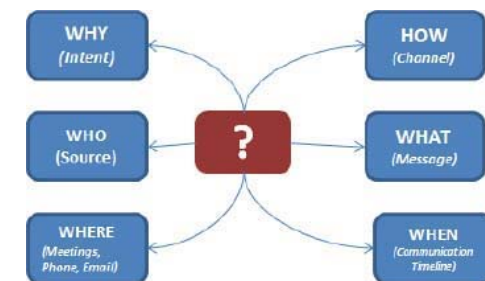
Communications Management Plan Contents

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

For smaller, less complex projects a simplified plan may be sufficient

# Table 10-1. 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.

Impact of Poor Communications

Poor Team Communications	Poor Stakeholder Communications
• Misunderstanding around project goals and objectives • Missed deadlines • Conflicts between team members • Team members develop modules that are not compatible • Decreased productivity on the project leading to increased timelines and going over budget • Lack of commitment on the part of project team members in accomplishing the work of the project	• Lack of commitment to the project • Misunderstanding around stakeholder expectations on what is considered project success • Conflicts between the project team and stakeholders • Stakeholders who may actively work against the project being accomplished • Failed projects

Managing Communications
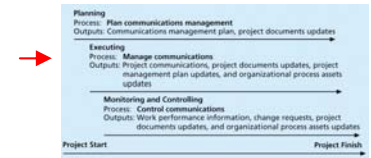
- All communication strategies and standards described in the Communications Management Plan need to be implemented and followed
- Major documents sent/received have to be stored. They need to be found and retrieved when needed
- The plan needs to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect changes to the project or its stakeholders
- Important considerations include the use of tools and technologies for managing big data

Classifications for Communication Methods

- *Interactive communication*: Two or more people interact to exchange information via meetings, phone calls, or video conferencing. Most effective way to ensure common understanding
- *Push communication*: Information is sent or pushed to recipients without their request via reports, e-mails, faxes, voice mails, and other means. Ensures that the information is distributed, but does not ensure that it was received or understood
- *Pull communication*: Information is sent to recipients at their request via emails, websites, forums, bulletin boards, e-learning, and other means

Table 10-2. 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

Galati, Tess. Email Composition and Communication (EmC2) Practical Communications, Inc. (www.praccom.com) (2001).
*Depends on system functionality

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

Monitoring Communications
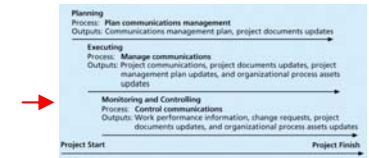
- The main goal of monitoring communications is to ensure the optimal flow of information that facilitates project progress
- The project manager and project team should use their various reporting systems, expert judgment, and meetings to assess how well communications are working. If problems exist, the project manager and team need to take action, which often requires changes to the earlier processes of planning and managing project communications
- It is beneficial to have a facilitator from outside the project team to assess efficiency of communications (project sponsor, project champion, *etc*)

Developing Better Communication Skills

▸ Many companies spend a lot of money on technical trainings for their employees, even when employees need more from communications training

▸ Programmers are also more likely to enroll voluntarily in classes to learn the latest technology than in classes that develop communications 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 and visual aids, and make logistical arrangements ahead of time

▸ Run the meeting professionally

▸ Set the ground rules for the meeting

▸ Build relationships

Guidelines - email

▸ Send emails to the right people

▸ Use meaningful subject lines. Subject line must reflect the message content. Don't leave it blank.

▸ Your greeting should address the recipient using their name

Dear Ms. Jones, - if the recipient is not well known to you, is above you in authority

Hi Tom, - for a colleague who is well-known to you

Hey – is too informal for business emails

▸ Try to limit the content of the email to one main subject

▸ The body of the email should be as clear as possible and well structured in paragraphs

▸ Always review your email before you send it

▸ Respond to emails timely (check with the Communications Management Plan)

▸ Don't forget to sign your emails (*Regards, Kind Regards, Sincerely*)

Using Templates for Project Communications

▸ Providing examples and templates for project communications saves time and money

▸ Organizations can develop their own templates, use some provided by outside organizations, or use samples from textbooks

▸ Companies that excel in project management make effective use of templates providing them on company's Intranet sites

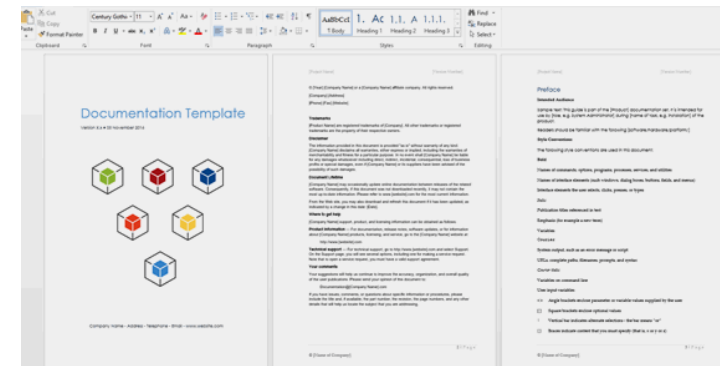# Table 10-3. Sample Template for a Monthly Progress Report

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.
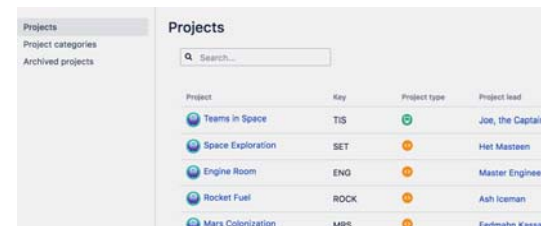
Project Web Sites

▸ Many project teams create project websites to store important product documents and other information

▸ Project websites provide a centralized way of maintaining project documents and code making sure all team members use the latest versions

▸ Important considerations:
  ◦ Content
  ◦ Security
  ◦ Access from mobile devices
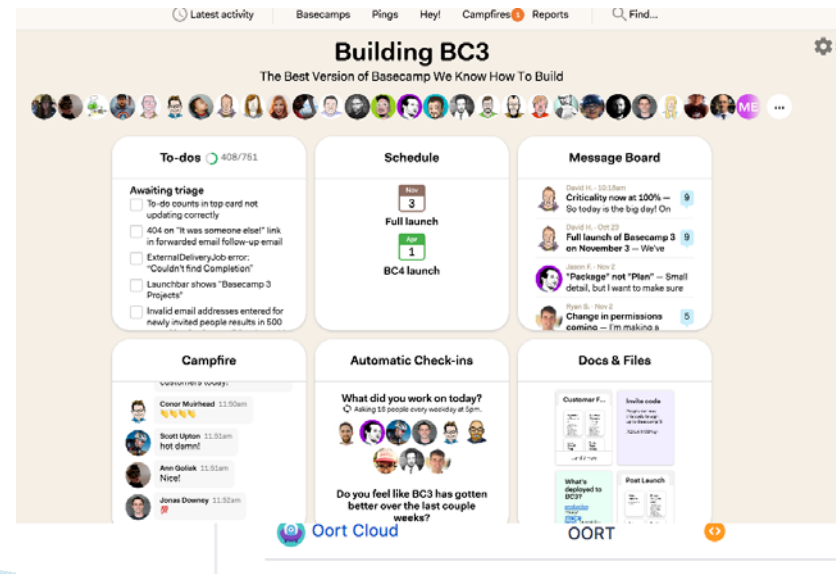
Project Archives

▸ It is also important to organize and prepare project archives

▸ Project archives are complete sets of organized project records and documents that provide an accurate history of the project

▸ These archives can provide valuable information for future projects

Chapter 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:

  ◦ Plan communications management

  ◦ Manage communications

  ◦ Control communications

Chapter 10: Project Communications Management