



Using communication tools

Chapter 6

PMG112
Project communication

Lecture

Section 2

Communication tools

Putting it into practice

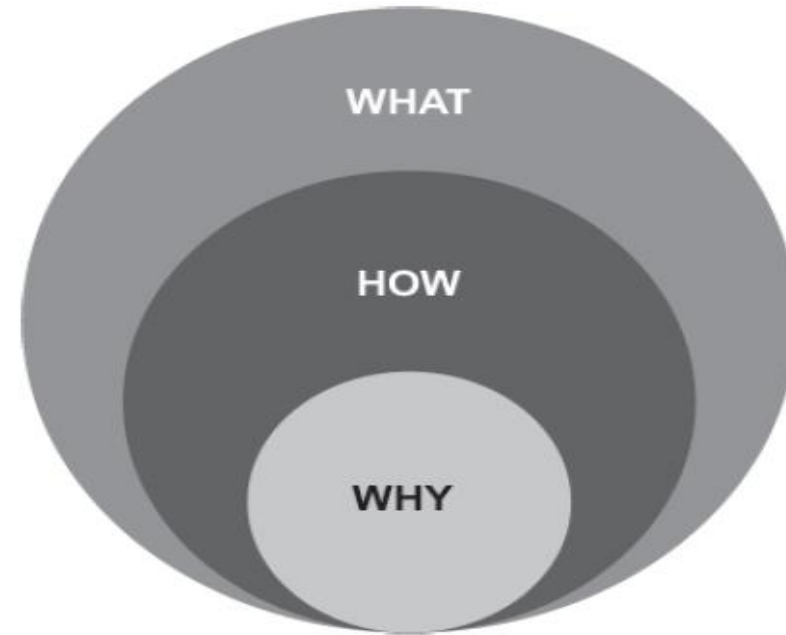
Section 1

Choosing the right tools

Section one

Choosing the right tools

Our emphasis in this section is on the process and importance of choosing the right tool, rather than focusing on specific, brand-name products or services. The concept is to start with WHY, then look at HOW, then answer WHAT

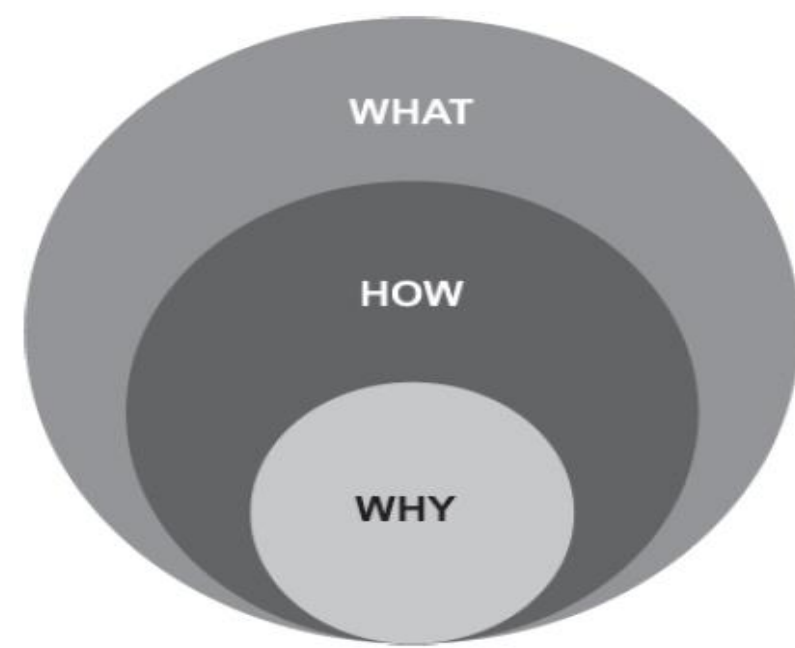


Choosing the right tools

WHY—the reason or purpose. Why are we addressing this communication problem? Why is this an issue? Why is this important?

HOW—differentiating factors. How do the different features, capabilities, or uses address our project communication needs? How will this tool solve a need or enhance our project communication abilities?

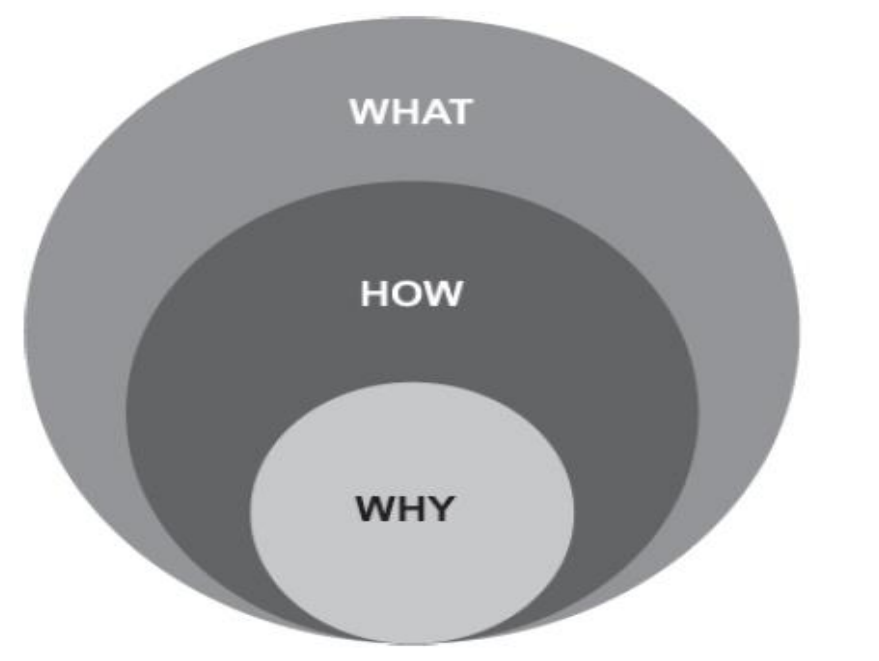
WHAT—the product or mechanism. What project communication tool is the best solution? What result or change in our project communications do we expect to see?



The way

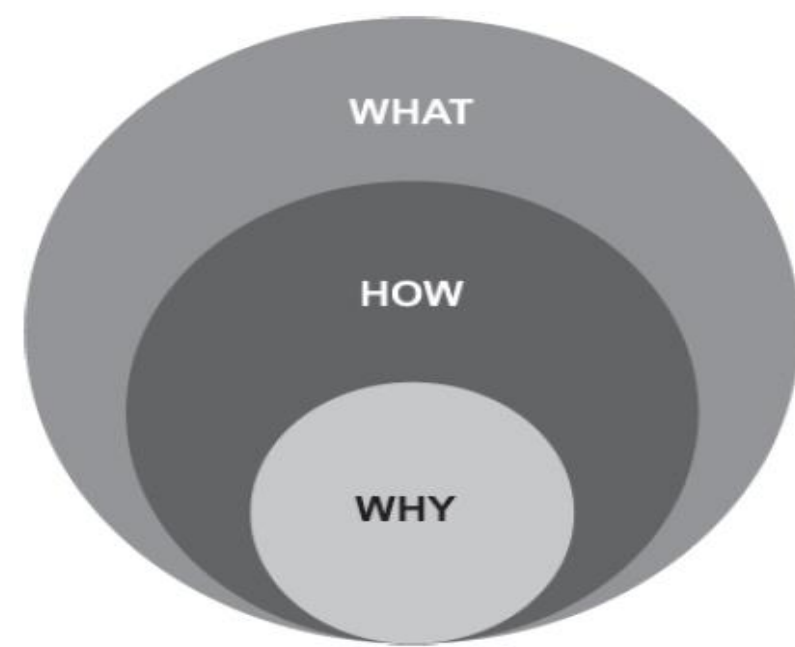
Many times, we don't stop to consider the why. Usually, we start with the tool (the what) and even look at the features (the how), before we address the need (the why).

Let's say you see a demonstration of a new carpet cleaner (the what). You love the features, accessories and the high-quality cleaning it does (the how), and you buy it—except you don't have any carpets to clean (missing the why)! The same is true in projects.



The way

We get a new communications tool. We start using it. We then discover it does not meet our communication needs. This creates even greater communication problems on the project: more misunderstandings, more frustration, more waste of time and resources, and more uncertainty.

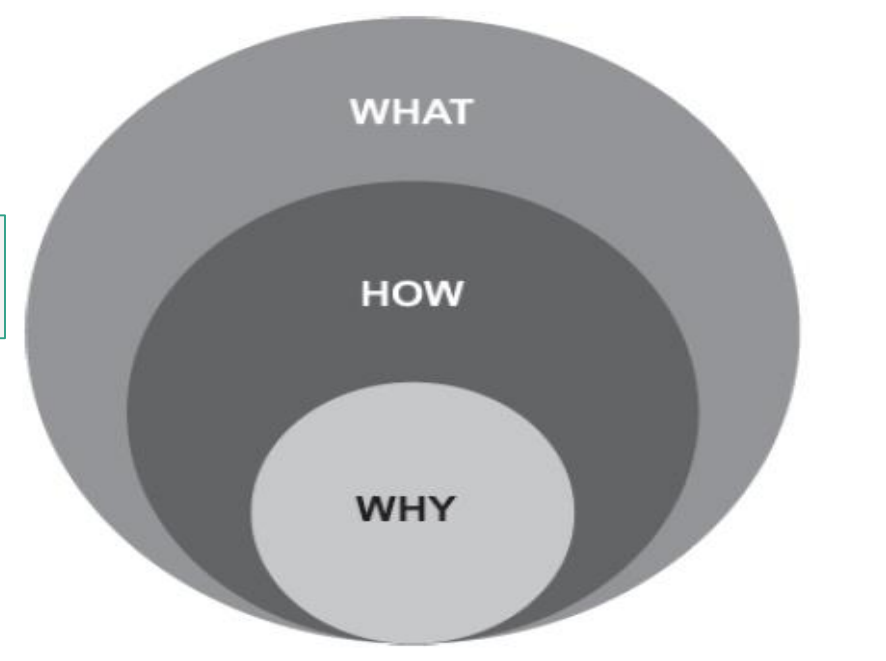


The way

How can we avoid this?

By starting with the why! Why are we addressing this communication need? Why is this an issue? Why is this important to the project, team, and stakeholders?

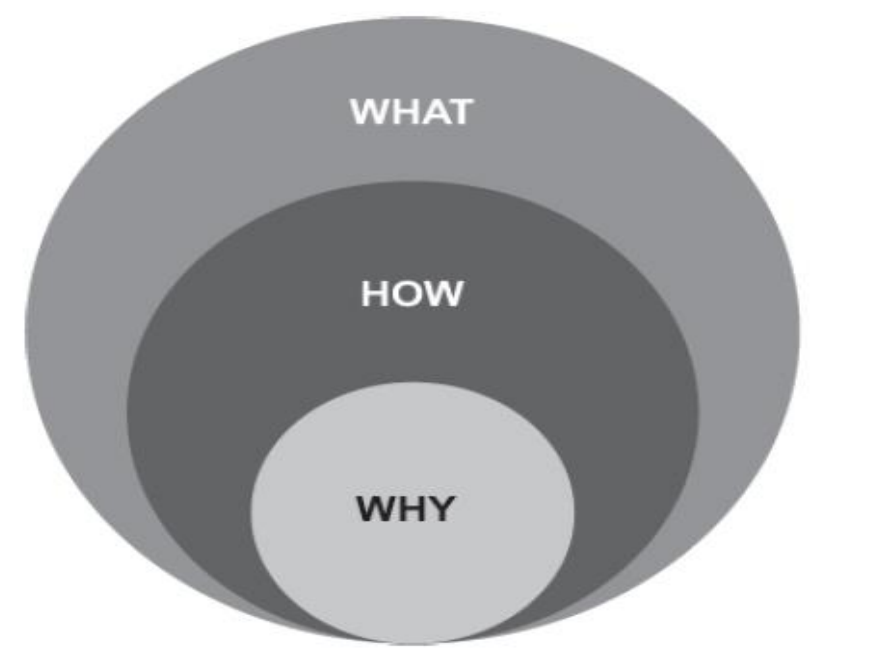
Focus first on the why— the reason or the purpose. Once these questions are answered, the next steps of how and what will logically follow.



The How

Next, establish a list of criteria based on your project needs, organization, team, budget, and other influencing factors. You should be focusing “on the criteria that matter” when selecting the right product or tool.

These criteria are the how—how the tool can accomplish the why. This is an excellent place to begin. Take a look at the list and modify it to build your own set of selection criteria.



The How

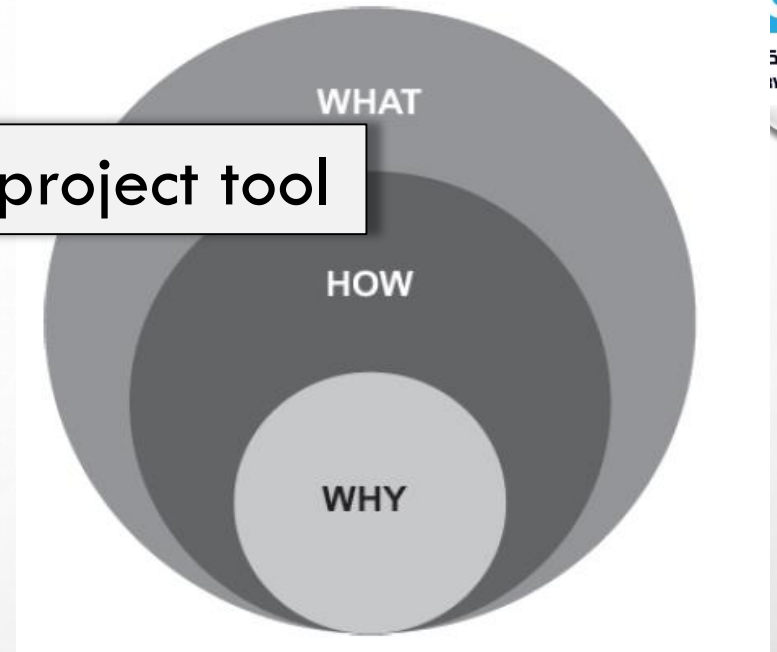
criteria to consider when selecting a project tool

Task management: How is managing tasks handled? Is it a simple tool or do we need complex features?

Tracking: How does the tool track time, tasks, budgets, resources, and progress?

Visibility: How are dashboards and project reports shown?

Accessibility: How is the online access?



The How

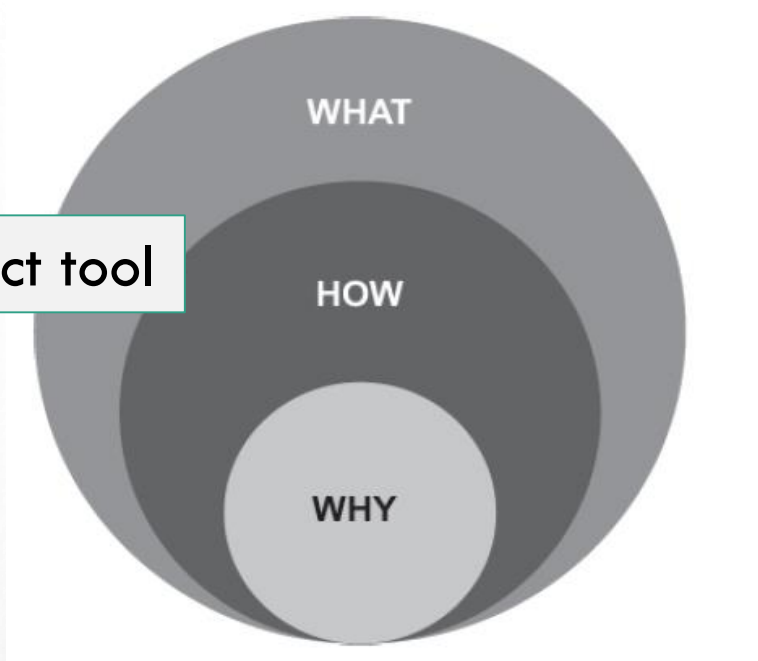
criteria to consider when selecting a project tool

Mobility: How does a mobile app help our project team manage their work?

Features: How are collaboration features handled, like discussions or online chats?

Security: How is security addressed so that we know our data is safe?

Integration: How easy is it to integrate with our current environment including compatibility with other products we use?

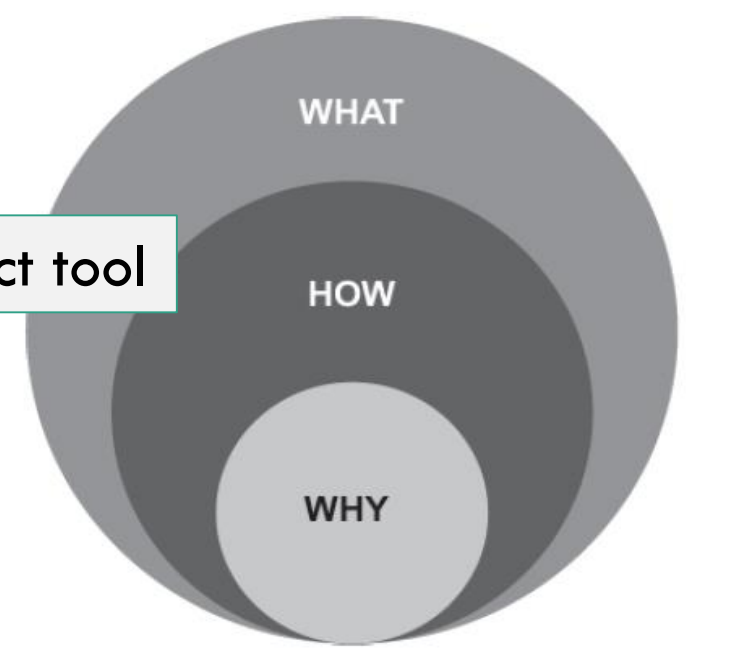


The How

criteria to consider when selecting a project tool

Usability: How is the usability? Is it simple to use so that the team can start using it immediately?

Cost: How does it fit within our budget?

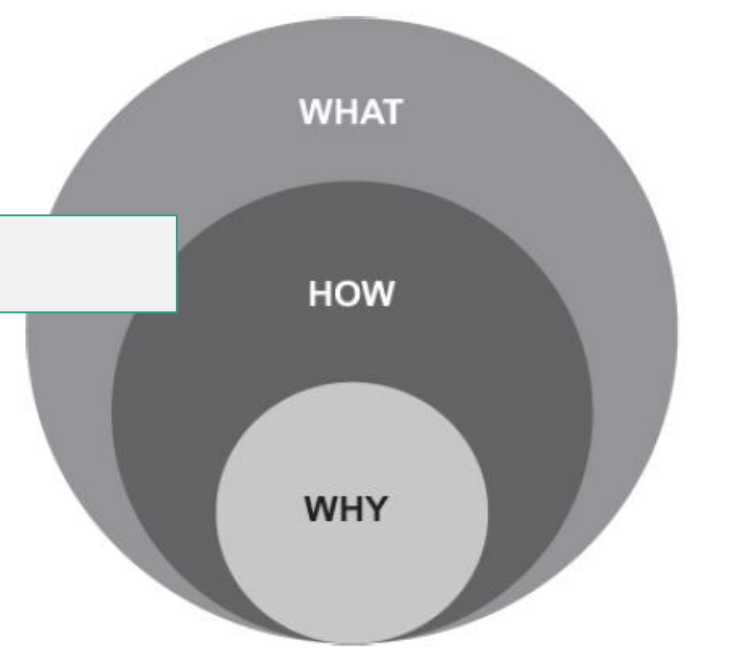


The How

The importance of these criteria

A criteria list provides you with a focused roadmap for your selection process so that you don't get off track with criteria that do not matter.

In evaluating tools, you also need to consider how the communication takes place—is it synchronous (meaning real-time or contemporaneous) or asynchronous (not interactive or not at the same time)? A combination of both synchronous and asynchronous communication tools is required for all types of project teams and stakeholders.



The How

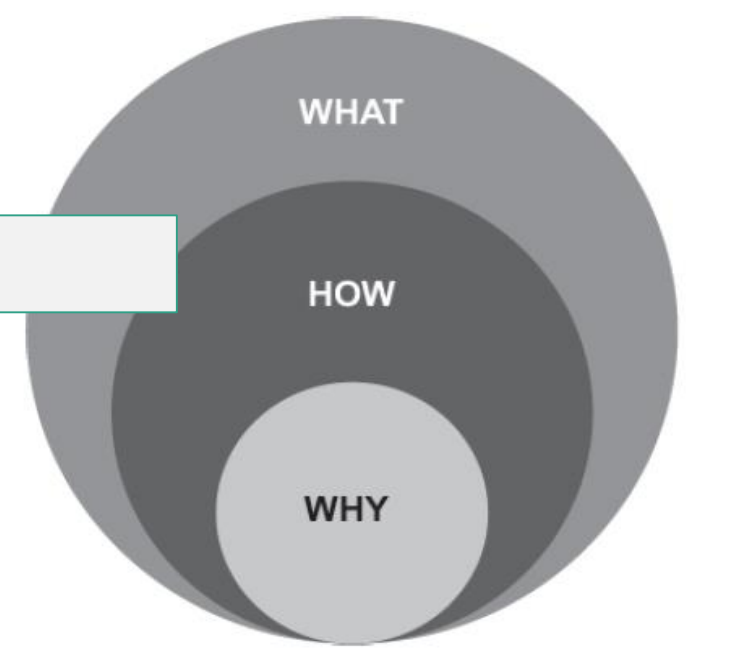
Criteria's groups

Once you have established your criteria list and have considered the need for synchronous and asynchronous communications, the next step is to prioritize the criteria in order of importance. Categorize the features into three groups:

Group 1: Criteria you must have

Group 2: Criteria you would like to have

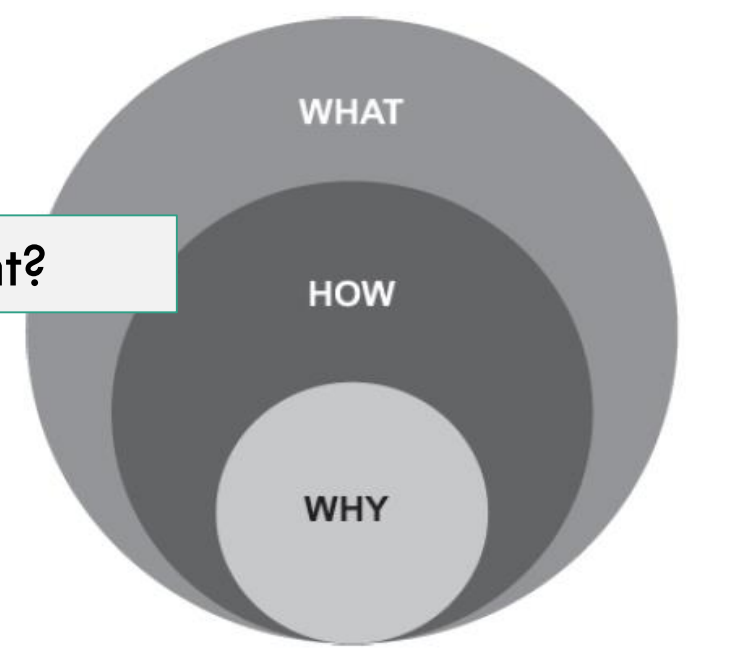
Group 3: Criteria you don't need



The How

Why is putting Criteria in groups important?

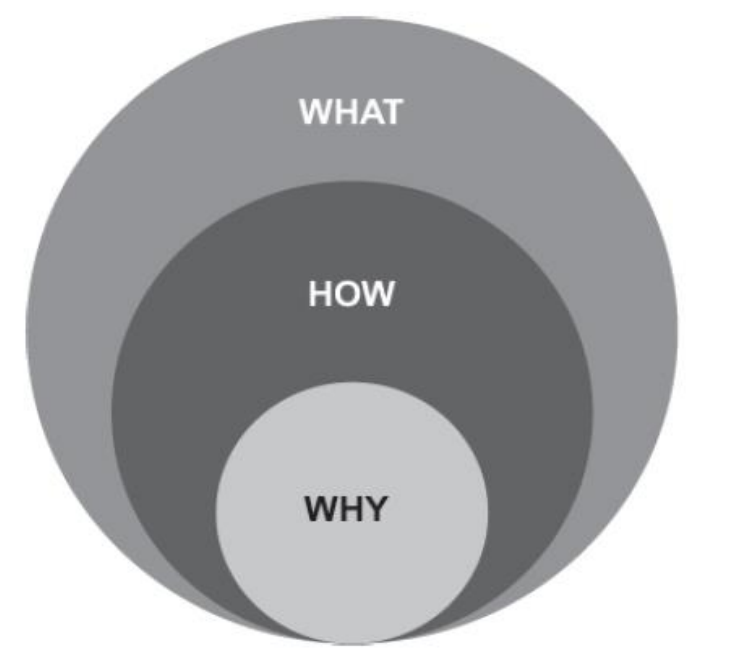
Putting together a criteria list and establishing priorities before looking at the actual communication tools—regardless of the type of tool—will help you throughout the selection process and increase the probability of choosing and using the most effective tools that fit your project needs.



The What

Now that we have looked at the why and the how, it is time to look at the what—the actual project communication tools that you might consider.

The goal here is to find and select tools that can accomplish the why while meeting all of the criteria you have established in the how.



Section two

Communication tools

Table 7.3 Categories of project communication tools

1	2	3	4	5
Technology	Project documents	Presentations and templates	Meetings	Talents and strengths

Technology

collaboration tools

Video Conferencing

Teleconferencing

E-mail

Social Media

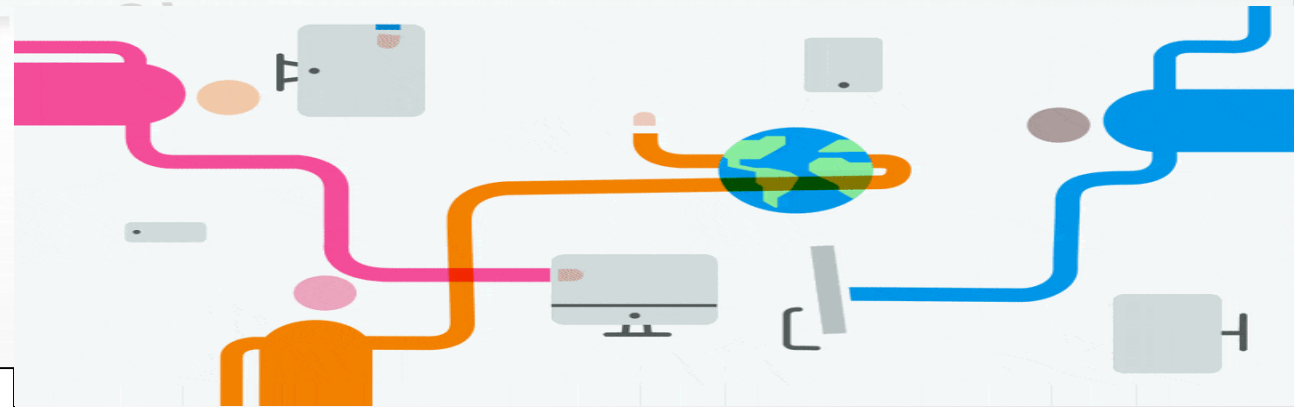
Choosing the most effective technology must be done carefully. This is not a simple process. It is “influenced by the organization’s budget, the nature of the team task, and members’ access to various technologies.”

There is urgency. There is confidentiality. There is availability and compatibility. There is knowledge and ability. The process is not easy.

Technology

Collaboration tools

Collaboration Software PC Magazine defines collaboration software as “many different kinds of apps and services that handle everything from video conference calls to letting two people type on a document at the same time.”



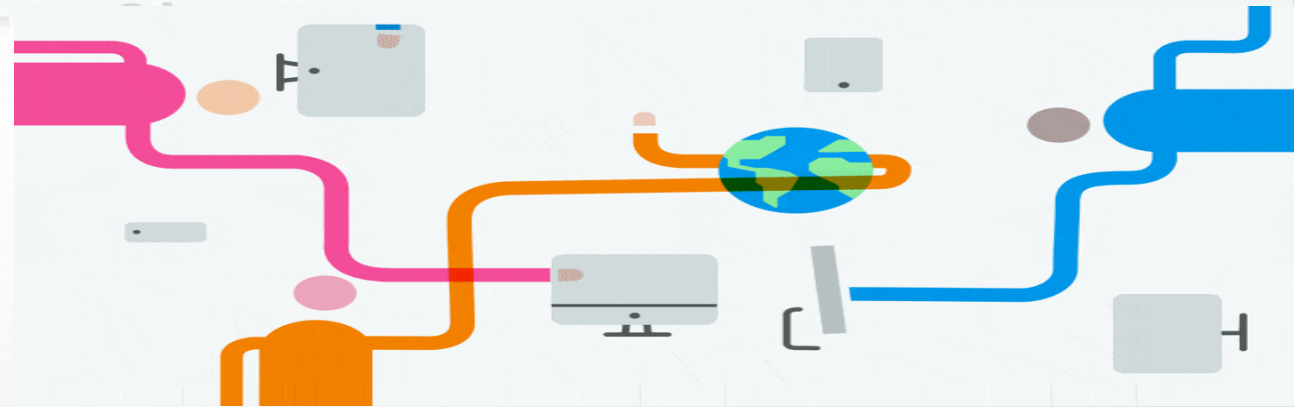
Technology

When should we use Collaboration tools?

When a team needs to collaborate, use collaboration software tools that allow for interactive discussions (such as online chat rooms or instant messaging).

when you need the ability to jointly work on the same document. It will increase productivity with people working together, talking, and communicating (synchronous).

When information needs to be shared, collaboration websites provide a resource for storing, communicating, and sharing project information (asynchronous).

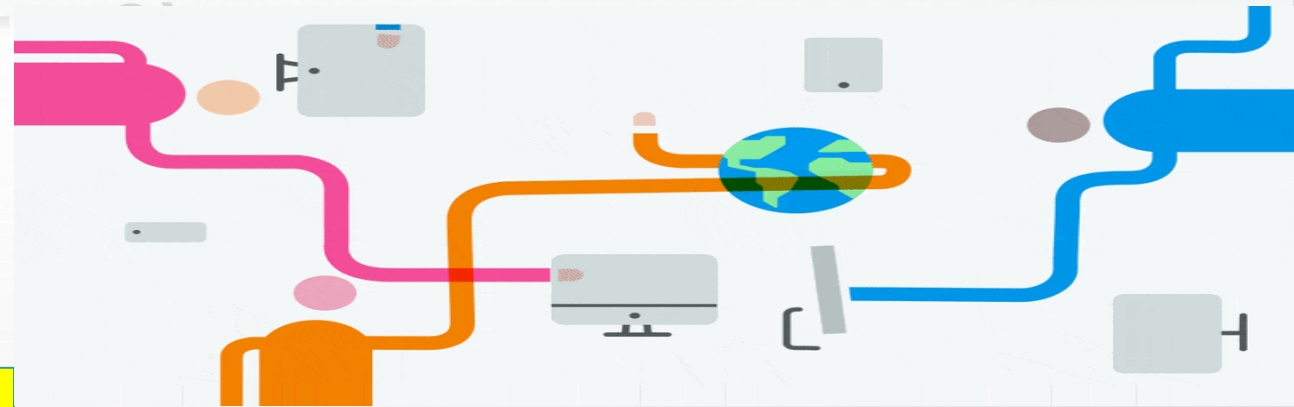


Technology

Benefits of Collaboration tools?

The benefit is that the project team and authorized stakeholders can use the website—at their convenience—for accessing the most current information on the project.

In addition, collaboration tools today are very robust and can be especially useful for teams who are not colocated. They also cut down significantly on e-mail clutter.



Technology

Video Conferencing

The value in using a video conferencing tool as a communication method is that you can see everyone. Consider it another form of face-to-face meeting.

You benefit from the verbal communication, as well as seeing the nonverbal communication of gestures, body language, reactions, or level of participation.

Furthermore, you can share a screen to show participants documents, presentations, videos, and other information which can facilitate even greater understanding and collaboration.



Technology

Benefits of Video Conferencing

The chat feature within many video conferencing tools provides an added mechanism for asking questions, getting clarification, and engaging online with other participants.

The downside of video conferencing is that not everyone has the required bandwidth, or some may have difficulty accessing it or may not know how to use it effectively.



Technology

Benefits of Video Conferencing

The benefit is that it is easier to schedule as it involves less complicated technology than a video conference call.

Many teleconferencing and video conferencing tools also allow the meeting to be recorded so that team members who are absent can listen to it at a later time.



Technology

Teleconferencing

Teleconferencing requires an excellent facilitator to manage the conversation so that participants are not talking all at the same time and the conversation (and agenda topics) keeps moving forward.

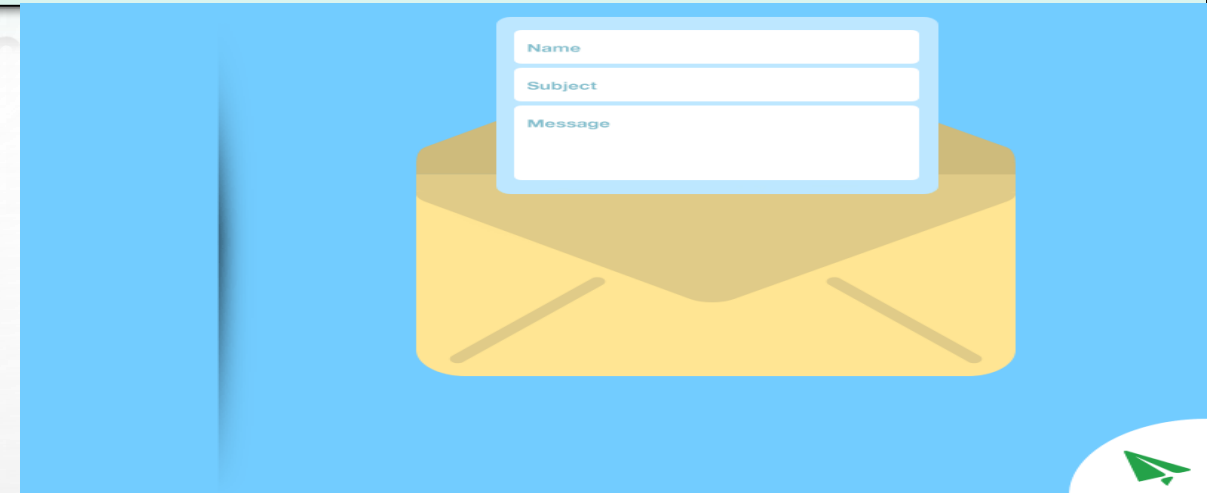
A downside of these tools is that you can only hear the participants; you cannot see them.



Technology

E-mail

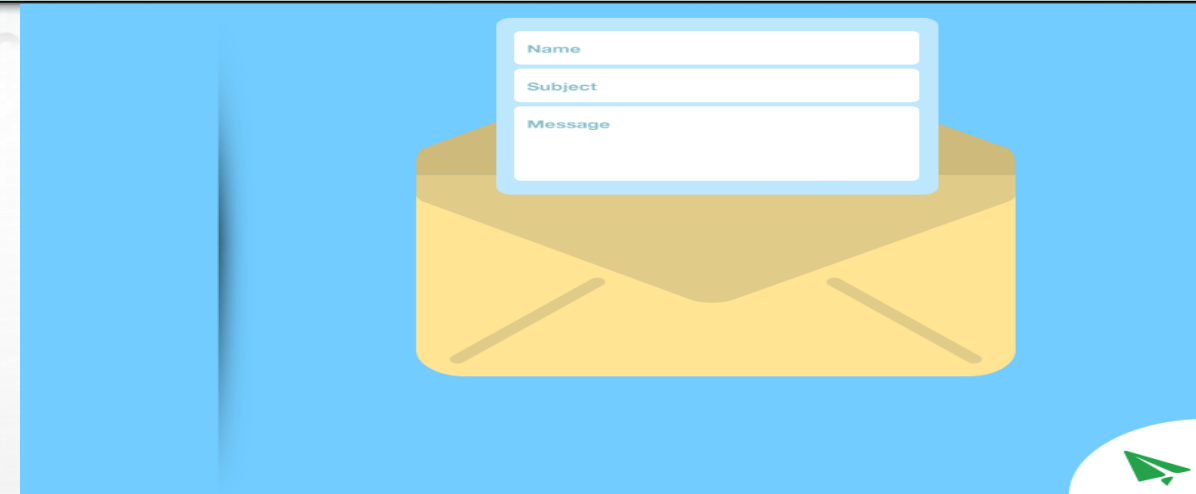
While e-mail is part of our daily routine, it is considered one-way communication (asynchronous). You send a message. Then you wait. And wait. And wait until you get a response, if any. E-mail should be used for documenting conversations, not conducting conversations.



Technology

Benefits of E-mail

The benefit of email is that it provides you with project documentation. The downside of email is urgency (others may not respond as quickly as you need) and understanding (the tone of your written message may be different from the tone of how your message is read).



Technology

E-mail

In working on projects, look for tools that enable a two-way dialogue, not one-way. Remember: Just because you hit the “send” button on an e-mail does not mean that you have actually communicated. Just because you hit the “send” button on an e-mail does not mean that you have actually communicated.



Technology

Social Media

Using social media tools to communicate in a project is becoming more prevalent. Social media provides an avenue for sharing project information with stakeholders in a public, low-cost, and easily accessible way.



Technology

Benefits of Social Media

This can be beneficial in large projects that affect members of the broader external community as a means to provide them with current information about the project status and how it affects them as it progresses.

It also provides stakeholders with a means of providing feedback, and can be measured through engagement metrics available in many social platforms.



Technology

Social Media

However, social media is not the right tool for every project and every stakeholder group. Carefully consider the why, how, and what of using social media as a tool, and ensure it satisfies your tool selection criteria before moving forward.



Table 7.3 Categories of project communication tools

1	2	3	4	5
Technology	Project documents	Presentations and templates	Meetings	Talents and strengths

Project documents

Project repots

Project Schedule

Milestone Schedule

Status Reports

Kanban Board



Project documents

Project repots

the report is simply for documentation purposes. If you know there is information in the report that certain stakeholders need to know, communicate it separately. At minimum, when you send the report, add an introductory note that uses bullet points to highlight specific aspects of the report you want to ensure they see.



Project documents

Project reports

The benefit of project reports is that critical project information has been documented.

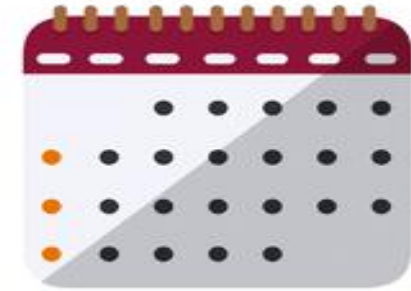
The challenge: making sure that project reports, decision logs, issue logs, and other reports have a purpose and are being used (and read)!



Project documents

Project Schedule

One of the most powerful tools we have for communicating about the project is the project schedule. The project schedule is highly detailed and communicates the tasks, milestones, planned and actual start/end dates, durations, dependencies, resources, and other detailed information.

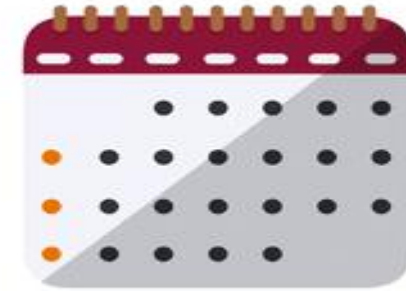


Project documents

Project Schedule

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It brings the pieces (information) from other sections of the project plan into one place—the schedule.



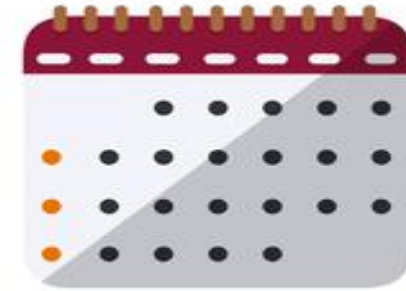
Project documents

How to use Project Schedule

To improve your project communications, consider printing the project schedule as a large wall chart, or post it on a virtual team wall. As you start doing the work on the project, mark your project schedule in different colors.

When a task is late, communicate this by highlighting the task in a bright color with a large arrow or circle.

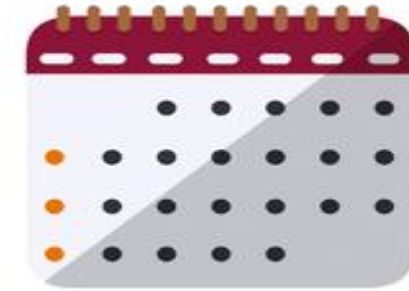
When a task is completed early, communicate this by highlighting the task on the schedule in a different bright color and add an icon (star, exclamation point, etc.).



Project documents

Benefits of Project Schedule

The benefit of having a marked-up project schedule that is visible to everyone is communicating progress, problems, and commitment. Visibility is an excellent communication tool.



For example, if you are assigned a task and it is late, it is circled for everyone to see! And for those tasks that are completed early or for other achievements, it is important to communicate and celebrate successes (large and small) throughout the life of the project.

Project documents

Project Schedule

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Predecessors	Resource Names
ABC COURSE DEV	32 days	Wed 7/17/19	Thu 8/29/19		
• 1 Course Design	15 days	Wed 7/17/19	Tue 8/6/19		
1.1 Determine 8 weekly topics	2 days	Wed 7/17/19	Thu 7/18/19		SME
1.2 Select textbook and assign weekly reading	2 days	Fri 7/19/19	Mon 7/22/19	3	SME
1.3 Select other learning materials	4 days	Tue 7/23/19	Fri 7/26/19	3,4	SME
1.4 Identify instructional media requirements	1 day	Mon 7/29/19	Mon 7/29/19	5,3	SME,ID
1.5 Define discussion question topics	5 days	Tue 7/30/19	Mon 8/5/19	6	SME,ID
1.6 Course Design Review	1 day	Tue 8/6/19	Tue 8/6/19	7	SME,ID,D
Course Design Complete	0 days	Tue 8/6/19	Tue 8/6/19	8	
• 2 Create Assignments	8 days	Wed 8/7/19	Fri 8/16/19		
2.1 Write assignments	3 days	Wed 8/7/19	Fri 8/9/19	8	SME,ID
2.2 Create rubrics	3 days	Mon 8/12/19	Wed 8/14/19	11	SME,ID
2.3 Develop answer keys/instructor notes	1 day	Thu 8/15/19	Thu 8/15/19	12	SME
2.4 Assignments Review	1 day	Fri 8/16/19	Fri 8/16/19	13	SME,ID,D
Assignments Complete	0 days	Fri 8/16/19	Fri 8/16/19	14	
• 3 Instructional Media	12 days	Wed 8/7/19	Thu 8/22/19		
3.1 Write scripts	5 days	Wed 8/7/19	Tue 8/13/19	8	Scriptwri
3.2 Design media / film	3 days	Wed 8/14/19	Fri 8/16/19	17	MediaDe
3.3 Produce media	3 days	Mon 8/19/19	Wed 8/21/19	18	MediaPro
3.4 Instructional Media Review	1 day	Thu 8/22/19	Thu 8/22/19	19	SME,ID,N
Instructional Media Complete	0 days	Thu 8/22/19	Thu 8/22/19	20	
• 4 Build Course	5 days	Fri 8/23/19	Thu 8/29/19		
4.1 Load course into LMS	3 days	Fri 8/23/19	Tue 8/27/19	14,20	LMSAdm
4.2 Structure gradebook	1 day	Wed 8/28/19	Wed 8/28/19	23	LMSAdm
4.3 Course Review	1 day	Thu 8/29/19	Thu 8/29/19	24	ID
Course Build Complete	0 days	Thu 8/29/19	Thu 8/29/19	25	
Course Development Complete	0 days	Thu 8/29/19	Thu 8/29/19	9,15,21	

Project documents

Milestone Schedule

By definition, a milestone schedule is “a type of schedule that presents milestones with planned dates.”

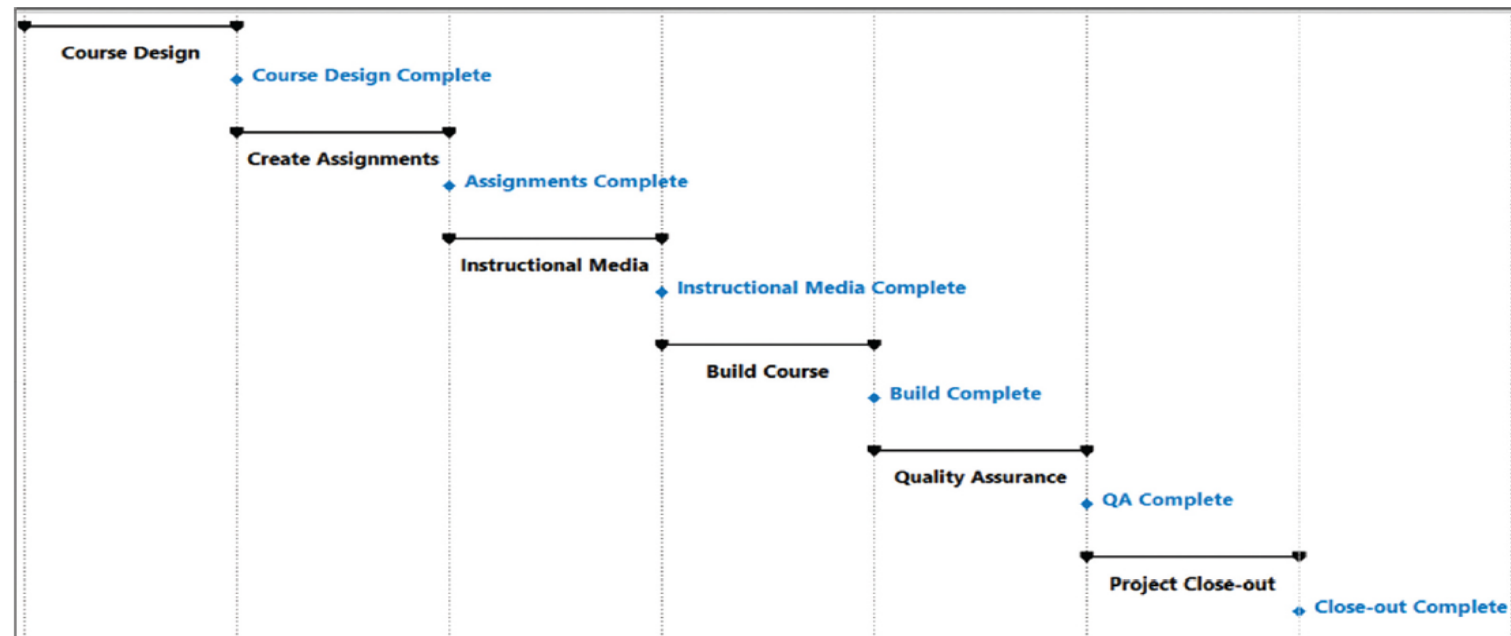
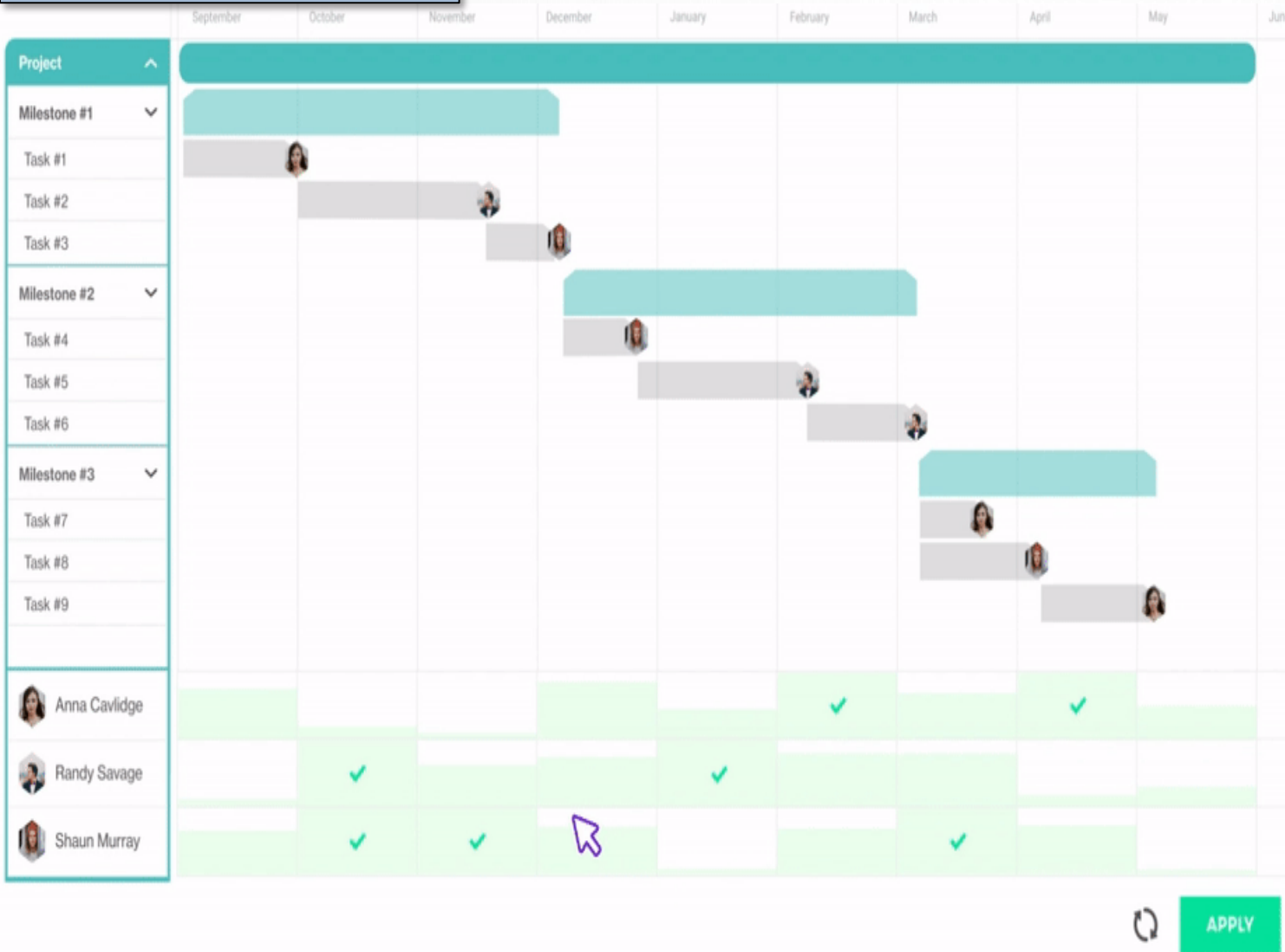


Figure 7.4 Milestone schedule example

Source: Debbie Austin, DBA, PMP

Project documents

Milestone Schedule



Project documents

Benefits of Milestone Schedule

The benefit of using a milestone schedule as a communication tool is that sometimes key stakeholders, project sponsors, or management may only want a high-level view (or summary) of the status of key milestones, or points in time. Consider using a milestone schedule for communicating in these situations.



Project status report	Status:
	☐ Green: On track (within cost, schedule, scope parameters)
	☐ Yellow: In jeopardy
	☐ Red: Off track
Submitted by:	
Role:	
Project name:	
Reporting period:	
Report date:	

Project objective

Project status	Include color (green, yellow, red) and explanation
Overall	
Scope	
Schedule	

Budget	
Other	

Tasks	Completed since last report

Tasks	Working on (Progress on these tasks will be stated in next report)

ar intervals.

Project documents

How to use Status Reports

The frequency and formality of communicating project status will depend on your project.

Status reports do not need to be complicated. They should be easy to read and preferably a maximum of one page (depending on the size and complexity of the project). Using a template ensures that a constant format and consistent information is being communicated.

Project documents

How to use Status Reports

Don't forget to add a section to your status report on recent lessons learned! Post your status reports on the collaboration website or in a shared folder for easy access by the project sponsor, project team, management, and other key stakeholders.

Make sure that your stakeholders are receiving current information in the status reports, and not getting status reports with outdated details. The timing of your status report distribution should be outlined in your project communications management plan.

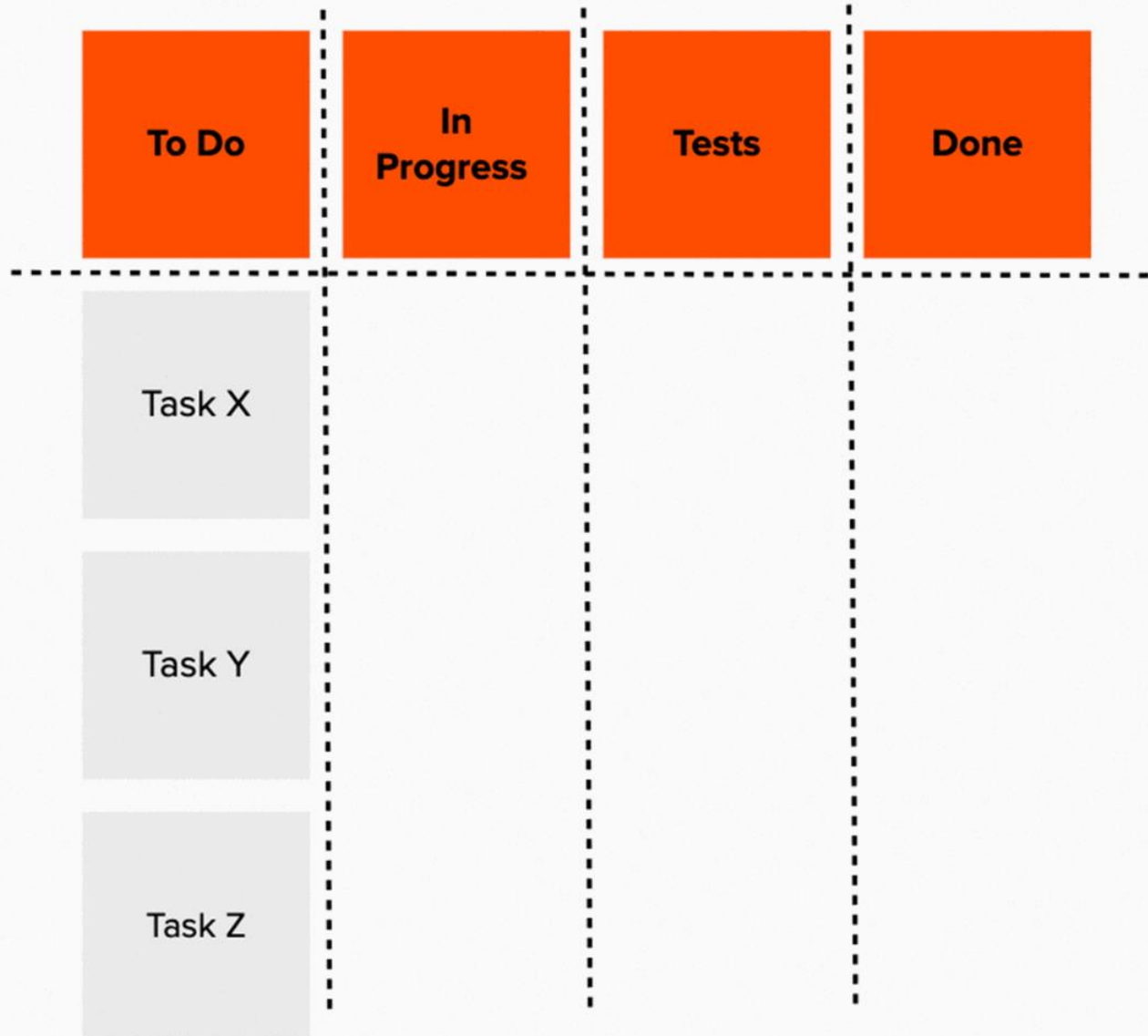
Project documents

Benefits of Status Reports

The benefit in consistently using status reports is that they help answer the question, “Where are we on the project?” for everyone involved.



ments



Project documents

Kanban Board

There may be other elements you include on your Kanban board to fit your needs.

Each task is represented by a “card” and the card moves across the board as the work progresses.

Consider it a visible status report or a different, more visual way to communicate workload on the project.

Project documents

Benefits of Kanban Board

The benefit is that it is a great visual to show to do, doing, and done. It also helps in showing how much work is waiting to be done, the need to establish priorities, and visibility on problems (or work that is stalled or blocked).

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THANK YOU

