

# A Guide for Effective Project Communication

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## **Introduction:**

The greatest component when managing IT projects is the success or failure of your communication. As a project manager, you must be able to navigate these communication landscapes, to ensure stakeholders are informed, engaged, and aligned throughout the project life cycle. Effective communication is key, not just for stakeholders, but between you and your team as well. In this blog post, we will review the keys to good communication as well as how to make your communication plan.

## **Element of Planning Communication**

As a project manager, you need to expect to spend the majority of your management time communicating. This is why understanding the fundamentals of effective communication is important in both informal and formal situations. Here are some concepts to help you navigate communication.

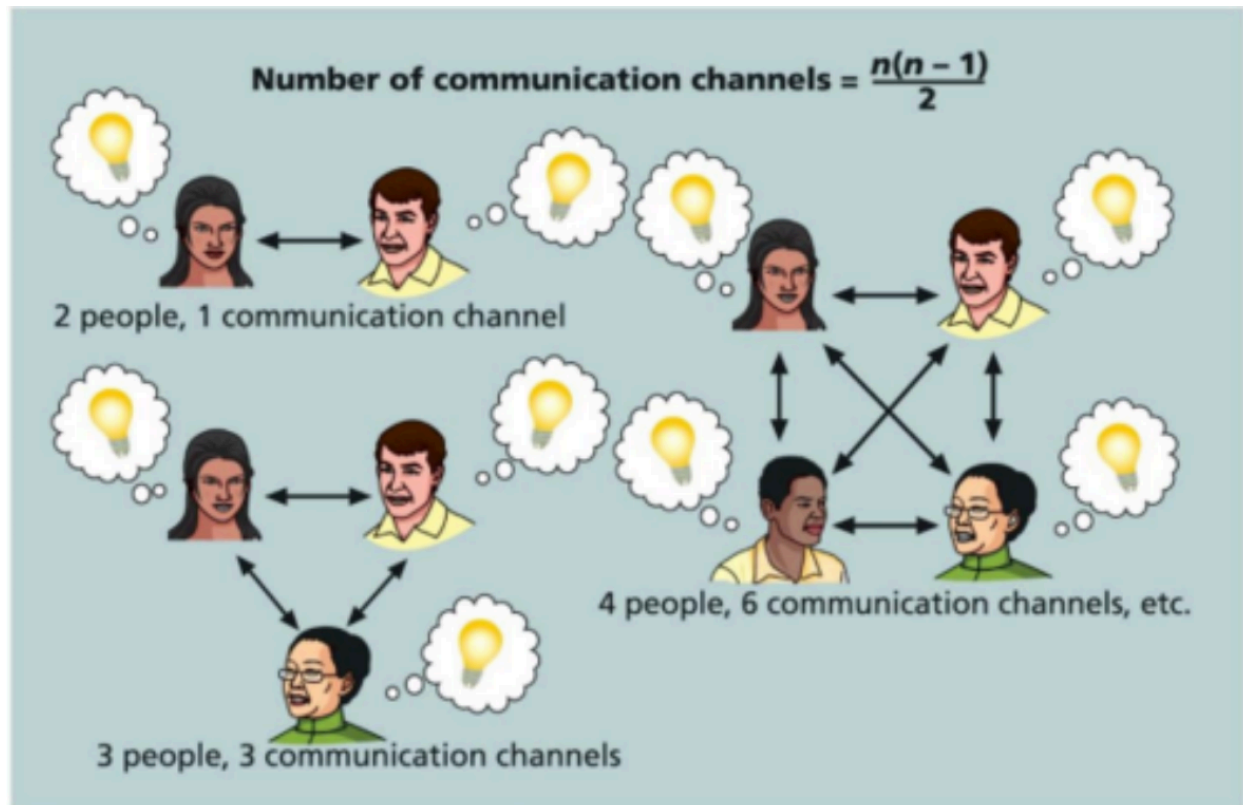
### [Group and Individual Communication Needs](#)

Your project communication must be able to recognize and adapt to the different types of diverse communication from the group and individually. Because of this diverse communication, adding more people to a project that needs to catch up can complicate things because of complex communication (Schwalbe). Be careful with putting your eggs in one basket, or relying on one type of communication method. Instead have multiple types of methods like written, emails, images, meetings, etc, to promote more dialogue.

Another aspect to keep in mind is geographic locations and language barriers. You should be mindful of time zones when scheduling meetings, as well as any language accommodations you may need to make.

## Determining Communication Channels

The number of people involved in your project will determine the number of communication channels needed. You can use this formula for determining how many communication channels are needed:  $n(n-1)/2$ , with “n” being the number of people involved in the project. It is important to make sure that messages reach all intended recipients (Schwalbe).



**FIGURE 10-2** The impact of the number of people on communication channels

## Distributing Information in a Timely/Effective Manner

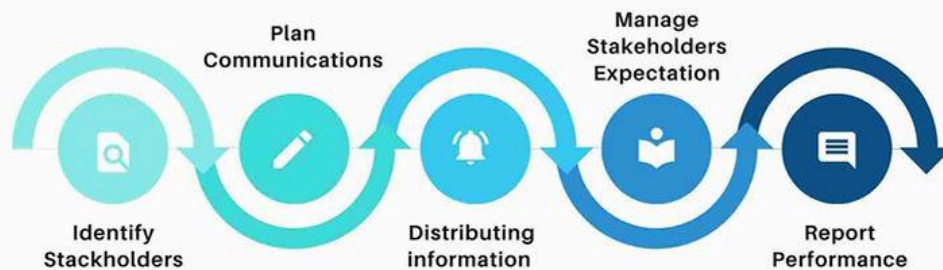
How fast and how effective are crucial factors when distributing and updating project information. It is easy for communication delays to happen, which can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, or even project setbacks. It is your job as a project manager to close the gaps in these potential negatives by developing good communication protocols. You should also be able to determine which situations are best for which communication methods, for example, sending an email or a text message for a last-minute project change. Modeling after

agile techniques, it is good to also have frequent meetings to make sure everyone is on the same page.

## Escalation Procedures

When it comes to receiving or outputting bad news, context is important. Situations will arise where delivering bad news becomes unavoidable. You should evaluate how certain things can affect both your project life cycle and your team. Forecasting and anticipating scenarios is a good way to create the communication strategies needed for addressing potential issues and their solutions.

“Good communicators consider many factors before deciding how to distribute information, including the size of the group, the type of information, and the appropriate communication medium” (Schwalbe). Determining the needs, channels, time, effectiveness, and preferences are all key factors to having good communication.



## Creating a Communications Management Plan

Now that we have explored some fundamentals of project communication, let us understand the process of creating an effective communication plan. A well-defined plan will serve as your guide or roadmap for your communication protocols throughout your project life cycle. Here are the main components of your plan (Schwalbe):

1. Stakeholder communications: The first step would be to identify your stakeholder's communication requirements. This will involve understanding the information needs, preferences, as well as expectations of your stakeholders, sponsors, team members, and external clients. Conducting this analysis can help you edit your communication strategies for the diversity of the stakeholder's requirements.
2. Information to be communicated: This section includes defining the format, content included, and the level of detail for different types of communication like progress reports, status updates, or decision-making documents. Being clear and consistent will help your team understand what needs to be communicated.
3. Producer and Receiver of Information: In addition to defining the information to be communicated, we also need to understand who will be the recipients and the producers of the information. Assigning roles and responsibilities for communication can help prevent miscommunication.
4. Frequency of Communication: How fast and how much is essential for determining the frequency of your communication. Keeping your team and stakeholders updated, informed, and engaged is essential for your lifecycle (TenSix). Having regular updates, meetings, and checkpoints gives you and anyone else an opportunity to share progress, and concerns, or provide feedback. If you can maintain this momentum, you can uphold the frequency.
5. Escalation Procedures: Conflicts and problems are bound to arise with any type of project, especially in the project execution phase. Having clear procedures and strategies to develop is important to the resolution and prevention of issues that could escalate. As a project manager, you must be able to determine the issues, whether technical, resource, etc and be able to de-escalate and address them.
6. Revision and Update Procedures: Project dynamics can change over time, and as milestones are achieved, new stakeholders are introduced, or even priority shifts, all of these aspects show that your communication plan needs to align with the project objectives. Establishing these revision protocols can ensure that your communication plan remains relevant and active.
7. Glossary: Having a glossary of common terminology can help standardize communication and avoid any misunderstandings among your team and stakeholders. You can define key project terms, acronyms, and all project-specific jargon that would

need to be clarified. This will help everyone be on the same page in understanding project concepts and objectives.



## Conclusion:

Effective project communication management is essential for project success, and the ultimate backbone of project delivery. It is not only for conveying information, but it can also be a tool for building relationships and managing project outcomes. By understanding the diverse communication needs of your team as well as crafting an effective communications plan, as a project manager you will be able to navigate communication strategies.

Remember that communication is an ongoing process, and you need to have constant attention and be able to adapt. Mastering communication is a skill that sets project managers apart. Invest time and effort into developing your communication capabilities, to deliver successful projects, and have a lasting impact with stakeholders.

## References:

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(Image 1)
4. <https://medium.com/brightwork-collaborative-project-management-blog/how-to-create-a-project-communication-plan-e78db44b557a> (Image 2)
5. Schwalbe, Kathy. "Chapter 10-2: Project Communications Management." (Image 3)