ICT Project Management

Unit 10: Project Communication Management

Project Communications Management includes the processes that are required to ensure timely and appropriate planning, collection, creation, distribution, storage, retrieval, management, control, monitoring, and the ultimate disposition of project information.

- ✓ Project managers spend most of their time communicating with team members and other project stakeholders, whether they are internal (at all organizational levels) or external to the organization.
- ✓ Effective communication creates a bridge between diverse stakeholders who may have different cultural and organizational backgrounds, different levels of expertise, and different perspectives and interests, which impact or have an influence upon the project execution or outcome.

10.1. Basics of Communication

KEY CONCEPTS FOR PROJECT COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT:

- ✓ Communication is the exchange of information, intended or involuntary.
- ✓ The information exchanged can be in the form of ideas, instructions, or emotions.

Project Communications Management **consists of two parts**.

1. The first part is developing a strategy to ensure communication is effective for stakeholders.
2. The second part is carrying out the activities necessary to implement the communication strategy

KEY Factors in Project Communication Management:

1. Objectives
2. Message
3. Audience
4. Channels

Mechanisms of Information Exchange:

- ❖ **Written form.** Either physical or electronic.
- ❖ **Spoken.** Either face-to-face or remote.
- ❖ **Formal or informal** (as in formal papers or social media).
- ❖ **Through gestures.** Tone of voice and facial expressions.
- ❖ **Through media**. Pictures, actions, or even just the choice of words.
- ❖ **Choice of words.** There is often more than one word to express an idea, there can be subtle differences in the meaning of each of these words and phrases.

Communications describe the possible means by which the information can be sent or received, either through **communication activities**, such as meetings and presentations, **or artifacts**, such as emails, social media, project reports, or project documentation.

✓ Effective communication builds a bridge between diverse stakeholders who may have different cultural and organizational backgrounds as well as different levels of expertise, perspectives, and interests.

Dimensions of Communication Activity:

May Have many dimensions, some of them are:

❖ **Internal.** Focus on stakeholders within the project and within the organization.
❖ **External.** Focus on external stakeholders such as customers, vendors, other projects, organizations, government, 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.
❖ **Hierarchical focus.** The position of the stakeholder or group with respect to the project team will affect the format and content of the message, in the following ways:
  • *Upward.* Senior management stakeholders.
  • *Downward.* The team and others who will contribute to the work of the project.
  • *Horizontal.* Peers of the project manager or team.
❖ **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, media releases.

The project's communications are supported by efforts to prevent misunderstandings and miscommunication by careful selection of the methods, messengers, and messages developed from the planning process.

How to Reduce Misunderstanding in Communication?

Misunderstandings can be reduced but not eliminated through **using the 5Cs** of written communications in composing a traditional (non-social media) written or spoken message.

1. **C**orrect grammar and spelling
2. **C**oncise expression and elimination of excess words
3. **C**lear purpose and expression directed to the needs of the reader
4. **C**oherent logical flow of ideas
5. **C**ontrolling flow of words and ideas

The 5Cs of written communications are supported by communication skills, such as:
- ✓ Listening actively
- ✓ Awareness of cultural and personal differences.
- ✓ Identifying, setting, and managing stakeholder expectations
- ✓ Enhancement of skills

Trends and Practices for Project Communication Management:

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

10.2. Project Communication Management Processes:

The Project Communications Management processes are:

1. **Plan Communications Management:** Process of developing an appropriate approach and plan for project communication activities based on the information needs of each stakeholder or group, available organizational assets, and the needs of the project.

2. **Manage Communications:** Process of ensuring timely and appropriate collection, creation, distribution, storage, retrieval, management, monitoring, and the ultimate disposition of project information.

3. **Monitor Communications:** Process of ensuring the information needs of the project and its stakeholders are met.

10.3. Importance of Communication Management

Projects that don't have a solid communication plan in place can suffer from a number of setbacks:

- Rigidity, preventing necessary deviation from the original plan
- Blind leadership, unaware of the obstacles faced by the project team
- Slow response time to critical issues, reactionary
- Uninformed decisions made by management
- Lack of confidence in leadership by team members
- Short-sighted decisions made by frustrated team members

On the other hand, creating a solid network of communication at the start of a project could prevent each of these issues:

- ✓ Fluidity, allowing the original plan to evolve as needed

- ✔ Informed leadership, available to support team members in a meaningful way
- ✔ Rapid response as issues occur, saving time and money, anticipatory
- ✔ Keeps management informed so decisions are relevant and beneficial
- ✔ Respect between team members and leads
- ✔ Decisions are left to qualified leaders who understand the bigger picture

10.4. Planning Project Communication Management

- ✔ Plan Communications Management is the process of developing an appropriate approach and plan for project communications activities based on the information needs of each stakeholder or group, available organizational assets, and the needs of the project.

- ✔ The key benefit of this process is a documented approach to effectively and efficiently engage stakeholders by presenting relevant information in a timely manner.
- ✔ This process is performed periodically throughout the project as needed.

An effective communications management plan that recognizes the diverse information needs of the project's stakeholders is developed early in the project life cycle.

- ✔ Communication plan should be reviewed regularly and modified when necessary, when the stakeholder community changes or at the start of each new project phase.
- ✔ On most projects, communications planning is performed very early, during stakeholder identification and project management plan development

Inputs, Tools and Techniques and Output of the process: Plan Communication Management

Plan Communications Management

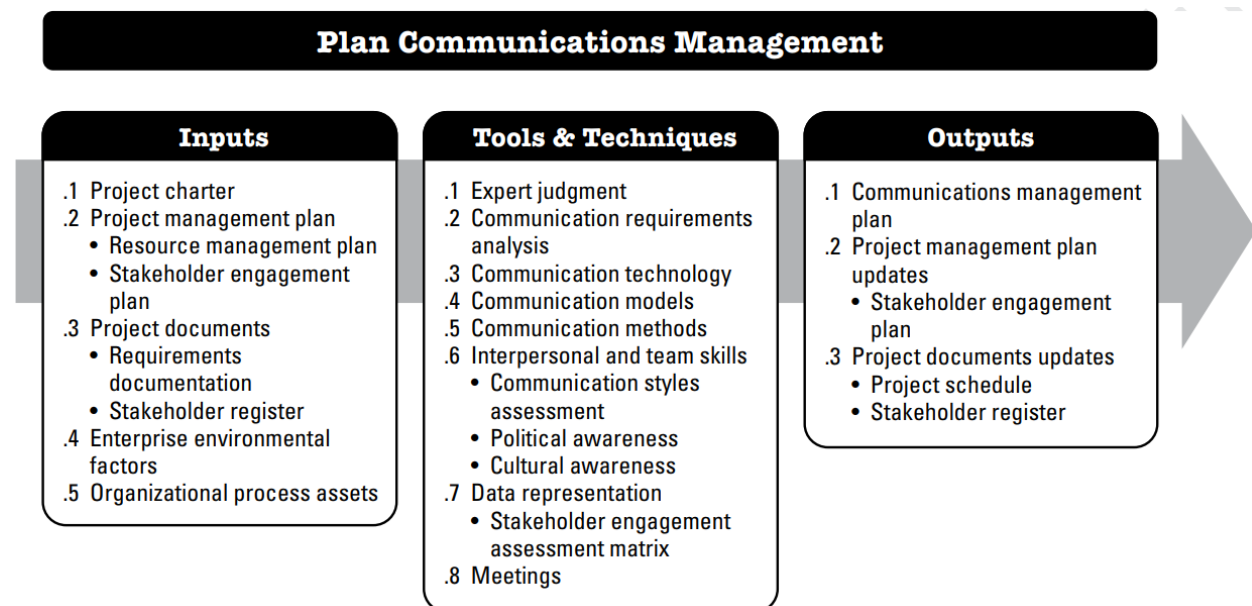| Inputs	Tools & Techniques	Outputs

.1 Project charter
.2 Project management plan
  • Resource management plan
  • Stakeholder engagement plan
.3 Project documents
  • Requirements documentation
  • Stakeholder register
.4 Enterprise environmental factors
.5 Organizational process assets
	.1 Expert judgment
	.2 Communication requirements analysis
	.3 Communication technology
	.4 Communication models
	.5 Communication methods
	.6 Interpersonal and team skills
	  • Communication styles assessment
	  • Political awareness
	  • Cultural awareness
	.7 Data representation
	  • Stakeholder engagement assessment matrix
	.8 Meetings
		.1 Communications management plan
		.2 Project management plan updates
		  • Stakeholder engagement plan
		.3 Project documents updates
		  • Project schedule
		  • Stakeholder register

Figure: Inputs, Tools and Techniques and Output of the process: Plan Communication Management

Tools and Techniques:

Communication Requirement Analysis:

Sources of information typically used to identify and define project communication requirements include but are not limited to:
- ✓ Stakeholder information and communication requirements from within the stakeholder register and stakeholder engagement plan;
- ✓ Number of potential communication channels or paths, including one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many communications;
- ✓ Project organization and stakeholder responsibility, relationships, and interdependencies;
- ✓ Development approach;
- ✓ Disciplines, departments, and specialties involved in the project;
- ✓ Logistics of how many persons will be involved with the project and at which locations;
- ✓ Internal information needs (e.g., when communicating within organizations);
- ✓ External information needs (e.g., when communicating with the media, public, or contractors); and
- ✓ Legal requirements

Communication Technology:

- ✓ Common methods used for information exchange and collaboration include conversations, meetings, written documents, databases, social media, and websites.

How to choose Communication technology?

On the basis of:

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

Communication Models:

- ✓ Communication models can represent the communication process in its most basic linear form (sender and receiver), in a more interactive form that encompasses the additional element of feedback (sender, receiver, and feedback), or in a more complex model.
    1. **Sample basic sender/receiver communication model**
        - This model is concerned with ensuring that the message is delivered, rather than understood.
        - sequence of steps in a basic communication model is: Encode→Transmit Message→ Decode
    2. **Sample interactive communication model**

- Describes communication as a process consisting of two parties, the sender and receiver, but recognizes the need to ensure that the message has been understood.
- The additional steps in an interactive communication model are: Acknowledge, Feedback / Response

3. **Cross-Cultural Communication Model**

✓ Cross-cultural communication presents challenges to ensuring that the meaning of the message has been understood.

✓ Differences in communication styles can arise from differences in working methods, age, nationality, professional discipline, ethnicity, race, or gender.

✓ People from different cultures communicate using different languages (e.g., technical design documents, different styles) and expect different processes and protocols.

✓ Cross-cultural communication model incorporates the idea that the message itself and how it is transmitted are influenced by the sender's current emotional state, knowledge, background, personality, culture, and biases.

✓ Similarly, the receiver's emotional state knowledge, background, personality, culture, and biases will influence how the message is received and interpreted, and will contribute to the barriers or noise.
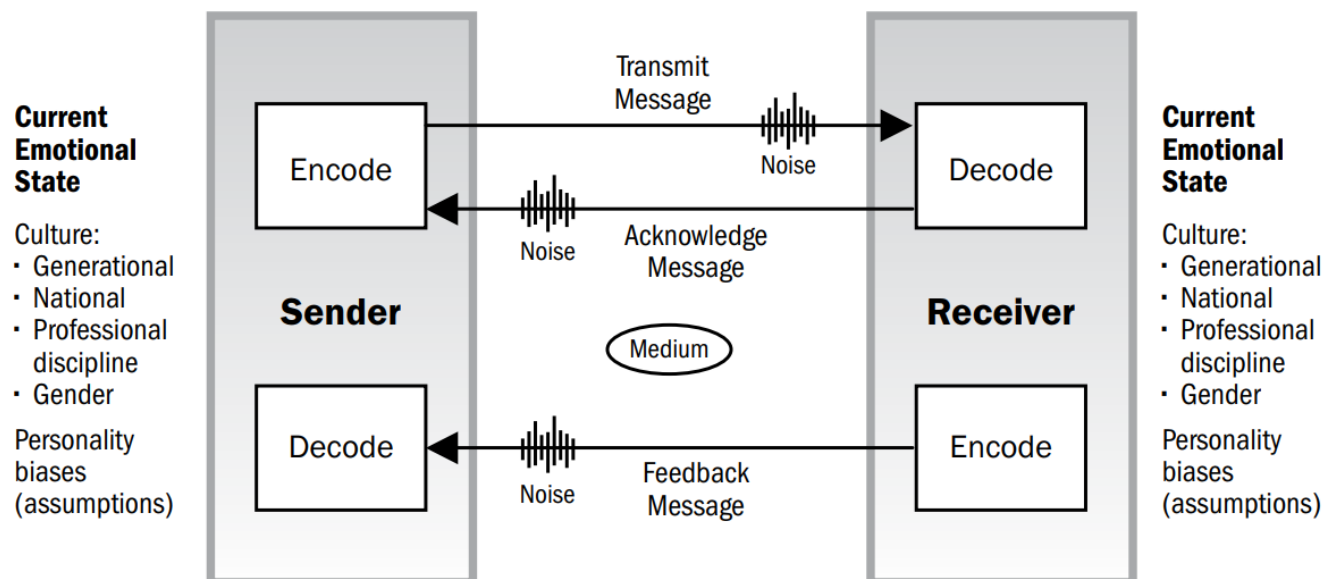
Figure: Communication Model for Cross-Cultural Communication (PMBOK)

Communication Methods   imp

✓ There are several communication methods such as nonverbal, verbal, written, contextual, oral, body language, etc. and they all fall within **three basic categories**: *interactive, push, and pull*.

1. Interactive communication Method.

✓ The most effective type of communication between two or more people in real time.

✓ It is a face to face communication type in which the project manager can receive direct feedback from the project team or stakeholders to understand their thoughts and provides them his ideas.

✓ Interactive communication can be used when the urgent response is needed or when the issue is important and there is a possibility of misunderstanding.

✓ This real-time communication method provides fast and effective results.

For example, you hold a meeting related to the project's status and invited the stakeholders. During the meeting, you discussed the key points and bottlenecks of the project and received the participant's opinions. This is an example of interactive communication.

Example of the Interactive Communication Method are:

✓ Interactive communication can be performed via media like teleconferences or face to face contacts. Below are a few examples of interactive communication.

- Meetings
- Phone Calls / Conference
- Video Calls / Conference
- Workshops

2. Push communication Method.

✓ Push communication is not a face to face communication type like interactive communication.
✓ The project manager sends the information to the recipient with no expectation of receiving immediate feedback or response.
✓ Sent or distributed directly to specific recipients who need to receive the information.
✓ But some action or response is needed when the recipient receives the message.
✓ The information conveyed through push communication is usually in written form and should not be urgent classified.
✓ In the push communication method, you send the message or information but you are not sure that the message is well understood by the recipient. Therefore push communication method is not suitable for urgent situations.

For example, in a Financial Software project, you detected a dangerous problem related to transaction security (let's say, any random number sequence is accepted for transaction

verification instead of OTP). You sent an email related to the problem. However, nobody read your message and the action is not taken.

<u>**Push Communication Method Example**</u>

- Letters
- Memos
- Emails
- Reports
- Faxes
- Voice mails

3. Pull Communication Method.

- ✓ Pull communication is an informational type of communication.

- ✓ Pull communication is not a face to face communication type and it does not require immediate feedback or response.

- ✓ It is suitable for large and complex projects with a large audience.

- ✓ In this type of communication, the sender places the information at a general database such as a SharePoint or a shared drive and the recipients are responsible to use the information placed at this location.

For example, you subscribed to a website of Pokhara University. You receive information related to the result, notice, routine etc. If you do not read the information or messages this will not affect the website or the website does not expect your response.

<u>**Pull Communication Method Example**</u>

- A website / Web Portal
- Intranet sites
- E-learning
- Lesson learned database
- A knowledge repository
- A bulletin board
- A SharePoint of a sharedrive.

10.5. Manage Communication

- ✓ Manage Communications is the process of ensuring timely and appropriate collection, creation, distribution, storage, retrieval, management, monitoring, and the ultimate disposition of project information.
- ✓ It enables an efficient and effective information flow between the project team and the stakeholders. This process is performed throughout the project.
- ✓ It identifies all aspects of effective communication, including choice of appropriate technologies, methods, and techniques.

- ✓ In addition, it should allow for flexibility in the communications activities, allowing adjustments in the methods and techniques to accommodate the changing needs of stakeholders and the project.
- ✓ It also provides opportunities for stakeholders to make requests for further information, clarification, and discussion.

Techniques and considerations for effective communications management include

- ✓ Sender-receiver models
- ✓ Choice of media
- ✓ Writing style.
- ✓ Meeting management.
- ✓ Presentations.
- ✓ Facilitation
- ✓ Active listening

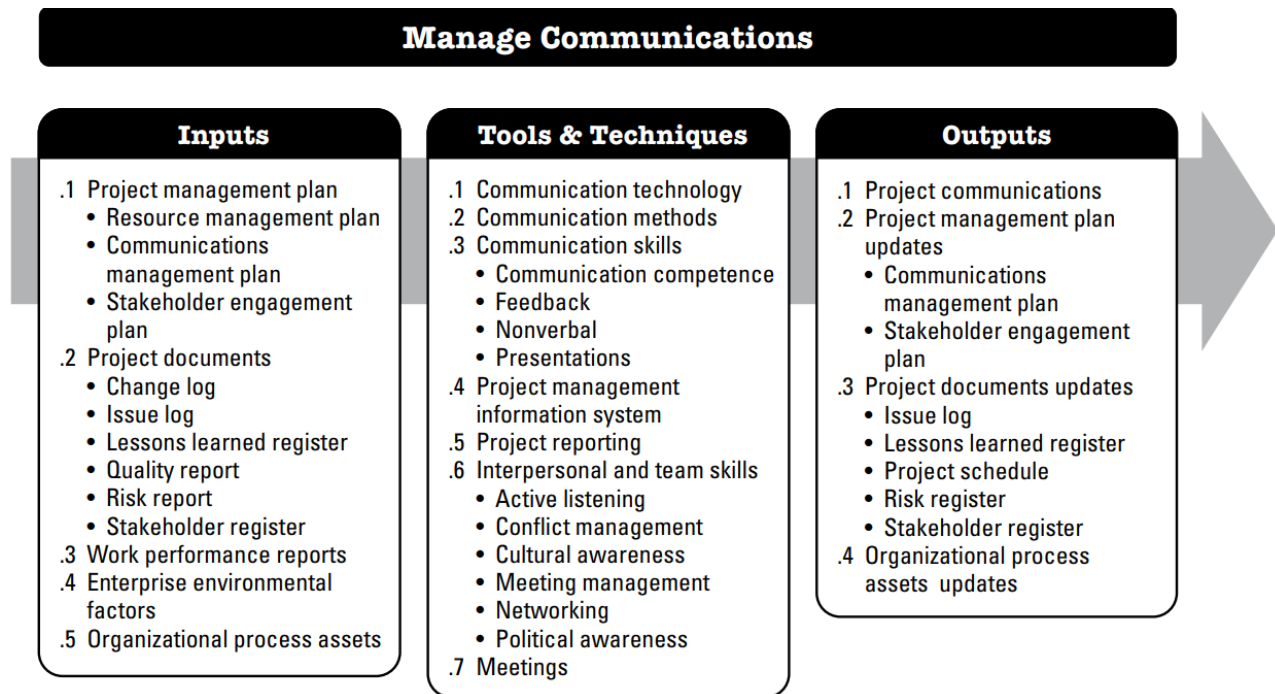**Inputs, Tools and Techniques and Outputs of the process: Manage Communication**

Manage Communications

Inputs	Tools & Techniques	Outputs
.1 Project management plan • Resource management plan • Communications management plan • Stakeholder engagement plan .2 Project documents • Change log • Issue log • Lessons learned register • Quality report • Risk report • Stakeholder register .3 Work performance reports .4 Enterprise environmental factors .5 Organizational process assets	.1 Communication technology .2 Communication methods .3 Communication skills • Communication competence • Feedback • Nonverbal • Presentations .4 Project management information system .5 Project reporting .6 Interpersonal and team skills • Active listening • Conflict management • Cultural awareness • Meeting management • Networking • Political awareness .7 Meetings	.1 Project communications .2 Project management plan updates • Communications management plan • Stakeholder engagement plan .3 Project documents updates • Issue log • Lessons learned register • Project schedule • Risk register • Stakeholder register .4 Organizational process assets updates

Figure: Inputs, Tools and Techniques and Outputs of the process: Manage Communication

10.6. Monitor Communication

- ✓ This process used to be called 'control communications,' but was updated in the sixth edition of the PMBOK.
- ✓ Despite the title change, the process is the same. It involves monitoring and controlling project communications throughout the entire lifecycle.

✓ Monitor Communications may require a variety of methods, such as customer satisfaction surveys, collecting lessons learned, observations of the team, reviewing data from the issue log, or evaluating changes in the stakeholder engagement assessment matrix.

✓ The Monitor Communications process can trigger an iteration of the Plan Communications Management and/or Manage Communications processes to improve effectiveness of communication through additional and possibly amended communications plans and activities. Such iterations illustrate the continuous nature of the Project Communications Management processes.

This may include the confirmation of the following:

✓ Communications went out as planned
✓ They were received by the proper stakeholders
✓ Messages were understood
✓ Any relevant feedback was provided to the appropriate project members

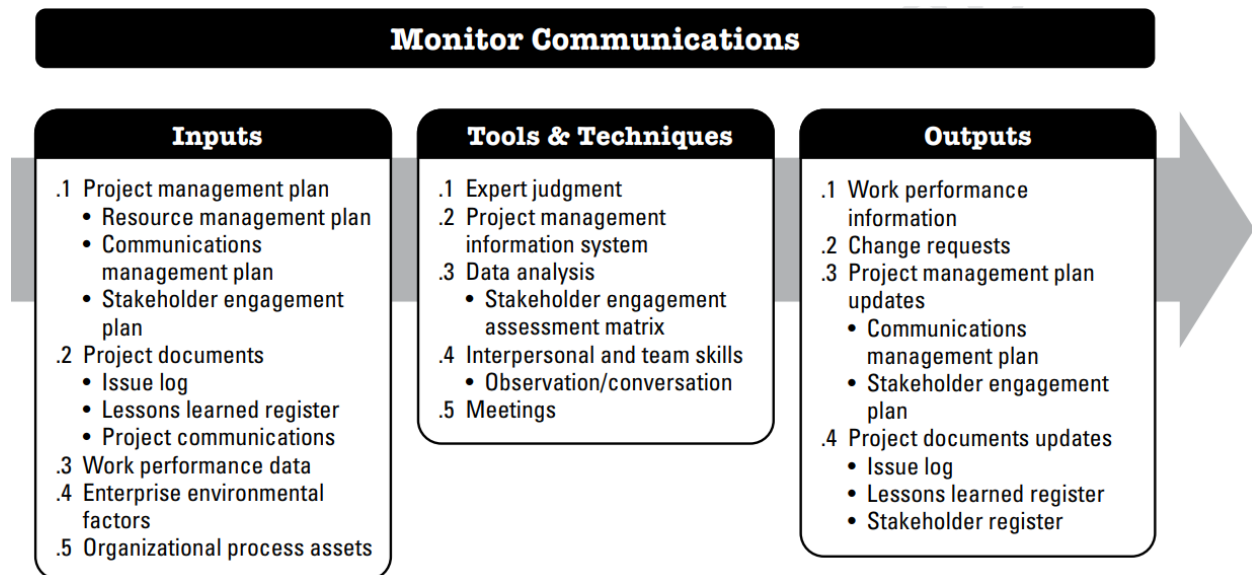**Inputs, Tools and Techniques and Outputs of the process: Monitor Communication**

Monitor Communications

Inputs

.1 Project management plan
  • Resource management plan
  • Communications management plan
  • Stakeholder engagement plan
.2 Project documents
  • Issue log
  • Lessons learned register
  • Project communications
.3 Work performance data
.4 Enterprise environmental factors
.5 Organizational process assets

Tools & Techniques

.1 Expert judgment
.2 Project management information system
.3 Data analysis
  • Stakeholder engagement assessment matrix
.4 Interpersonal and team skills
  • Observation/conversation
.5 Meetings

Outputs

.1 Work performance information
.2 Change requests
.3 Project management plan updates
  • Communications management plan
  • Stakeholder engagement plan
.4 Project documents updates
  • Issue log
  • Lessons learned register
  • Stakeholder register

Figure: Inputs, Tools and Techniques and Outputs of the process: Manage Communication

**End of Unit 10 **