

Global Project Management

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Lecture 3

Global Communication Strategy



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The early development of a good communication strategy can reduce misunderstandings between stakeholders from different country and company cultures communicating over distance. The main interested parties must work together to define this strategy, creating the project communications management plan. This lecture suggests three main steps to prepare a global communication strategy, by:





- identifying the types of information to be communicated;
- gathering the communication requirements from key stakeholders;
- determining how the communication will effectively happen.





As a first step, you need to identify the project information that must be part of the communications plan, with the help of the project team members and other key stakeholders. The information items can be grouped into broad categories, which will vary according to the knowledge area, the project complexity and the type of organization. These are some examples of information categories that are applicable to most projects:



Project Management Plan – the heart of the project information, containing the detailed project definition that will serve as the main source of information for the project execution and control activities.





Project status – the project managers and coordinators must produce project performance statistics, which compare the current costs, schedule, customer satisfaction levels and quality measurements with the approved baseline.

Project records – different project records keep track of the elements that may affect the project performance, such as issues, risk and changes.





Status of the work packages – the work package owners maintain a status report for their activities, normally in a level of detail that allows the project team members to understand their tasks, and the project manager to link related events (issues and risks) that occurred in different activities.





Project organization – the global project manager is responsible for the definition of the project organization chart, combined with clear roles and responsibilities for team members coming from different organisations and locations.

Logistics – the project team members collect useful information on office locations, travel guidelines and other basic knowledge for the stakeholders who are travelling across countries and working abroad.





Standards and templates – the project team members must define a set of document templates that will form the project knowledge repository. They can also produce guidelines instructing the project office or other team members to collect the project information and

to update the documents in the repository. This will avoid project team members located in different countries or working for different organisations using various document formats with inconsistent information structures.





After the main project knowledge components are identified, you need to analyse the stakeholders' information requirements. One possible way is the preparation of a communication requirements matrix (see Figure below) describing the relationship between the stakeholders (listed in the matrix columns) and the information items (represented in the rows). In each cell of the matrix, describe how the stakeholder contributes to the project communication, by:



preparing the information, alone or together with other stakeholders;
informing other stakeholders;
receiving and analysing the information;
reviewing or approving the information before distribution;
archiving or deleting the information or documentation.



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Identifying the stakeholders' requirements



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Stakeholder Information	SP Sponsor	SC Steering committee	PM Project Manager	PC Project Coordinators	TM Team Members	C Customers	S Suppliers	P Partners
Project status	Informed by PM	Informed by PM	Prepare with PC	Prepare with PM	Informed by PM	Partially informed by PM (select relevant information)	Partially informed by PM (select relevant information)	Partially informed by PM (select relevant information)
Work package status	n/a	n/a	Informed by PC	Prepare with TM, inform PM	Prepare with PC	n/a	n/a	n/a
Project organization	Provide input to PM & Approve	Provide input to PM & Approve	Prepare with PC Review with SP & SC	Prepare with PM	Informed by PM	Partially informed by PM (exclude confidential information)	Partially informed by PM (exclude confidential information)	Partially informed by PM (exclude confidential information)
Logistics	Informed by PM	Informed by PM	Prepare with PC	Prepare with PM	Informed by PM	n/a	n/a	n/a
Standards and Templates	n/a	n/a	Prepare with PC	Prepare with PM	Informed by PM	n/a	n/a	n/a
Project Management Plan	Informed by PM	Informed by PM	Prepare with PC	Prepare with PM	Prepare with PM	Partially informed by PM (exclude confidential information)	Partially informed by PM (exclude confidential information)	Partially informed by PM (exclude confidential information)

Figure 8.2 Example of a communication requirements matrix



You must prepare the requirements matrix during the communications planning activities, keeping in mind the strategies to change the stakeholder commitment level. The investment of time and resources on knowledge generation and distribution must be measured against the value they produce to the project.





Thus, the project team must avoid producing information not specified in the communications requirements matrix, except if this is requested via the formal change control process. In this case, the communications requirements matrix must reflect the change and its impact on all stakeholders. This will bring the added value of providing the new information to a larger community of stakeholders, increasing their level of commitment to the project goals and strategies.



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Define a global communication matrix



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In the third component of the global communications management plan, you will define the format of each communication, its frequency and participants, by using all the information discussed in the previous lectures:



Meeting types and communication media – start your communication matrix with the main meeting types and communication media you have used in previous, similar projects. During the lessons-learned sessions, identify other types of meetings that can increase the level of commitment of key stakeholders. Review Chapter 7 when preparing this list, to identify the information distribution patterns to be used during the project.





The project knowledge base – use the standard established by your company for the project knowledge base. If there is no standard available, define one for your project,





Online meeting templates – all documents on the communication matrix must be adapted for online meetings, promoting the use of online conferencing by allowing a quick capture of the discussions and decisions.





The advantages of using visual information – consider publishing charts and dashboards with a visual status of your project, and use the same information during the status meetings. This can reduce the time required by the stakeholders to understand the message being transmitted.





You can also shorten the preparation time by using the project knowledge base to produce charts automatically with the project performance information. Visual information can help to obtain buy-in from stakeholders that are not available to participate in regular meetings, allowing them to learn the status of the project at a glance.





The global communication channels – , all communication flowing across borders requires careful planning and the application of the principles specified across various chapters of the Global Project Management Framework©. The number of remote communication channels can also be reduced by assigning the roles of local coordinator to local team members.





The stakeholder register – when determining the format and technology of communications and meetings, take all elements on the register into consideration, mainly power, influence, reactions, challenges, opportunities, knowledge level and cultural patterns.





Cultural aspects – when preparing executive reports to specific-oriented stakeholders, start with an executive summary. On the other hand, people from diffuse-oriented cultures will appreciate having the executive summary at the end.





During the planning phase of a top priority project involving four different companies in several locations across the globe, the project managers defined a global communication strategy that satisfied the main requirements of the key stakeholders.





When the project implementation started, the team members from the supplier company were struggling with the aggressive schedule, and working very hard to commit to the agreed delivery dates. The project communication strategy was not followed, and the other three companies (the customer and two technology partners)



- Deliverables were completed on time, but the other parties only received the information afterwards, with impact to their own activities and to the availability of resources.





- Some deliverables were not completed on time, and the other parties were not informed of the main causes, the impacts on schedule and costs and the new estimated dates.



- Meetings were repeatedly cancelled without warning, or key participants did not attend, increasing frustration and loss of time.
- The levels of customer satisfaction and trust among the three partners were very low.





A team of specialized project managers performed an assessment of the situation and recommended the immediate assignment of project coordinators. Their main role was to learn and follow the project communication strategy, adapting the frequency and format of meetings when required.





The project finished on time, and the level of customer satisfaction was very high between the assessment and project closure. This showed, to all participants, the importance of following the project communication strategy, adapting it to new requirements and planning for resources to execute the strategy.





The time required to collect information, process the data, build the project knowledge and attend meetings must be built into the project plan and included in the resource estimates.



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Resources:

Global Project Management

Communication, Collaboration and
Management Across Borders

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