

# Communications Management

## TEN

How often do you delete a voicemail without listening to the very end of the message? Is your inbox typically flooded with emails? How many times has a team member on one of your projects not received an important piece of information that could have impacted their work? These types of occurrences happen all too often on projects and indicate a need to better plan and manage communications. Think about your real-world projects. How much time do you spend planning and managing communications?

When surveyed, project managers typically identify communication-related issues as the problem they experience most frequently on projects. Communication is an incredibly important part of managing a project, so shouldn't we make sure we plan, manage, and monitor our messages?

Many beginning project managers only communicate using status reports. As project managers gain experience, they often recognize the need for a more structured approach to communications. Effective project managers create a communications management plan that goes beyond merely sending status reports and includes asking stakeholders what they need communicated to them and identifying what communications need to be received from the stakeholders. Effective project managers also frequently revisit communications at team meetings to limit the potential for communication problems. To pass the exam, you should have this type of mindset about communicating on projects.

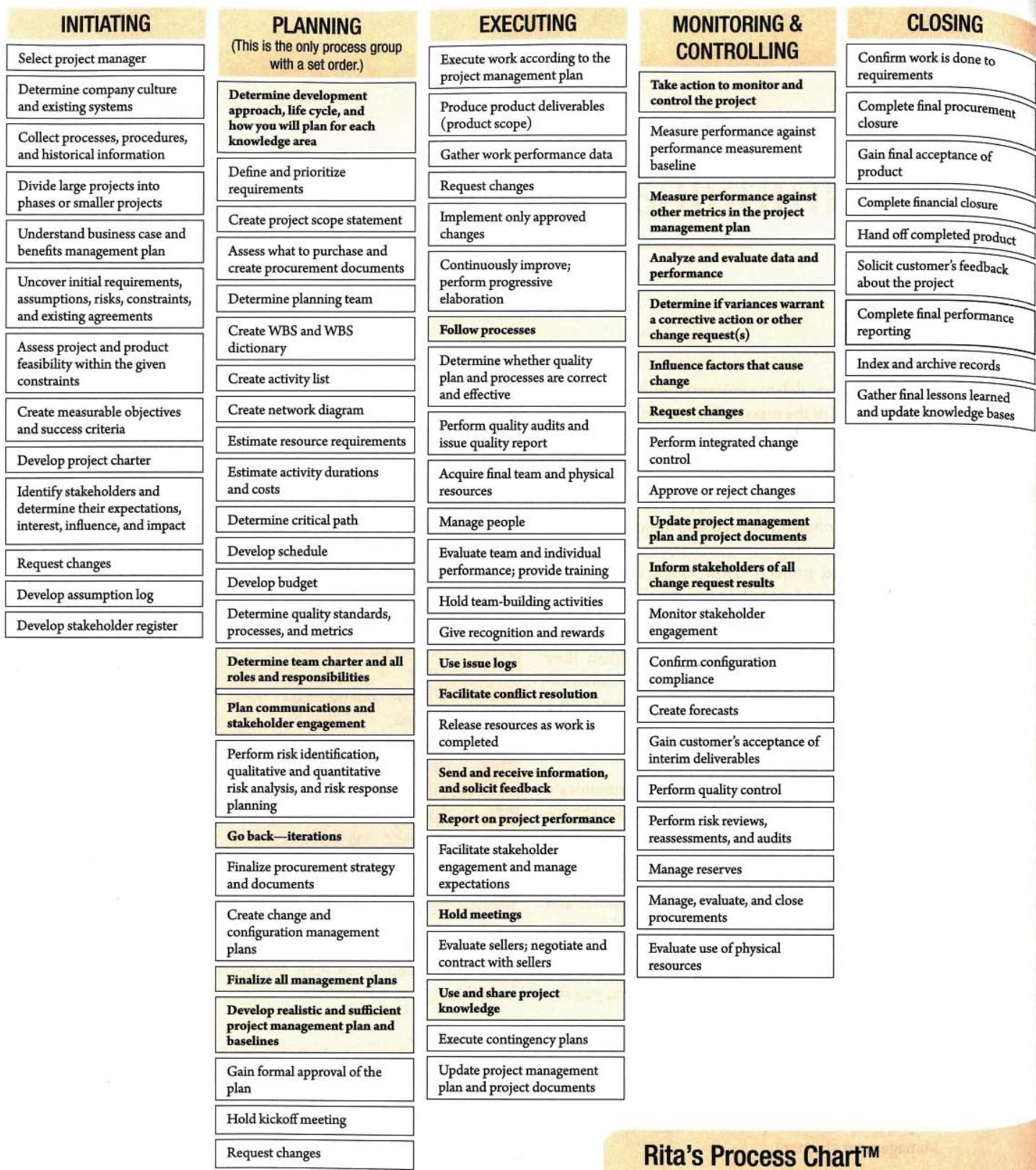
Although this chapter is not particularly difficult, it is one you should take seriously. Be sure to find your gaps regarding communications, and be aware that communications questions are frequently combined with other topics. For example, a WBS can be used as a communications tool (see the Scope Management chapter), and risk response strategies should be communicated to the stakeholders (see the Risk Management chapter).

### QUICKTEST

- Communications management process
- Communications management plan
- Flow of communication
- Communication types
  - Formal/informal written
  - Formal/informal verbal
- Communication models
  - Interactive
  - Noise
  - Effective communication
  - Nonverbal
  - Verbal
  - Active listening
  - Effective listening
  - Feedback
- Communications technology
- Communication methods
  - Interactive communication
  - Push communication
  - Pull communication
- Meetings
- Communication channels
- Project reporting
  - What should be reported
  - Types of reports
    - » Status report
    - » Progress report
    - » Trend report
    - » Forecasting report
    - » Variance report
    - » Earned value report
    - » Lessons learned documentation
- Communication blockers
- Monitoring communications

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Rita's Process Chart™  
Communications Management  
Where are we in the project management process?

You may also see questions linking communications management to stakeholder management. As you might expect, these two are closely related: managing stakeholder engagement and keeping stakeholders informed and involved requires well-thought-out communications. See the Stakeholder Management chapter for more information.

The following should help you understand how each part of communications management fits into the overall project management process:

| The Communications Management Process | Done During                              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Plan Communications Management        | Planning process group                   |
| Manage Communications                 | Executing process group                  |
| Monitor Communications                | Monitoring and controlling process group |

## Plan Communications Management

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Process Plan Communications Management

Process Group Planning

Knowledge Area Communications Management

The Plan Communications Management process considers how to develop a plan for project communications activities. This plan should be based on the information needs of stakeholders and on the needs of the project. The plan identifies what systems and processes are already in place to support communication needs, as well as what processes and documents must be created to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of communications on the project. This effort includes planning what information will be communicated, to whom, when, using what method, and how frequently. The major output of this process is the communications management plan, which will guide the project manager and the team in managing and monitoring communications to ensure information is getting to the people who need it, is clear and understandable, and allows stakeholders to take action as necessary.

To create an effective communications management plan, you must understand communications technology, methods, and models. You must also take into account the performing organization's established processes and procedures for communicating about projects, its historical records and lessons learned from previous projects, and other stored information (organizational process assets). In addition, you must consider the performing organization's environment and approved communication systems, including its culture and expectations (enterprise environmental factors). You'll need to refer to the project charter and relevant project documents, such as requirements documentation and the stakeholder register. You will also need to consider the project management plan—specifically, plans for resource management and stakeholder engagement. The resource management plan may indicate communications requirements of project team members and resource managers. The stakeholder engagement plan may provide information on planned strategies to engage stakeholders, which likely emphasize communication efforts. Your communications management plan must detail how your project communications will support those plans.

In planning communication on a project, it's essential that you determine and analyze stakeholders' communications requirements. Different stakeholders need to receive different information in various formats, and you must figure out in advance what each stakeholder needs when it comes to communication. On your projects, do you take the time to ask stakeholders about their communications requirements? Remember, you need to gather requirements from your stakeholders that relate not only to how they want the product of the project to function, but also to how they want to communicate and be communicated with on the project. These communications requirements need to be analyzed to determine how they can be met and to make sure that meeting them will add value to the project and will be worth the effort and cost involved.

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If you have only managed small projects, you might believe you need to spend just a few minutes thinking about what information people may need. Having this attitude when taking the exam is a mistake, however. Rather, imagine a team of 300 people spread throughout the world, speaking many different languages and with diverse approaches to communication that are influenced by their culture. This example should help you to recognize how much work goes into planning communications and how critical it is to thoroughly plan communications for a large project. Many project managers fail to recognize not only the impact of communications on a project but also the complexity of sharing information. When we teach communication in our Project Management Tricks of the Trade® class, this topic is one that most people are not initially interested in, yet they find the communication activities we offer in class to be some of the most valuable.

This topic is important on the exam, but luckily it is not difficult—as long as you think in terms of large projects. A basic concept of communications is that they should be efficient (providing only the information needed) and effective (providing information in the right format at the right time), and should add value to the project. Think about your real-world communications. Do you do the following?

- Ask people what information they need and when (this overlaps with stakeholder management).
- Plan communications for all stakeholders.
- Customize standardized communication practices within your organization to meet the needs of the project.
- Use multiple methods of communicating.
- Plan how you will confirm communication is actually received and understood.
- Realize that communication goes in multiple directions, to and from people at all levels within and external to the organization.
- Analyze how factors such as location, culture, security, privacy, and language will impact communication on the project.
- Plan communication with each stakeholder based on the individual's needs and interests.
- Have a system for storing, maintaining, and retrieving project information.

**Exercise** Test yourself! What information and documents need to be communicated on a project?

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## Answer

Some possible answers are:

- Project charter
- Project management plan and project documents
- Impacts to and from other projects
- WBS, network diagram, and dependencies
- When resources will be needed
- Meeting schedule
- Work assignments
- Status
- New risks uncovered
- Uncertainties
- Problems
- Successes
- Changes to project scope and product scope
- Schedule of planned reviews of the project management plan, including when updates are likely to be issued
- Updates to the project management plan and project documents
- Results of change requests
- Upcoming work
- Delays
- The date of the next milestone completion
- Performance reports
- Lessons learned
- Issue logs
- Configuration management issues
- What types of emails will be sent to each stakeholder
- Contact information for all stakeholders
- Method of updating the communications management plan



Project communications occur internally and externally to the core project team—vertically (up and down the levels of the organization) and horizontally (between peers). Make sure your planning includes communicating in all directions, as shown in figure 10.1.

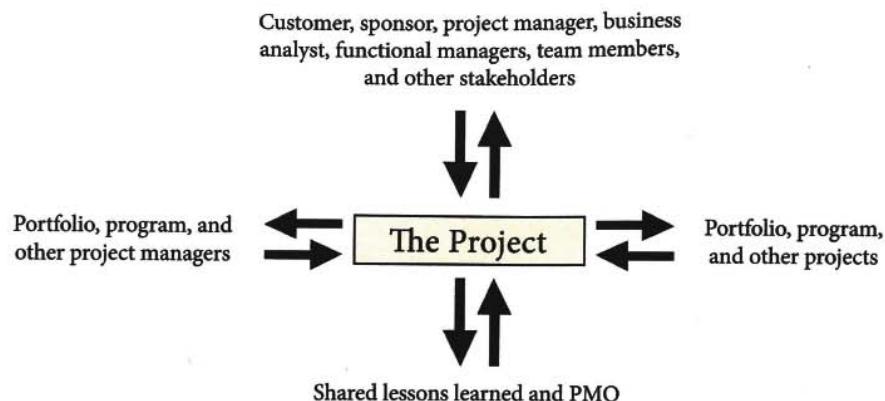


FIGURE 10.1 *Flow of communication on a project*

To communicate effectively, you need to handle communications in a structured way and choose the best type of communication for each situation. Information can be expressed in different ways—formally or informally, written or verbal. You need to decide what approach to use for each instance of communication. Make sure you understand the following chart.

| Communication Type | When Used                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Formal written     | Project management plan, other formal documentation (such as the project charter), and reports; can be both physical and electronic |
| Formal verbal      | Planned meetings and stakeholder briefings; can be face-to-face or remote                                                           |
| Informal written   | Email, handwritten notes, text messages, instant messaging, social media, and websites                                              |
| Informal verbal    | Unscheduled meetings, conversations, and other casual discussions                                                                   |

## Exercise

Test yourself! What is the best type of communication in the following situations?

| Situation                                                      | Communication Type |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Updating the project management plan                           |                    |
| Giving presentations to management                             |                    |
| Trying to solve a complex problem                              |                    |
| Making notes regarding a telephone conversation                |                    |
| Making changes to a contract                                   |                    |
| Informing a team member about poor performance (first notice)  |                    |
| Informing a team member about poor performance (second notice) |                    |
| Scheduling a meeting                                           |                    |
| Clarifying a work package                                      |                    |
| Requesting additional resources                                |                    |
| Trying to discover the root cause of a problem                 |                    |

| Situation                                             | Communication Type |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Sending an email to ask for clarification of an issue |                    |
| Holding a milestone party                             |                    |
| Conducting an online bidder conference                |                    |

**Answer** Imagine these as situational questions. Exam questions may have more words, but they will boil down to straightforward situations like the ones described in the following table.

| Situation                                                      | Communication Type |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Updating the project management plan                           | Formal written     |
| Giving presentations to management                             | Formal verbal      |
| Trying to solve a complex problem                              | Formal written     |
| Making notes regarding a telephone conversation                | Informal written   |
| Making changes to a contract                                   | Formal written     |
| Informing a team member about poor performance (first notice)  | Informal verbal    |
| Informing a team member about poor performance (second notice) | Formal written     |
| Scheduling a meeting                                           | Informal written   |
| Clarifying a work package                                      | Formal written     |
| Requesting additional resources                                | Formal written     |
| Trying to discover the root cause of a problem                 | Informal verbal    |
| Sending an email to ask for clarification of an issue          | Informal written   |
| Holding a milestone party                                      | Informal verbal    |
| Conducting an online bidder conference                         | Formal written     |

**The Five Cs of Communication** Certain qualities of written communication enhance the likelihood that communications will be correctly interpreted and understood by the recipients. The following qualities should be incorporated by the project manager to ensure that messages are effective:

- Correct grammar and spelling
- Concise and well-crafted
- Clear and purposeful
- Coherent and logical
- Controlled flow of words and ideas

**Communication Models** PAGE 371 Many of us do not think scientifically about our communications. We just send an email and expect that it will be read and interpreted properly. The most basic communication model only ensures that a message has been delivered, but excellent project communication requires a more structured approach to communications.

A more comprehensive communication model, interactive communication, includes three main components: the sender, the receiver, and the confirmation that the message is correctly understood. Each message is encoded by the sender and decoded by the receiver. The receiver acknowledges receipt of the message, and both the sender and receiver are responsible for confirming that it has been properly interpreted by the receiver.

Factors such as the receiver's perception of the message, everyday distractions, or even a lack of interest can affect the way the receiver decodes a message. Communication models often refer to these types of factors as "noise" because they interfere with the receiver's ability to understand the message.

More complicated communication models exist, and different models may be appropriate for different projects or components of a single project. The model or models that will be used on the project are described in the communications management plan. Keep the interactive model of communication in mind when answering communications questions on the exam.

**TRICKS  
OF THE  
TRADE**

**Effective Communication** The sender should determine which communication method to use to send a message, and then encode the message carefully and confirm that it is understood. When encoding the message, the sender needs to be aware of the following communication factors:

- **Nonverbal** A significant portion of in-person communication is nonverbal; this can include gestures, facial expressions, and body language.
- **Verbal** There are two important aspects of verbal communication:
  - The words and phrases a sender chooses are essential components of the message, but their meaning can be obscured by the accompanying nonverbal factors.
  - Pitch and tone of voice also help to convey a spoken message.

To confirm the message is understood, it's helpful for the sender to ask for feedback using questions such as, "Could you rephrase what I've said in your own words?" But it's also up to the receiver to make sure they have received and understood the entire message.

This is especially true in situations involving cross-cultural communication. Senders and receivers of communications must be cognizant of cultural differences, including age, gender, and nationality, and take those factors into account when planning, transmitting, and interpreting communications.

The previous paragraphs apply to individual interactions as well as to project communication. It's possible to plan not just the types of communications to be used, but also ways for the sender to confirm the receiver has interpreted the message as intended. The communications management plan provides guidance to stakeholders regarding what to communicate and when to communicate it. It also includes direction on how to confirm understanding of communications.

**TRICKS  
OF THE  
TRADE**

**Effective Listening** So what should a receiver do during in-person communication to accurately decode a message and confirm it has been understood? The receiver should pay attention to the sender's gestures and facial expressions, and try to focus on the content of the message without distraction. It's also important that a receiver practices active listening. Active listening means the receiver confirms they are listening, expresses agreement or disagreement, and asks for clarification when necessary.

If a message is not understood, the receiver should acknowledge the message by saying something like, “I am not sure I understand. Can you explain that again?” Like the sender, the receiver needs to encode their response carefully, keeping in mind the potential effects of verbal and nonverbal communication, when giving feedback to the sender, as illustrated in figure 10.2.

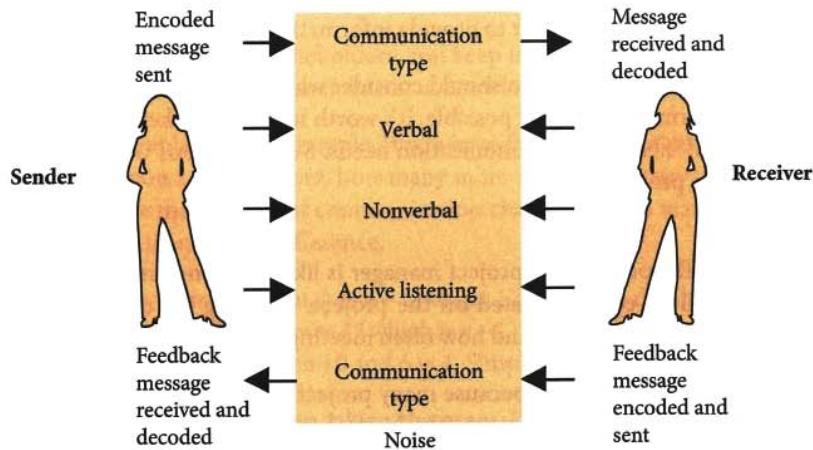


FIGURE 10.2 *The interactive communication model*



### Communications Technology

PAGE 370 Communication can take place in many ways: face-to-face, over the phone, in writing, through instant messaging, and via email. These means of communicating are collectively referred to as communications technology. Another aspect of planning communications is determining the optimal technology with which to communicate information. To determine the appropriate technology to use, ask questions such as:

- Would it be better to communicate this information in person or virtually?
- Would it be better to communicate the information through an email or a phone call?
- What technology is the team familiar and comfortable with?
- How quickly does the information need to be communicated?
- Are there security or confidentiality issues that should be considered when choosing a means of communicating information?
- Would a letter sent through the mail get more attention?

#### TRICKS OF THE TRADE

As you read this chapter, you may come across many new terms. You can learn most of these terms without memorization as long as you understand the concept that project communications must be planned to include all stakeholders—who may be in several different countries. For example, can you guess what push communication might be without reading the next section? You will see many of the terms we use in this chapter on the exam, but do not waste time memorizing them. Just read this chapter over once or twice, and you should understand the concepts for the exam.

### Communication Methods

PAGE 374 When planning communications, it is also important to determine the communication method. These methods can be grouped into the following categories:<sup>1</sup>

- **Interactive communication** This method is reciprocal and involves two or more people. One person provides information; others receive it and then respond to the information. Examples of interactive communication include conversations, phone calls, meetings, instant messaging, and video calls.

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- **Push communication** This method involves a one-way stream of information. The sender provides information to the people who need it but does not expect feedback from the recipients. Examples of push communication are status reports, emailed updates, blogs, and company memos.
- **Pull communication** In this method, the sender places the information in a central location. The recipients are then responsible for retrieving the information from that location. This method is often used to distribute large documents or to provide information to many people.

In choosing a communication method, you should consider whether feedback is needed or if it is enough to simply provide the information. Where possible, it's worth involving stakeholders in the final decision about which methods will meet their communication needs. Such decisions will support the stakeholder engagement efforts on the project.

**Meetings** Early in the project, the project manager is likely to conduct meetings with the team to plan how information will be communicated on the project. Planning for communication should also involve thinking ahead about when, how, and how often meetings will be used throughout the project.

Meetings are a problem in the real world because many project managers manage by doing everything in meetings, and most meetings are not efficient. Thinking ahead about how and when meetings will be conducted, when they're appropriate and when a less disruptive form of communication could be substituted, and who needs to attend meetings can go a long way toward addressing this problem.

When planning meetings, consider the following rules:

- Schedule recurring meetings in advance.
- Meet with the team regularly, but not too often.
- Have a purpose for each meeting.

**Communications Requirements Analysis** PAGE 369 Requirements analysis will help you correctly understand stakeholders' information requirements. Understanding and fulfilling these requirements will help you maintain stakeholder engagement by ensuring that communication needs are met. If you skip this step, you risk not meeting the communication needs of stakeholders, and potentially misunderstanding requirements altogether.

Use the following information to determine and analyze communication requirements:

- Stakeholder register
- Stakeholder engagement plan
- Locations of stakeholders
- Number of communication channels



**Communication Channels<sup>2</sup>** A quick note on communication channels. When you add one more person to the team, does the number of communication channels simply increase by one? No. In fact, there is a substantial increase in communication channels. As a result, communication needs can grow rapidly with each added stakeholder.

Communication channels can be calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{n(n - 1)}{2} \quad n = \text{the number of stakeholders}$$

Note that  $n$  equals the total number of stakeholders, and keep in mind during the exam that you may have to add yourself as a stakeholder if a question does not acknowledge the project manager.

Let's practice using this formula with an example. If you have four people on your project (including you, the project manager) and you add one more, how many more communication channels do you have? To get the answer you calculate the number of communication channels with a team of four and with a team of five, and then subtract to identify the difference.

For a team of four: calculate 4 times 3 (which is  $n - 1$ ) to get 12, and then divide by 2 to reach the answer, which is 6. For a team of five: calculate 5 times 4 (which is  $n - 1$ ) to get 20, and then divide by 2 to reach the answer, which is 10. The difference between 10 and 6 is 4. Simple!

You may or may not see this formula when taking the exam. But just in case, be sure to understand the concept, and know how to calculate the number of communication channels.

**Communications Management Plan** PAGE 377 The primary output of the Plan Communications Management process is a communications management plan that documents both the communications needs of stakeholders and a strategy to meet those needs. Components of the plan may include what communications should be prepared, disseminated, and received among all project stakeholders, how communications should be named and stored, who has access to the communications, who has the ability to edit communications, and who has responsibility for sending and receiving project communications. The plan also includes information on how the effectiveness of project communications will be evaluated.

Figure 10.3 shows a portion of what you might find in a communications management plan.

| What Needs to Be Communicated | Why | Between Whom | Best Method for Communicating | Responsibility for Sending | When and How Often |
|-------------------------------|-----|--------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
|                               |     |              |                               |                            |                    |
|                               |     |              |                               |                            |                    |
|                               |     |              |                               |                            |                    |

FIGURE 10.3 Sample portion of a communications management plan

Because communications are so complex, a communications management plan should be in writing for most projects. It must address the needs of all the stakeholders, and should account for any language and cultural differences on the project. The communications management plan is part of the project management plan.

## Manage Communications PAGE 379

**Process** Manage Communications  
**Process Group** Executing  
**Knowledge Area** Communications Management

Throughout the life of a project, many stakeholders will require information about the project. The communications needs of stakeholders are determined in planning and documented in the communications management plan. These needs are met in Manage Communications, through the distribution of communications artifacts, such as reports, graphics, and emails, as well as through meetings and other in-person communication.

The resource, communications, and stakeholder management plans all document communication needs that must be managed. In addition, the quality and risk management processes generate reports that are disseminated to stakeholders through this process.

The Manage Communications process also includes making sure information is flowing back and forth on the project in accordance with the communications management plan. This process is about facilitating effective communication and practicing flexible approaches when managing communications. Managing communications also includes providing opportunities for stakeholders to request additional information and clarification. Also note that project reports and other formal written communications are archived as part of the project's historical records.

**Communication Blockers<sup>3</sup>** Project managers may unknowingly introduce communication blockers during their projects. Communication blockers can range from a lack of cultural sensitivity to a failure to provide concise messages. Blockers cause miscommunication and can lead to disagreement and confusion. The exam has often included one or two questions that ask, "What can get in the way of communication?" or "The following has occurred; what is wrong?" The correct answer may include:

- Noisy surroundings
- Distance between those trying to communicate
- Improper encoding of messages
- Language
- Culture

Using the technology, models, and methods established in the communications management plan to meet the communication needs of the project is vital to successful communications management. It is important to make sure communications are received, effective, efficient, and understandable. Along with the communications management plan, project documents and work performance reports will give you information about what needs to be communicated. Whether it's information from recent risk reviews, forecasts on project performance, or details about changes that have gone through the integrated change control process, a project manager will need to follow the communications management plan to effectively share information.

The following tools and techniques can be used to manage communications.

**Communication and Interpersonal Skills** PAGES 384 AND 386 What communication skills do you use? Do you practice active listening? How do you handle conflict? Do you pay attention to cultural differences between stakeholders? Utilizing a range of communication skills, as well as relying on interpersonal skills can help you better manage communications.

Although the communications management plan may suggest good practices for project communications, it is a responsibility of the project manager and team to tailor their communications approach in response to feedback from stakeholders. Also keep in mind that the culture of the organization and the political

environment within which the project and its stakeholders exist will need to be regularly assessed, and the project manager and team must be flexible in their adaptation to any significant changes. A project manager and all stakeholders on a project must use their skills to reduce or resolve conflicts and to promote effective communicating.

**Meetings** PAGE 386 As discussed in the “Plan Communications Management” section of this chapter, meetings are often key elements of the effort to manage communications. When handled properly, they provide a means to communicate efficiently with stakeholders. Review the following rules for conducting meetings:

- Set a time limit, and keep to it.
- Create an agenda with team input.
- Distribute the agenda beforehand.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Let attendees know their responsibilities in advance.
- Bring the right people together.
- Chair and lead the meeting with a set of rules.
- Assign deliverables and time limits for all work assignments that result from meetings.
- Document and publish meeting minutes.

**Project Reporting** PAGE 385 A big part of managing communications focuses on project reporting, which involves communicating to stakeholders about how the project is going. Much of that information comes from work performance reports, an output of the Monitor and Control Project Work process. It also involves asking for feedback from stakeholders to ensure they have received the information they need and have understood it, and to determine whether they need more. This communication may take the form of presentations, blog updates, or reports, as outlined in the communications management plan. There probably is not much here that you do not already know, but make sure you remember the following:

- Reports should provide the kinds of information and the level of detail required by stakeholders.
- Reports should be designed for the needs of the project.
- Use the most appropriate communication method when sending information.
- Reports should include measurements against the performance measurement baseline set in the project management plan. For the exam, it is expected that a project manager will have this information and will communicate it to their stakeholders.
- Reports must be truthful and not hide what is really going on. This seems logical, but because of scandals related to untruthful reporting from companies around the world, there may be a few questions on the exam describing such situations.
- Cost, schedule, scope, and quality performance (not just schedule) should be reported.
- Reports help team members know where they need to recommend and implement corrective actions.
- Reporting performance includes looking into the future. Using forecasts, the team and sponsor can determine what preventive actions are needed.
- Feedback from stakeholders who receive reports as part of this process should be analyzed to allow for tailoring of future communications to better meet the needs of stakeholders.

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There are different types of reports used in project management. For the exam, think in terms of a large project, and recognize that a project manager might issue the following types of reports:

- **Status report** This report describes where the project currently stands in relation to the performance measurement baseline.
- **Progress report** A progress report describes what has been accomplished.
- **Trend report<sup>4</sup>** This report examines project results over time to see if performance is improving or deteriorating.
- **Forecasting report<sup>5</sup>** This report predicts future project status and performance.
- **Variance report<sup>6</sup>** A variance report compares actual results to baselines.
- **Earned value report<sup>7</sup>** An earned value report integrates scope, cost, and schedule measurements to assess project performance.
- **Lessons learned documentation** Reports on performance are used as lessons learned for future projects.

The Manage Communications process results in the distribution of project communications, such as performance reports, status reports, and presentations, as well as other forms of communications. The communications management plan may be updated to reflect changes in the approach to managing communications on the project. The stakeholder engagement plan and stakeholder register may be updated to reflect changes in stakeholder communications requirements or changes in the project's strategy to fulfill their requirements. Issues regarding communications are documented in the issue log and, possibly, in the lessons learned register. The project schedule may need to be changed to accommodate implementation of changes to the communications management process.

## Monitor Communications PAGE 388

Process Monitor Communications  
Process Group Monitoring & Controlling  
Knowledge Area Communications Management

In the Monitor Communications process, the project manager and team assess how communications are going throughout the project to ensure information is flowing as planned—in the right way, to the right people, and at the right time—to effectively keep stakeholders informed and maintain the desired levels of stakeholder engagement. The communications management plan provides details on how to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of communications. If you're not familiar with formal data collection and evaluation techniques, you'll need to think about how you would use them on a large project.

This process involves measuring to determine whether the communications management plan is being followed and whether communications are meeting the needs of the stakeholders. If not, you need to identify where communication is breaking down, and then respond and adjust as necessary to meet the stakeholders' communication needs. How can you tell if communication is breaking down? In addition to the metrics you've established in your communications management plan, you'll need to rely on some soft skills. Some problems will be obvious. People will let you know, for example, if they're not getting the reports or information they're meant to receive. Or you'll know people aren't reading meeting minutes if they're not following up on action items. But you'll also benefit from encouraging stakeholders to tell you whether the project communications are meeting their needs.

As mentioned earlier, you should ask stakeholders for feedback on the reports and other communications they receive. Also, project team members should report any communication problems they experience, and help to identify ways communications can be improved on the project.

**Exercise** Test yourself! Based on what you've learned, do you have a sense of what you need in order to monitor communications and why? For this exercise, we'll give you the inputs (what you need to monitor communications); you'll need to determine how they are used in the Monitor Communications process.

| Input                            | How Is It Used in Monitor Communications? |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Project management plan          |                                           |
| Project communications           |                                           |
| Issue log                        |                                           |
| Lessons learned register         |                                           |
| Work performance data            |                                           |
| Enterprise environmental factors |                                           |
| Organizational process assets    |                                           |

## Answer

| Input                    | How Is It Used in Monitor Communications?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project management plan  | The communications management plan and other pieces of the project management plan are important to this process because they allow you to compare actual communication on the project against planned communication. They provide details on what needs to be distributed, why, how, when, and to whom, along with information on roles and responsibilities.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Project communications   | You'll need to compare the actual project communications to the communications management plan. How do the various reports and other communications hold up against what you planned? Are they giving you the intended results?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Issue log                | An issue log can be used to document and track issues on the project—areas of confusion, disagreement, conflict, and concern that require attention. It is also updated to reflect resolution of those issues. The issue log helps you assess the causes of the issues and their impacts on the project; it can also help when planning corrective actions. This is a useful tool that lets you capture and communicate about issues, so you're handling them proactively rather than reactively, with the goal of preventing problems and change requests. |
| Lessons learned register | Actively documenting lessons learned during a project can help you learn from previous problems, and avoid repeating the same mistakes. Lessons learned should be shared with other ongoing projects as appropriate. They become part of the historical records of the project and the organization's lessons learned repository, and thereby provide the benefit of past experience with communications issues to future projects.                                                                                                                         |

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| Input                            | How Is It Used in Monitor Communications?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Work performance data            | Work performance data is raw communications data about what has occurred during a project. The data can help you measure the efficiency and effectiveness of communications against planned metrics. You can also use the data in root cause analysis to evaluate the cause of poor communications or to analyze variances from the plan to determine if changes are necessary. |
| Enterprise environmental factors | Organizational culture, existing communications tools and systems, and common practices for communicating are influencing factors that need to be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of communications and the communications management plan.                                                                                                                        |
| Organizational process assets    | You need to refer to your organization's available or required procedures, reporting formats, standards, tools, and security policies related to communication to make sure communications are meeting organizational expectations.                                                                                                                                             |

Monitoring communications will result in work performance information (an analysis of raw work performance data), possible change requests, and possible updates to the project management plan and project documents.

This concludes the Communications Management chapter. For the exam, keep in mind that communication is essential to success and affects all areas of a project. Poor communication can cause major problems and rework. Therefore, a project manager should take a structured approach to communication by creating a communications management plan. As the project work is being done, the project manager and the project stakeholders need to follow the communications management plan to distribute information about the project, make sure communication is flowing as planned, and adjust the communications approach as necessary.

## Practice Exam

1. A team member has been late to several recent team meetings, and the last two deliverables he submitted were not acceptable. The project manager decides he can no longer wait for things to improve and must address the issue with the team member. What is the best form of communication for addressing this problem?
  - A. Formal written communication
  - B. Formal verbal communication
  - C. Informal written communication
  - D. Informal verbal communication
2. Extensive use of \_\_\_\_\_ communication is most likely to aid in solving complex problems.
  - A. Formal verbal
  - B. Informal written
  - C. Formal written
  - D. Nonverbal
3. The new project manager has a team including several individuals for whom English is not their first language. He frequently uses technical jargon from his former company, which is unfamiliar to these team members, when discussing work activities with his team members. The most likely result of communication blockers is that:
  - A. The project is delayed.
  - B. The trust level is enhanced.
  - C. Conflict occurs.
  - D. Senior management is displeased.
4. Communications are often enhanced when the sender \_\_\_\_\_ the receiver.
  - A. Speaks up to
  - B. Uses gestures when speaking to
  - C. Speaks slowly to
  - D. Shows concern for the perspective of
5. Formal written correspondence with the customer is required when:
  - A. Defects are detected.
  - B. The customer requests additional work not covered under contract.
  - C. The project has a schedule slippage that includes changes to the critical path.
  - D. The project has cost overruns.
6. You are managing a project on which considerable negotiations will be involved. You are confident that these negotiations will go well and that all agreements will be finalized into formal, written contracts. When you are engaged in negotiations, nonverbal communication skills are of:
  - A. Little importance
  - B. Major importance
  - C. Importance only when cost and schedule objectives are involved
  - D. Importance to ensure you win the negotiation

# Communications Management T E N

7. A large, one-year telecommunications project is about halfway done when you take the place of the previous project manager. The project involves three different sellers and a project team of 30 people. You would like to see the project's communications requirements and what technology is being used to aid in project communications. Where will you find this information?
  - A. The stakeholder management plan
  - B. The information distribution plan
  - C. The bar chart
  - D. The communications management plan
8. Changes to some project deliverables have been documented in the project management plan. These changes, along with other project information, have been distributed according to the communications management plan. One stakeholder expressed surprise to the project manager upon hearing of a documented change to a project deliverable. All stakeholders received the communication providing notification of the change. What should the project manager do?
  - A. Determine why the stakeholder did not receive the information, and let him know when it was published.
  - B. Ask the functional manager why the stakeholder did not understand his responsibility.
  - C. Review the communications management plan, and make revisions if necessary.
  - D. Address the situation in the next steering committee meeting, so others do not miss published changes.
9. Communication is key to the success of a project. As the project manager, you had three stakeholders with whom you needed to communicate. Therefore, you had six channels of communication. A new stakeholder has been added with whom you also need to communicate. How many communication channels do you have now?
  - A. 7
  - B. 10
  - C. 12
  - D. 16
10. Two people are arguing about what needs to be done to complete a work package. In addition to the words being spoken, if the project manager wants to know what is going on, she should pay most attention to:
  - A. What is being said and when
  - B. What is being said, who is saying it, and the time of day
  - C. Physical mannerisms and when during the schedule this discussion is taking place
  - D. The pitch and tone of their voices, along with their gestures
11. A project manager has a project team consisting of people in four countries. The project is very important to the company, and the project manager is concerned about its success. The length of the project schedule is acceptable. What type of communication should he use?
  - A. Informal verbal communication
  - B. Formal written communication
  - C. Formal verbal communication
  - D. Informal written communication

## T E N   Communications Management

12. The project team meeting is not going well. Many attendees are talking at the same time, there are people who are not participating, and many topics are being discussed at random. Which of the following rules for effective meetings is not being adhered to?
  - A. Demonstrate courtesy and consideration of each other, and control who is allowed to speak.
  - B. Schedule meetings in advance.
  - C. Have a purpose for the meeting, with the right people in attendance.
  - D. Create and publish an agenda and a set of rules for controlling the meeting.
13. You have just been assigned as project manager for a large manufacturing project. This one-year project is about halfway done. It involves five different sellers and 20 members of your company on the project team. You want to quickly review where the project now stands. Which of the following reports would be the most helpful in finding such information?
  - A. Work status
  - B. Progress
  - C. Forecast
  - D. Communications
14. A team member is visiting the manufacturing plant of one of the suppliers. Which of the following is the most important thing to be done in any telephone calls the project manager might make to the team member?
  - A. Ask the team member to repeat back what the project manager says.
  - B. Review the list of contact information for all stakeholders.
  - C. Ask the team member to look for change requests.
  - D. Review the upcoming meeting schedule.
15. A project manager overhears a conversation between two stakeholders who are discussing how unhappy they are with the impacts of the project on their own departments. Stakeholder A asks if the project is on time, and stakeholder B replies that the SPI is 1.05. Stakeholder A asks if the project manager for the project knows of stakeholder B's concern. Stakeholder B responds that he is not sure. What is the best thing for the project manager to do?
  - A. Make sure the stakeholders are aware that the project manager overheard. Then ask them to direct any questions to the project manager in writing.
  - B. Make a presentation to all the stakeholders regarding the status of the project.
  - C. Send both stakeholders a copy of the issue log, and ask for additional comments.
  - D. Arrange a meeting with both stakeholders to allow them to voice any concerns they may have.
16. Things have been going well on the project. The work authorization system has allowed people to know when to start work, and the issue log has helped keep track of stakeholders' concerns. The sponsor has expressed his appreciation for the team members' efforts by hosting a milestone party. The project manager gets a call from a team member saying the results from the completion of her activity's predecessor are two days late. Which of the following reasons would best describe why this occurred?
  - A. The project manager was focusing on the sponsor's needs.
  - B. Functional management was not included in the communications management plan.
  - C. The successor activities should have been monitored, not the predecessors.
  - D. The right people were not invited to the milestone party.

# Communications Management T E N

17. A project manager has just been assigned a team comprised of team members from many countries including Brazil, Japan, the United States, and Britain. What is her best tool for success?
- A. The responsibility assignment matrix (RAM)
  - B. The teleconference
  - C. Team communication with the WBS
  - D. Well-developed interpersonal skills
18. The project has 13 team members and affects more than 15 departments in the organization. Because the project is 20 percent complete to date and the team has had successful performance reports from five of the affected departments, the project manager holds a party to celebrate. The project manager invites key stakeholders from all of the departments to the party in order to give those providing good reviews an informal opportunity to communicate good things to those departments that have not yet been affected by the project. At the party, the project manager walks around to try to discover any relevant information that would help her make the project even more successful. She happens to hear a manager of one of the departments talking about setting up more regular meetings on the project.
- The best thing for the project manager to do would be to first:
- A. Record the effectiveness of the party in the project lessons learned.
  - B. Review the effectiveness of the project's communications management plan.
  - C. Hold a meeting of all the stakeholders to discuss their concerns.
  - D. Make sure the manager has a copy of the communications management plan so that he is reminded that such concerns should be sent to the project manager.
19. The requirements of many stakeholders were not approved for inclusion in your project. Therefore, you had a difficult time gaining formal approval of the project management plan. The stakeholders argued and held up the project while they held meeting after meeting about their requirements. The project was finally approved and work began six months ago. All of the following would be good preventive actions to implement except:
- A. Keep a file of what requirements were not included in the project.
  - B. Make sure the change control process is not used as a vehicle to add the requirements back into the project.
  - C. Maintain an issue log.
  - D. Hold meetings with the stakeholders to go over the work that will not be added to the project.
20. The project manager is expecting a deliverable to be submitted by email from a team member today. At the end of the day, the project manager contacts the team member to notify him that it has not been received. The team member apologizes and explains that he was not able to email the deliverable, and it was sent through the mail instead. The team member goes on to remind the project manager that he had informed the project manager during a phone conversation that this would occur. "Was that the conversation we had when I told you I could not hear you well due to poor cell phone coverage?" asks the project manager. "Yes," replies the team member. What could have been done to avoid this problem?
- A. Verbal communication
  - B. Adding to the issue log after the phone call
  - C. Better attention to determining communications requirements
  - D. Feedback during the communication

## T E N Communications Management

21. A project manager at a large consulting firm is asked to report on the actual project results versus planned results. The project is going well, and the marketing department wants to see if the current results can be used in a future marketing campaign. This project manager should prepare a:

- A. Trend report
- B. Forecasting report
- C. Status report
- D. Variance report

22. A successful project manager is required to use knowledge, skills, and abilities in a number of different areas of expertise. Planning ability is very important, as is the ability to execute, manage and control the project according to the project management plan. Which area of expertise is most important for a project manager?

- A. Communication
- B. Team building
- C. Technical expertise
- D. Project control

23. The project manager is trying to recall a stakeholder's preferred communication method. Where can she find that information?

- A. RACI chart
- B. Stakeholder engagement assessment matrix
- C. Stakeholder engagement plan
- D. Resource management plan

## Answers

**1. Answer D**

**Explanation** It is best to start this discussion informally. The project manager should also document the problem and include a summary of the conversation with the team member. If informal communication does not solve the problem, formal written communication is the next course of action.

**2. Answer C**

**Explanation** Formal written communication allows your words to be documented and ensures they will go to everyone in the same form. When there are complex problems, you want everyone to receive the same information.

**3. Answer C**

**Explanation** Communication blockers can range from a lack of cultural sensitivity to a failure to provide concise messages. Blockers cause miscommunication and can lead to disagreement and confusion. The major result of communication blockers and miscommunication as a whole is conflict.

**4. Answer D**

**Explanation** An understanding of the receiver's perspective allows the sender to direct the communication to meet the receiver's needs.

**5. Answer B**

**Explanation** Everything we do is more formal in a procurement environment than in other project activities. Therefore, formal written communication is required when the customer requests work not covered under the contract.

**6. Answer B**

**Explanation** Nonverbal communication carries a significant portion of the message you send. With so much at stake, nonverbal communication is of major importance.

**7. Answer D**

**Explanation** This information is found in the communications management plan.

**8. Answer C**

**Explanation** The question states that all stakeholders received the information, so the issue is not that this stakeholder did not receive it. The problem presented here illustrates that there is something missing in the communications management plan. The best answer is to review the communications management plan in order to prevent future problems and to find any instances of similar problems.

**9. Answer B**

**Explanation** Did you remember that the project manager needs to be included when calculating the number of communication channels? Therefore, there are actually four stakeholders to begin with and six channels of communication. The question is asking how many total channels of communication you have with a team of five people. The formula is  $[n \times (n - 1)]/2$  or  $(5 \times 4)/2 = 10$ .

**10. Answer D**

**Explanation** Nonverbal communication represents a major part of all communication. The choice including verbal communication (pitch and tone) as well as gestures is the best choice.

**11. Answer B**

**Explanation** Because of the differences in culture and the distance between team members, formal written communication is needed.

**12. Answer D**

**Explanation** Courtesy and consideration is not a “rule” for effective meetings. Since there is no indication that the meeting was not scheduled in advance or that there isn’t a purpose, these cannot be the best answers. “Discussed at random” implies no agenda. If an agenda is issued beforehand, people will follow the outline and should not need random discussions.

**13. Answer B**

**Explanation** The key word is quickly. The status report is too detailed for a quick look. The forecast report only looks into the future. The progress report summarizes project status, and would be the most helpful for a quick review.

**14. Answer A**

**Explanation** There are many choices that are reasonably correct. Look for the most immediate need. Here, the team member is in a manufacturing environment. That means communications will most likely be blocked by noise. It is best for the project manager to ask the team member to repeat back what he says, to ensure the team member correctly heard what the project manager communicated.

**15. Answer D**

**Explanation** This is another question with more than one right answer. Would asking for something in writing be the best way to communicate? In this particular situation, asking for the concern to be put into writing might alienate the stakeholders. The issue log is where the issue should be listed, but the situation does not say if the project manager knows what the stakeholders’ concern is. Therefore, using the issue log cannot be the best choice. Why not make a presentation to all the stakeholders regarding the status of the project? The concern was being voiced only by stakeholders A and B, so it is unnecessary to involve all the stakeholders. This problem would likely require informal verbal communication to discover the real problem. Arranging a meeting with the concerned stakeholders is therefore the best choice.

**16. Answer B**

**Explanation** Since there is no information about the sponsor or his needs in this situation, focusing on his needs cannot be best. The statement that successor activities should have been watched, rather than the predecessors, is not a correct statement. A project manager should watch both predecessor and successor activities. Attendance at the party and the issue at hand (the late results) are not related. Often forgotten in communications management plans are the bosses of team members (functional management, in a matrix organization). Including the bosses of team members in communications planning, requirements gathering, risk management, and other areas of project management helps make the project better. In addition, it helps the functional managers manage their resources effectively. If the functional manager of the team member assigned to the predecessor activity had been included in the project planning processes, he would have known when the team member was needed to do work for the project and the impact, if any, of delay. The communications management plan should also have included a method to communicate potential delays.

**17. Answer D**

**Explanation** Working with people from different cultures who may have different values and beliefs necessitates an understanding of both basic definitions and areas of cultural impact. Project managers need good interpersonal skills and a willingness to adapt to other cultures.

# Communications Management

T E N

## 18. Answer B

**Explanation** Many of these choices could be done, but ask yourself, “What is the most effective thing to do?” The party may well generate lessons learned, and recording them would certainly be a good idea, but the question asked what to do first. There is a more immediate issue—the manager. Meeting with all the stakeholders could be useful, but there is only one stakeholder, the manager, who definitely has an issue. Besides, a good project manager would be holding regular meetings with the stakeholders already. Making sure the manager has a copy of the communications management plan might be a good idea, as the manager apparently is not communicating with the project manager. However, this would not be enough to ensure the manager does communicate.

The manager is, in effect, saying he is not getting the information he needs, which is causing him to suggest more meetings. However, too many meetings can be a problem on projects. A great project manager does not just add meetings, but rather solves the real problem in the best way.

A goal of communications management is to get information to those who need it. The project manager may decide to adjust her communications management process by changing the format of a report or sending existing reports to the manager with the issue, rather than adding meetings. Therefore, the correct choice is to review the methods of providing project information to the stakeholders.

## 19. Answer D

**Explanation** This issue should be over, but since there were so many meetings and arguments about the requirements being removed, it is unlikely the issue will be dropped by the stakeholders. However, as it has not come up again and the project was started six months ago, spending time in a meeting is excessive. The other choices are easier, have less impact on the project, and are, therefore, things that could be done.

## 20. Answer D

**Explanation** The pitch and tone of voice (verbal communication) is not relevant here, as the project manager could not even hear all that was being said. There were no issues recognized after the conversation, so none could be added to the issue log. This issue is not related to communications requirements, so that choice cannot be best. Saying, “I am not sure I properly heard what you said,” during the conversation or repeating the message back to the team member would have prevented this problem. Giving and requesting feedback during the communication is the best option.

## 21. Answer D

**Explanation** This situation describes the need to compare. A trend report shows performance over time. A forecasting report looks only to the future. A status report is generally static (relating to a moment in time). The only choice that compares project results is a variance analysis.

## 22. Answer A

**Explanation** Project managers can spend 90 percent of their time communicating, so the correct choice must be communication.

## 23. Answer C

**Explanation** Stakeholders’ individual communication requirements are documented in the stakeholder engagement plan.