Communication Management
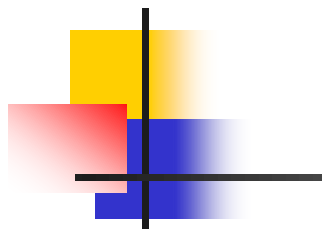
Buyang Cao
caobuyang@tongji.edu.cn

Communication management

- Why it matters?
  - *The greatest thread to the success of information technology projects is a failure to communicate.*

Purposes of Communications

To inform

To persuade

To create goodwill

To instruct

To inspire

Project Communications Management

What is Communications Management?

Project Communications Management includes the processes required to ensure **timely and appropriate generation, collection, distribution, storage, retrieval, and ultimate disposition of project information**.

Involve: soft skills

Software development is more about fancier communication – Chris Wanstrath, CEO of GitHub

Project Communications Management

- Project managers spend the majority of their time on
  - communicating with team members and other project stakeholders (internally or externally)
  - external to the organization.
- Effective communication creates:
  - Bridge between diverse stakeholders involved in a project
  - Connection for various cultural and organizational backgrounds, different levels of expertise, and various perspectives
  - Interests in the project execution or outcome

Overview of the processes

- **Identify Stakeholders**

  identifying all people or organizations impacted by the project, and documenting relevant information regarding their interests, involvement, and impact on project success.

- **Plan Communications**

  determining the project stakeholder information needs and defining a communication approach.

Overview of the processes

- ## Distribute Information
  making relevant information available to project stakeholders as planned.

- ## Manage Stakeholder Expectations
  communicating and working with stakeholders to meet their needs and addressing issues as they occur.

- ## Report Performance
  collecting and distributing performance information, including status reports, progress measurements, and forecasts.

Project Communications Management

Communication activity has many potential dimensions, including:

- Internal (within the project) and external (customer, other projects, the media, the public),
- Formal (reports, memos, briefings) and informal (emails, ad-hoc discussions),
- Vertical (up and down the organization) and horizontal (with peers),
- Official (newsletters, annual report) and unofficial (off the record communications),
- Written and oral, and
- Verbal and non-verbal (voice inflections, body language).

Project Communications Management

Four communication skills:

Thinking

Non-verbal

Listening
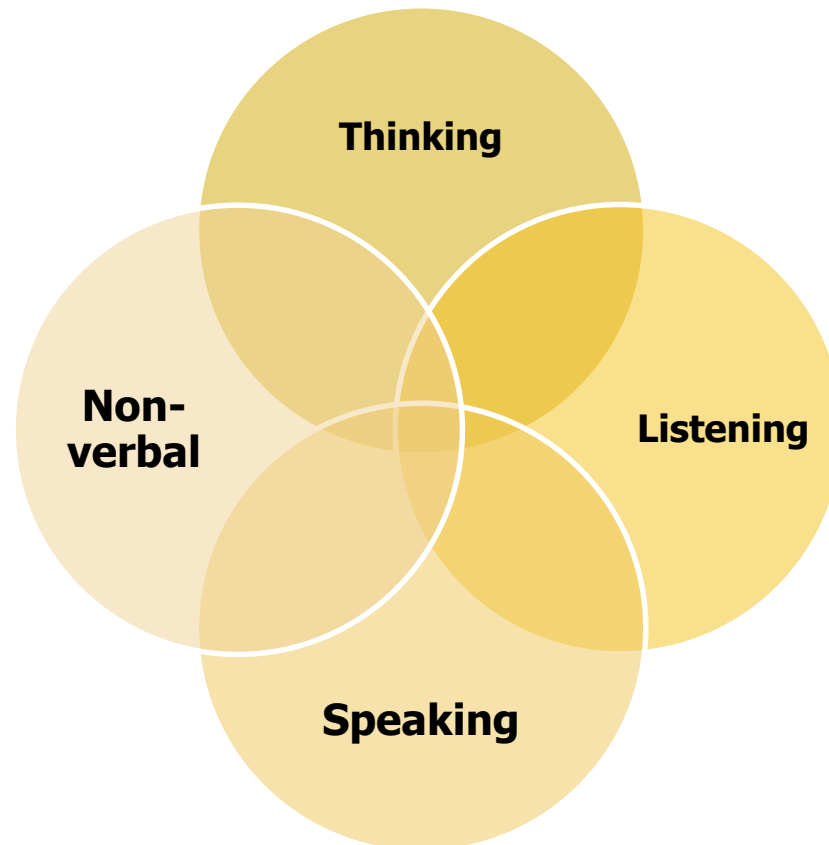
Speaking

Project Communications Management

Thinking: having a clear idea to be conveyed to another person

Listening: understand what in the other person's mind

Speaking: effectively selecting words and tones

Nonverbal communication: body, gesture, crying?

Project Communications Management

During communication:

- Listening actively and effectively,
- Questioning, probing ideas and situations to ensure better understanding,
- Educating to increase team's knowledge so that they can be more effective,
- Fact-finding to identify or confirm information,
- Setting and managing expectations,
- Persuading a person or organization to perform an action,
- Negotiating to achieve mutually acceptable agreements between parties,
- Resolving conflict to prevent disruptive impacts, and
- Summarizing, recapping, and identifying the next steps.

Identify Stakeholders

Identifying all people/organizations impacted by the project, and documenting their interests, involvement, and impact on project success.

- Project stakeholders are persons and organizations such as customers, sponsors, the performing organization, and the public that are actively involved in the project, or whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by the project.

- They may have the influence over the project and its deliverables. The may be at different levels within the organization and may possess different authority levels, or may be external to the project.

Identify Stakeholders

- It is critical for project success to identify the stakeholders early
  - analyze their levels of interest, expectations, importance and influence.
- A strategy can be developed for approaching a stakeholder and determining the level and timing of stakeholders' involvement
  - Goal: to maximize positive influences and mitigate potential negative impacts.
- The assessment and corresponding strategy should be periodically reviewed during project execution to adjust for potential changes.

Identify Stakeholders

Notes:

- Most projects will have a large number of stakeholders.
- The project manager's time is limited and must be used as efficiently as possible
- Stakeholders should be classified according to their interest, influence, and involvement in the project.

Goal: focus on the relationships necessary to ensure the success of the project
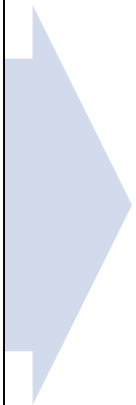
Identify Stakeholders

Inputs	Tools & Techniques	Outputs
1 Project charter 2 Procurement documents 3 Enterprise environmental factors 4 Organizational process assets	1 Stakeholder analysis 2 Expert judgment	1 Stakeholder register 2 Stakeholder management strategy

Plan Communications

Involve: determining the project stakeholder information needs and defining a communication approach

- who needs what information, when they will need it, how it will be given to them, and by whom.
- the informational needs and methods of distribution upon individual project
- Identifying the information needs of the stakeholders and determining a suitable means to meet those needs

Plan Communications

- A communication plan allows the project manager to document the approach to communicate most efficiently and effectively with stakeholders.

Plan Communications

Problems with improper communication planning:

- delay in message delivery
- communication of sensitive information to the wrong audience
- lack of communication to some of the required stakeholders.

Plan Communications

Comm. Technology factors affecting the project:

- **The urgency of the need for information**: briefing, notice, written reports, etc.
- **The availability of technology**
- **The expected project staffing**: experience and expertise, or training needed
- **The length of project**: technology change before the project is over
- **The project environment**: face-to-face or virtual meeting

Plan Communications

Effective communication characteristics:

- providing information in the right format, at the right time, and with the right impact.
- providing only the information that is needed.
- the communications planning is done very early, such as during project management plan development.

The results of this planning process should be reviewed regularly throughout the project and revised as needed to ensure continued applicability.

Plan Communications

Stakeholder	Document Name	Document Format	Contact Person	Due
Customer management	Monthly status report	Hard copy	Tina Erndt, Tom Silva	First of month
Customer technical staff	Monthly status report	E-mail	Julie Grant, Sergey Christophe	First of month
Internal Management	Monthly status report	Hard copy	Bob Thomson	First of month
Internal business and technical staff	Monthly status report	E-mail	Angle Liu	First of month
Training subcontractor	Training planning	Hard copy	Bill Hass	01/31/2014
Software subcontractor	Software implementation plan	E-mail	Maya Gates	12/01/2013

Plan Communications

Inputs	Tools & Techniques	Outputs
1 Stakeholder register	1 Communication requirements analysis	1 Communications management plan
2 Stakeholder management strategy	2 Communication technology	2 Project document updates
3 Enterprise environmental factors	3 Communication models	
4 Organizational process assets	4 Communication methods	

Distribute information

Getting project information to the right people at the right time and in a useful formats is just as important as developing the information in the first place.

Distribute information

- Making relevant information available to project stakeholders as planned
- Being performed throughout the entire project life cycle and in all management processes.
  - implementing the communications management plan
  - responding to unexpected requests for information

Distribute information

- Using technology to enhance information distribution
    - Intranet, internet, e-mails, web site, mobile devices, social media
    - Templates, sample of project files
    - Digital version
    - Software for documentation

Distribute information

- Formal and informal methods for distributing information
  - Written documents/reports
  - Informal verbal communications
  - Developing trusting relationships between members
  - Short face-to-face meetings
  - Informal discussions once a week over coffee

Distribute information

- Distributing important information in an effective and timely manner
  - Important information should not be buried in an attachment
  - Effective oral communications
  - Face-to-face interaction
    - 58% communication through body language, 35% through how the words are said, and 7% through the content or words that are spoken
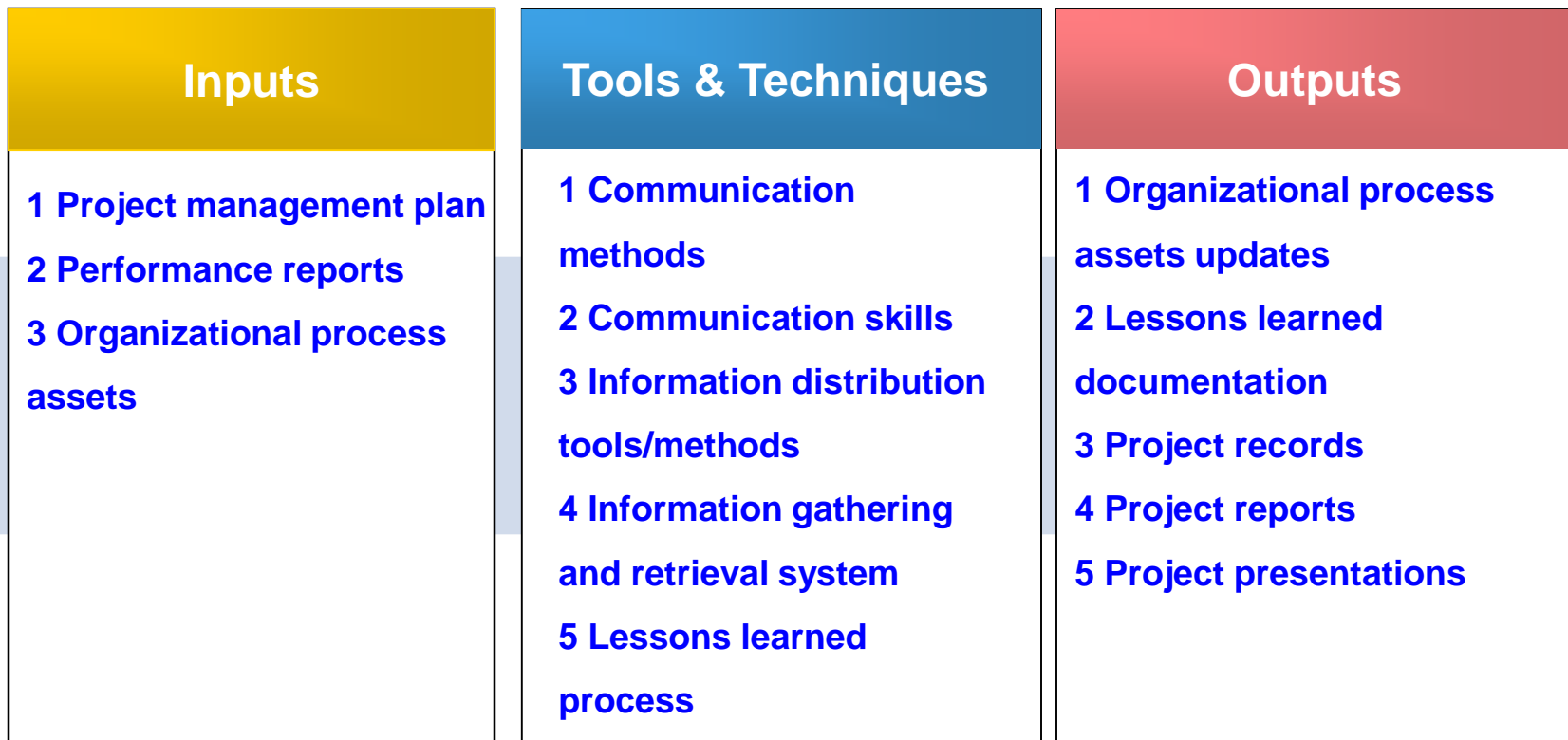
Distribute information

Understanding group and individual needs

- Personality and preference
- Communication style (speaking customer's language)
- Geographic and culture backgrounds
- Communicating "bad" news
- Number of communication channels (right persons and right amount of information)

Distribute information

Inputs	Tools & Techniques	Outputs
1 Project management plan 2 Performance reports 3 Organizational process assets	1 Communication methods 2 Communication skills 3 Information distribution tools/methods 4 Information gathering and retrieval system 5 Lessons learned process	1 Organizational process assets updates 2 Lessons learned documentation 3 Project records 4 Project reports 5 Project presentations

Manage Stakeholder Expectations

The process of communicating and working with stakeholders to meet their needs and addressing issues as they occur. It involves

- communication activities directed toward stakeholders to influence their expectations, address concerns, and resolve issues

Manage Stakeholder Expectations

Activities in the process:

- Managing the expectations of stakeholders to increase the likelihood of project acceptance by negotiating and influencing their desires to achieve and maintain the project goals

- Addressing concerns that have not become issues yet, usually related to the anticipation of future problems.

- Clarifying and resolving issues that have been identified. The resolution may result in a change request or may be addressed outside of the project, for example, postponed for another project or phase or deferred to another organizational entity.

Manage Stakeholder Expectations

Managing expectations brings us

- increasing the probability of project success by ensuring that the stakeholders understand the project benefits and risks.
  - active supporters of the project and to help with risk assessment of project choices
  - preventive actions can be taken to win their support or minimize potential negative impacts.
- decreasing the risk that the project failing to meet its goals and objectives due to unresolved stakeholder issues
- limiting disruptions during the project.
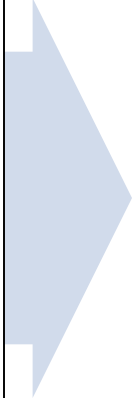
Manage Stakeholder Expectations

Inputs

1 Stakeholder register

2 Stakeholder management strategy

3 Project management plan

4 Issue log

5 Change log

6 Organizational process assets

Tools & Techniques

1 Communication methods

2 Interpersonal skills

3 Management skills

Outputs

1 Organizational process assets updates

2 Change requests

3 Project management plan updates

4 Project document updates

Report Performance

The process of collecting and distributing performance information, including status reports, progress measurements, and forecasts.

- periodically collect and analyze baseline versus actual data

- understand and communicate the project progress and performance

- forecast the project results

Report Performance

Two key outputs of performance reporting:

- Status report: where the project stands at a specific point in time

- Progress report: what the project team has accomplished during the current period

Status meeting

Report Performance

More elaborate reports may include:

- Analysis of past performance,
- Current status of risks and issues,
- Work completed during the period,
- Work to be completed next,
- Summary of changes approved in the period, and
- Other relevant information which must be reviewed and discussed

Report Performance

Suggestions for improving project communications:

- Using proper communication skills to manage conflicts
- Developing better communication skills
- Running effective meetings
- Using e-mails effectively
- Using templates for project communications
- Developing a communication infrastructure
- Using effective technologies to assist communications
  - Conference call equipment
  - Video conferences
  - Webcast
  - Blogs, facebook, twitter, WeChat, QQ, etc.

Report Performance

Inputs	Tools & Techniques	Outputs
1 Project management plan	1 Variance analysis	1 Performance reports
2 Work performance information	2 Forecasting methods	2 Organizational process assets updates
3 Work performance measurements	3 Communication methods	3 Change requests
4 Budget forecasts	4 Reporting systems	
5 Forecasted completion		
6 Organizational process assets		

Team task

Design/implement a platform to facilitate your communication. You can use third-party software for the prototype (stating the reasons to use it). Goals:

- All the team members get connected
- Specifying information/data to be conveyed
- A clear working flow
- Team members can share their ideas
- Someone can launch one topic and invite people for discussion
- Depository for files/reports, etc.
- Team members should be get informed if something needs to get attention
- Consider how it can serve the processes mentioned in the communication management
- (focusing: informing, discussing, documenting, work flow)