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Chapter 9: Project Communications Management



Contents

- Importance of Good Communications
- Project Communications Management Processes
 - Communications planning (planning phase)
 - Information distribution (executing phase)
 - Performance reporting (control phase)
 - Administrative closure (control phase)
- Creating a stakeholder analysis



Importance of Good Communications

- The greatest threat to many projects is a failure to communicate
 - Our culture does not portray IT professionals as being good communicators
 - Research shows that IT professionals must be able to communicate effectively to succeed in their positions
 - Strong verbal skills are a key factor in career advancement for IT professionals
- covering processes to ensure timely development, collection, disseminations, storage, and disposition of project information.
 - major output is the communications management plan.



Project Communication management process

- There are 4 processes in Project Communications Management
 - Communications planning (planning)
 - determining the information and communications needs of the stakeholders
 - Information distribution (execution)
 - making needed information available in a timely manner
 - Performance reporting (control)
 - collecting and disseminating performance information
 - Administrative closure (closing)
 - generating, gathering, and disseminating information to formalize phase or project completion



Communications Planning

- 14th of 21 planning phase process
- incorporates all planning required to ensure timely and appreciate development, collection, dissemination, storage, and disposition of project information.
- Every project should include some type of communications management plan, a document that guides project communications
- Creating a stakeholder analysis for project communications also aids in communications planning

Inputs to

Communications Planing



- Communications requirement
 - include who needs what type of information, when they need the information, how to distribute the information (i.e. who, what, when how)
- Communications technology
 - methods and tools used to transfer information among stakeholders
 - face-to-face conversation, knowledge repository database, on-line schedules, email, video-conference, voice mail, stream video, newsletters and web sites.
- Constraints
 - restriction that affect the performance of the project.
- Assumptions
 - factors that for planning purposes



Tools and techniques

- Stakeholder analysis
 - provides the methods and techniques to determine a systematic and logical view of the information requirements of stakeholders, and how to meet those needs.

Outputs from Communications Planing



- Communications management plan (CMP)
 - An evolving document and a subsidiary component of the project plan, the CMP describes how to handle all communication on the project
 - It can be formal or informal, detailed or high-level, depending on the needs of the project.
- CMP Contents
 - A description of a collection and filing structure for gathering and storing various types of information
 - A distribution structure describing what information goes to whom, when, and how
 - A format for communicating key project information
 - A project schedule for producing the information
 - Access methods for obtaining the information
 - A method for updating the communications management plans as the project progresses and develops

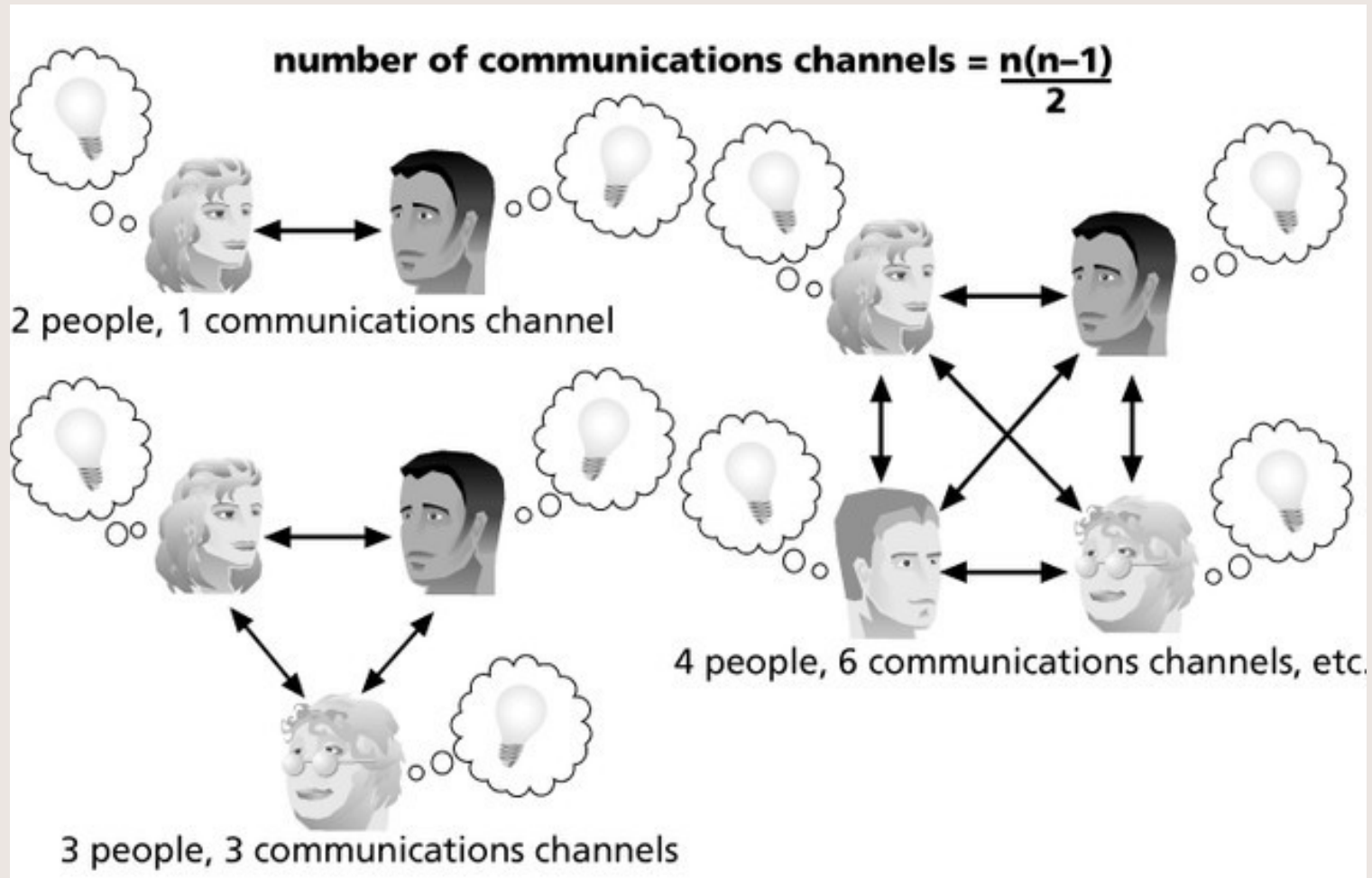


Information Distribution

- 4th of 7 executing phase process
- involves making information that stakeholders need on a timely basis
 - Getting the right information to the right people at the right time and in a useful format is just as important as developing the information in the first place
- By properly executing the communications management plan
 - using the information retrieval and distribution tools
 - responding to unexpected requests for information
 - ensure all stakeholders have the information they need.



The Impact of the Number of People on Communications Channels



Inputs to Information Distribution



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- Work results
 - results of activities performed to accomplish the project. Information on work results – completed and incomplete scheduled assignments and deliverables, actual and committed budget cost, how QA standards map to the result....
- Communications management plan (CMP)
 - describe all communication on the project is handled.
- Project plan
 - formal, approved document used to guide project execution and control.



Tools and techniques

- Communications skills
 - skills involving information exchanges. They are also part of the general management skills.
- Information retrieval system
 - tools in information distribution process
 - simple paper files, bound notebook, or they can be stored electronically as files or in a database
 - Retrieval systems are either filing system or software.
 - Commercial products such as Lotus Notes and Microsoft SharePoint are examples of applications software.
- Info distribution methods
 - distribution system (tools) include project meetings, correspondence, databases stored in a data warehouse, and video or audio conferences.

Outputs from Information Distribution



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- Project records
 - organized for easy access
 - includes correspondence, documents, and memos
 - Team will keep their own personal records for their assigned areas
 - Their personal records are often more detailed than the official project records.
- Project reports
 - formal reports on status and issues
- Project presentations
 - describe how the reports and records are presented to stakeholders
 - formal or informal. A great deal of a project manager's job



Performance Reporting

- 6th of 8 controlling phase process
 - collecting and distributing information to stakeholders on how the project is performing
- Performance reporting keeps stakeholders informed about how resources are being used to achieve project objectives
 - This process involves progress reports, status reports, and forecasts.
 - Status reports describe where the project stands at a specific point in time
 - Progress reports describe what the project team has accomplished during a certain period of time
 - Project forecasting predicts future project status and progress based on past information and trends
 - Status review meetings often include performance reporting



Inputs to Performance Reporting

- Project plan
 - formal, approved document used to guide project execution and control.
 - includes subsidiary plans such as the communications plan, risk management plan, and quality plan. The plan sets a baseline to measure progress.
- Work result
 - results of activities performed to accomplish the project. Information on work results – completed and incomplete scheduled assignments and deliverables, actual and committed budget cost, how QA standards map to the result....
- Other project records
 - other documents such as blueprints, technical documents, or specifications documents.



Tools and techniques

- Performance reviews
 - project meetings are held to evaluate status and progress.
- Variance analysis
 - compares results to planned results. Generally, the analysis is cost- and schedule-related.
- Trend analysis
 - examines project results over the dimension of time to see if pattern show performance improvement or deterioration.
- Earned value analysis
 - Integrates scope, cost and schedule measures. It compares actual results to planned result. Calculations are based on three key measures: Planned value, Actual cost, Earned value.
- Info distribution tools & techniques
 - includes all the tools and technique mentioned in Information distribution process.

Outputs from Performance Reporting



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- Performance reports
 - contain organized and summarized results of project reports, correspondence, documents, and memos
 - If possible, use charts and graphs to summarize information
 - Some key documents are status report, progress report, trend report and forecast report.
- Change requests
 - ask for modifications to some deliverable or objective
 - These formal documents can also involve changes to a contract, even include contract termination.



Administrative Closure

- 1st of 2 closing phase process
- A project or phase of a project requires closure
 - closing the administrative functions takes place at the end of the project.
 - Because projects are temporary, project closure briefings and lessons-learned documents provide important feedback
 - They keep valuable knowledge inside the organization and contribute to improvements in the next cycle of project.



Inputs to Administrative Closure

- Performance measurements documents
 - includes all the performance-related documents used to guide, record, and analyze project planning, execution and control
 - Other documents such as status, progress, and forecast report
- Product documentation
 - show result of activities performed to create the product or service that the project was chartered to achieve
 - These include plans, technical documents, design documents, specifications, blueprints, drawings, and electronic files.
- Other project records
 - other related documents



Tools and techniques

- Performance reporting tools and techniques
 - provide a feedback loop, solving the information needs of the various stakeholders and showing the interaction of all the tools used during the Performance Reporting phase just described.
 - Tools and techniques include performance reviews, variance analysis, trend analysis, and earned value analysis.
- Project reports
 - formal reports on status and issues
- Project presentations
 - describe how the reports and records are presented to stakeholders.
 - It can be formal or informal
 - A great deal of a project manager's job involves doing this stakeholder presentation.



Outline for a Final Project Report

- I. Cover page
- II. Table of contents and executive summary (for a long report)
- III. Need for the project
- IV. Project description and letter of agreement
- V. Overall outcome of the project and reasons for success or failure
- VI. Project management tools and techniques used and assessment of them
- VII. Project team recommendations and future considerations
- VIII. Final project Gantt chart
- IX. Attachments with all deliverables

Sample Template for a Project Web Site



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PROJECT X WEB SITE

Project Description

Welcome to the home page for Project X.

Team Members

Provide contact information, such as the names, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers of the project manager and Webmaster for the project Web site.

Project Documents

Charter

Gantt Chart

Progress Reports

Final Report

Provide summary information about the project and other pertinent information.

Templates

Discussions

Related Links

Outputs from Administrative Closure



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- Project archives
 - this is the long-term storage of all project activity records
 - The information should be complete and indexed for easy retrieval.
- Formal acceptance
 - confirms by customer by formally accepts the completion of the project
 - all requirements have been fulfilled
 - These require may include staff performance reviews, budget/cost reports, and lessons-learned documents.
- Lessons learned
 - includes detailed information on how common and usual project events were resolved.
 - part of the organization's knowledge base so the information can be applied to future projects.

Suggestions for Improving Project Communications



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- Manage conflicts effectively
- Develop better communication skills
- Run effective meetings
- Use templates for project communications

Conflict Handling Modes, In Preference Order



- Problem-solving
 - also known as confrontation
 - directly face a conflict and resolve it at once
- Compromise
 - use a give-and-take approach
- Smoothing
 - de-emphasize areas of differences and emphasize areas of agreement
- Forcing
 - the win-lose approach
- Withdrawal
 - retreat or withdraw from an actual or potential disagreement



Benefits of Problem-solving

- Problem solving often produces important results, such as new ideas, better alternatives, and motivation to work harder and more collaboratively
- Research by Karen Jehn suggests
 - task-related conflict often improves team performance
 - emotional conflict often depresses team performance

Developing Better Communication Skills



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- Companies and formal degree programs for IT professionals often neglect the importance of developing speaking, writing, and listening skills
- As organizations become more global, they realize they must invest in ways to improve communication with people from different countries and cultures
- It takes leadership to improve communication



Running Effective Meetings

- Determine if a meeting can be avoided
- Define the purpose and intended outcome of the meeting
- Determine who should attend the meeting
- Provide an agenda to participants before the meeting
- Prepare handouts, visual aids, and make logistical arrangements ahead of time
- Run the meeting professionally
- Build relationships

Developing a Communications Infrastructure



- A communications infrastructure is a set of tools, techniques, and principles that provide a foundation for the effective transfer of information
 - Tools include e-mail, project management software, groupware, fax machines, telephones, teleconferencing systems, document management systems, and word processors
 - Techniques include reporting guidelines and templates, meeting ground rules and procedures, decision-making processes, problem-solving approaches, and conflict resolution and negotiation techniques
 - Principles include using open dialog and an agreed upon work ethic



Using Software to Assist in Project Communications

- There are many software tools to aid in project communications
- The What Went Right? example describes several new web-based and wireless communications tools
- Microsoft Project 2000 includes several features to enhance communications



Summary

- Importance of Good Communications
 - lack of good communications is one of the biggest threats to many project
 - strong verbal skill is a key factor
- Project Communications Management Processes
 - Communications planning: determining the information and communications needs of the stakeholders
 - Information distribution: making needed information available in a timely manner
 - Performance reporting: collecting and disseminating performance information
 - Administrative closure: generating, gathering, and disseminating information to formalize phase or project completion



Summary (2)

- Creating a stakeholder analysis
- Suggestions for Improving Project Communications
 - Manage conflicts effectively
 - Develop better communication skills
 - Run effective meetings
 - Use templates for project communications
- Developing a Communications Infrastructure
 - Tools: e-mail, project management software, groupware, fax machines, telephones
 - Techniques: reporting guidelines and templates, meeting ground rules and procedures
 - Principles: open dialog and work ethic