

# COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT

## STUDY NOTES

In Preparation For  
PMI Certification Exam

**Prepared By:** Kim Ulmer  
**E-Mail:** kimu@us.ibm.com  
kimu@austin.ibm.com

# Communications Mgmt Study Notes

## Reference Material to study:

- ✓ *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*, Chapters 2 and 10 (1996 edition)
- ✓ *Human Resource Skills for the Project Manager*, Verma, Vijay K., 1996, Chapter 1
- ✓ *PMP Challenge*, ESI International, Communications Section
- ✓ *PMBOK Q & A*, PMI, 1997, Project Communications Management

## What to Study?

- ✓ The PMBOK phases of Project Communications Management: Communications Planning, Information Distribution, Performance Reporting, and Administrative Closure (Be familiar with Inputs, Tools and Techniques, and Outputs for each phase)
- ✓ Know the difference between the general management skill of communicating and Project Communications Management. The general management skill of communicating is the broader subject and involves knowledge such as: sender-receiver models, choice of media, writing style, presentation techniques, and meeting management techniques.
- ✓ Be familiar with the goals of interpersonal communication.
- ✓ Understand how interpersonal communication works. (sender-receiver model)
- ✓ Know the different methods of communication. (written, verbal, non-verbal such as body language)
- ✓ Be familiar with the barriers to successful communication.
- ✓ Be familiar with communication channels and links. Know the formula for communications channels:  $(N*(N-1))/2$  See sample problem.
- ✓ Be familiar with effective listening techniques.
- ✓ Be familiar with the barriers to effective listening and the guidelines for active listening.
- ✓ Know the four major communication styles: concrete-sequential, abstract-sequential, concrete-random, and abstract-random.
- ✓ Know the amount of time project manager's spend communicating.

## Communications Mgmt Processes

### Communications Planning:

- The process of determining the information and communications needs of the project stakeholders:
  - Who needs what information?
  - When will they need it?
  - How will it be given to them?
- Inputs include:
  - Communications requirements: sum of the information requirements of the project stakeholders.
  - Communications technology: the technologies or methods used to transfer information back and forth among project elements.
  - Constraints: factors that will limit the project management team's options.
  - Assumptions: factors that will be considered true, real, or certain for planning purposes. (Assumptions generally involve a degree of risk and may be identified here or in the risk identification process).
- Methods used during communications planning: stakeholder analysis done to obtain the information needs of the various project stakeholders.
- Outputs include: Communications management plan. Includes:
  - What methods will be used for gathering and storing information.
  - Who should receive the information and how will it be sent.
  - A description of the information to be distributed. (including formats)
  - Schedules showing when each type of communication will be produced.
  - A method for updating the communications plan.
  - The Communications Management Plan is a subsidiary element of the overall project plan.

### Information Distribution:

- The process of making needed information available to project stakeholders in a timely manner.
- Inputs include: work results, communications management plan, project plan.
- Methods used during information distribution are:
  - Communication skills
  - Information retrieval systems
  - Information distribution systems
- Outputs include: project records.

## Communication Mgmt Processes, cont.

### Performance Reporting:

- The process of collecting and disseminating performance information. This includes status reporting, progress measurement, and forecasting.
- Inputs include: project plan, work results, and other project records.
- Methods used during performance reporting include:
  - Performance reviews: reviews held to assess project status and progress.
  - Variance analysis: comparing actual project results to planned or expected results.
  - Trend analysis: examining project results over time to determine if performance is improving or deteriorating.
  - Earned value analysis
  - Information distribution tools and techniques.
- Outputs include:
  - Performance reports: gantt charts, s-curves, histograms, and tables.
  - Change requests

### Administrative Closure:

- The process of generating, gathering, and disseminating information to formalize phase or project completion.
- Inputs include:
  - Performance measurement documentation
  - Documentation of the product of the project
  - Other project records
- The methods used during administrative closure: performance reporting tools and techniques.
- Outputs from administrative closure: project archives, formal acceptance of the project or phase, and lessons learned.

## Communications Mgmt Concepts

### Goals of Interpersonal Communication:

- Understanding the exact meaning and intent of others.
- Being understood by others.
- Gaining acceptance for yourself and/or your ideas.
- Producing action or change.

### Interpersonal Communication:

- To ensure messages are received and understood, two-way communication is necessary.
- Interpersonal communication is the process of sharing information with others.
- Three basic elements of interpersonal communication:
  - The sender (or encoder) of the message.
  - The signal or the message.
  - The receiver (or decoder) of the message.
- Process of interpersonal communication:
  - Sender determines what information to share and with whom and encodes the message.
  - Sender transmits the message as a signal to the receiver.
  - The receiver receives the message.
  - The receiver decodes the message to determine its meaning and then responds accordingly.
  - Communication is successful if the decoded message is the same as the sender intended.

## Communications Mgmt Concepts, cont.

### Methods of Communication:

- **Verbal:**
  - Advantages:
    - Timely exchange of information
    - Rapid feedback
    - Immediate synthesis of message
    - Timely closure
  - Disadvantages: technical jargon especially in complex projects may make verbal communication difficult for non-technical people and other stakeholders.
  - Three stages of effective verbal communication and presentation:
    - The introduction: Tell them what you're going to tell them.
    - The explanation: Tell them.
    - The summary: Tell them what you just told them.
- **Non-verbal:**
  - Encoding a message without using words. Usually done through body language.
  - Total Message Impact = Words (7%) + Vocal tones (38%) + Facial expressions (55%)
  - PM's may combine vocal and nonverbal factors but must be careful that the two do not present contradictory messages.
- **Written communication:**
  - The main aim of business writing is that it should be understood clearly when read quickly.
  - The message should be well planned, simple, clear, and direct.
  - Major steps to writing:
    - Establish the basic purpose of the message.
    - Collect and organize material.
    - Prepare draft.
    - Check the overall structure.
    - Send the message.

## Communications Mgmt Concepts, cont.

### Macro-Barriers to Successful Communication:

- Information overload:
  - Keep messages simple and direct.
  - Provide sufficient information but not too much.
- Lack of subject knowledge:
  - Must have sufficient knowledge to send message.
  - Must know level of understanding of receiver.
- Cultural differences:
  - Meanings and interpretations may vary among different cultures.
  - Encourage team members to learn each other's cultures.
- Organizational climate:
  - Minimize the differences associated with status and ego within the organization.
  - Encourage open and trusting atmosphere.
- Number of links:
  - Reduce the number of transmission links.
  - The more links, the more opportunity for distortion.
  - Be aware of entropy. 23-27% of message is lost in upward communication.

### Micro-Barriers to Successful Communication:

- Perceptions:
  - Sender's view of the receiver: how sender perceives the receiver's level of knowledge and ability to understand the message.
  - Receiver's view of the sender: How the receiver personally feels about the sender may influence how carefully the receiver listens.
- Message competition:
  - Communicate only when you have the total attention of the recipient.
  - Try to minimize noise or other factors contributing to message interference.
- Project jargon and terminology:
  - Define project terminology used in messages.
  - Be aware of the use of project terminology and the intended audience.

### Types of Project Communicatons:

- Interpersonal communication.
- Communication with public and community.
- Formal communication.
- Informal communication.

### Communicaton Channels and Links:

- The PM must recognize and understand the project's formal communication channels.
- Three basic channels of comunication:
  - Upward communication (vertically or diagonally)
  - Downward communication (vertically or diagonally)
  - Lateral communication (horizontally)

## Communications Mgmt Concepts, cont.

### Effective Listening:

- Effective listening is one of the most important skills for a PM to acquire and practice.
- It helps develop mutual respect, rapport, and trust among project participants.
- Verbal listening behaviors:
  - Asking questions to clarify and gather more information.
  - Paraphrasing what the speaker has said.
  - Summarizing at intervals what the speaker has said to confirm what you have understood.
  - Asking the speaker for examples.
  - Ascertaining the speaker's feelings and acknowledging them. ("You seem angry.")
  - Directing the speaker to the most appropriate listener. ("George can best help you with that.")
- Non-verbal listening behaviors:
  - Making eye contact.
  - Being expressive and alert.
  - Moving closer to the speaker.
  - Listening for the intention behind the speaker's communication.
  - Facial expressions, touching, use of space, use of time.

### Barriers to Effective Listening:

- The mismatch between our speed of talking (100-400 words per minute) and our speed of thinking (approx. 600 words per minute) makes effective listening tough.
- Some of the personal and environmental barriers that influence the overall effectiveness of communication include:
  - Poor listeners: People do not talk freely when they know the audience isn't listening.
  - Resistance to the message: People don't like to listen to something that is contrary to their preconceived ideas.
  - Physical distractions: telephone calls, people coming in and out of office/meetings, etc.

### Guidelines for Active Listening:

- Stop talking!
- Show the speaker you are ready to listen:
  - Silence: signals you are ready to listen.
  - Few distractions: shut the door, put the phone on hold, etc.
  - A receptive attitude: empathize with the speaker's point of view.

## Communications Mgmt Concepts, cont.

### Communication Styles:

- The PM uses communication more than any other skill set to manage the project throughout its life cycle and ensure that team members are working cohesively and resolving problems.
- Four communication styles:
  - Concrete-sequential: (*Mr./Ms. Fix-it*)
    - Person likes to focus on ideas and tasks, thinks systematically and predictably.
    - Person wants to complete tasks and minimize change.
  - Abstract-sequential: (Organizer)
    - Person who relies on logical analysis and systematic planning to solve problems.
    - These communicators are people and task-oriented, which makes them effective team builders.
    - A-S communicators prefer to have all information before making a decision, and they know how to control resources and information.
  - Concrete-random: (Explorer/entrepreneur)
    - Person relies on people and technology, finds practical use for theories and models.
    - C-R communicators make decisions after thorough analysis and evaluation and excel at facilitating planning sessions, discussions, and changes.
  - Abstract-random: (Intuitive free thinker)
    - Person views experiences from different perspectives and sees the big picture and the long-term view.
    - A-R communicators make good brainstormers because they can listen actively and enjoy the process of generating new ideas.

### How PM's Spend their Time:

- 70-90% of project manager's time is spent communicating.
  - Of the PM's time spent communicating, approximately 45% is spent listening.
  - Another 30% is spent talking.
- PM's spend 50% of their time in meetings.

## Sample Problem

1. How many communication channels are added when you add three people to a four person team?

Answer: 15 communication channels are added.

No. of channels for a 4 person team:  $(n*(n-1))/2$   $(4*3)/2 = 6$

No. of channels for a 7 person team:  $(7*6)/2 = 21$

Therefore, adding 3 people to a 4 person team increased the no. of communication channels by 15.  $(21-6)$

## Sample Questions

1. Which of the following is not a process of Project Communications Management?
  - A. Administrative Closure
  - B. Performance Reporting
  - C. Information Distribution
  - D. Communications Planning
  - E. Conflict Resolution
  
2. Which of the following are outputs from the Communications Planning process?
  - A. Project records
  - B. Communications management plan
  - C. Performance reports
  - D. Formal acceptance
  - E. b and c
  
3. The receiver filters messages based on all but the following:
  - A. Culture
  - B. Semantics
  - C. Language
  - D. Distance
  - E. Knowledge
  
4. How much time does the typical project manager spend communicating both formally and informally?
  - A. 40-60%
  - B. 50-70%
  - C. 60-80%
  - D. 75-90%
  
5. In communications management, to assimilate through the mind or senses is the process of:
  - A. Receiving
  - B. Decoding
  - C. Comprehending
  - D. Understanding
  
6. The sending or conveying of information from one place to another is the process of:
  - A. Networking
  - B. Transmitting
  - C. Encrypting
  - D. Promoting
  
7. Group brainstorming encourages all of the following except:
  - A. Team building
  - B. Analysis of alternatives
  - C. Convergent thinking
  - D. Uninhibited verbalization

## Sample Questions, cont.

8. The three major types of communication are:
  - A. Written, verbal, and non-verbal.
  - B. Verbal, formal documentation, informal documentation.
  - C. Verbal, written, and graphic.
  - D. Verbal, written, and electronic.
  
9. All of the following are outputs from performance reporting EXCEPT:
  - A. Trend analysis
  - B. "S" curves, histograms, bar charts, and tables
  - C. Performance reports
  - D. Change requests
  - E. Stakeholder reports
  
10. All of the following aid in achieving consensus EXCEPT:
  - A. Maintaining a focus on the problem, not each other.
  - B. Avoiding conflict.
  - C. Seeking facts.
  - D. Avoiding voting, trading, or averaging.
  
11. All of the following are communication tools EXCEPT:
  - A. Memos
  - B. Verbal circulation of a rumor
  - C. Videos
  - D. Body language
  - E. Inputing data into a spreadsheet
  
12. Communication is the PRIME responsibility of a Project:
  - A. Manager in a weak matrix
  - B. Manager in a projectized environment
  - C. Coordinator
  - D. Expeditor
  
13. A tight matrix is:
  - A. A balanced matrix organization.
  - B. Where all team members are brought together in one location.
  - C. Where functional managers operate in a dual reporting structure reporting to both their own departments and to the project manager.
  - D. a and c
  
14. The sender is responsible for:
  - A. Confirming the message is understood.
  - B. Ensuring the receiver agrees with the message.
  - C. Scheduling communication exchange.
  - D. Presenting the message in the most agreeable manner.
  
15. What are the four parts of the communications model?
  - A. Sending, Receiving, Decoding, and Comprehending
  - B. Sender, Message, Medium, Receiver
  - C. Communicator, Message, Receiver, Decoder
  - D. Communicating, Transmitting, Receiving, Comprehending

## Sample Questions, cont.

16. A leadership style in which the project manager shares problems with team members and formulates solutions as a group is called:
  - A. Autocratic
  - B. Consultation in a group
  - C. Consensus
  - D. One-to-one consultation
  
17. In negotiating with functional department managers, project managers often find themselves using what two-party conflict management approach?
  - A. Win-Lose
  - B. Win-Win
  - C. Lose-Lose
  
18. A type of organization in which the project manager has little formal authority and basically acts as a staff assistant to an executive who is ultimately responsible for the project is called:
  - A. Functional
  - B. Weak matrix
  - C. Project coordinator
  - D. Project expediter
  
19. Formal acceptance by the client or sponsor of the project should be prepared and distributed during which process?
  - A. Information Distribution
  - B. Administrative Closeout
  - C. Organizational Planning
  - D. Performance Reporting
  
20. In which of the following organizations is the project manager role likely to be part-time?
  - A. Weak matrix
  - B. Functional
  - C. Balanced matrix
  - D. a and b
  - E. All of the above

## Answers

1. E
2. B
3. D Assumes that the media used for distance communication is acceptable (fax or phone is operational)
4. D
5. A Decoding is deciphering a message once assimilated.
6. B
7. C
8. A Reference Vijay Verma's, *Human Resource Skills for the Project Manager*, pgs. 18-21
9. A The outputs are change requests and performance reports. Stakeholder reports are examples of performance reports and B are examples of the formats for performance reports.
10. B In the modern view, conflict is inevitable and is a natural result of change. If managed properly, conflict is frequently beneficial. Withdrawal tends to minimize conflict but also fails to resolve the issue.
11. E Communication involves the exchange of information and implies a sender and a receiver.
12. D
13. B
14. A
15. B
16. C Reference Verma, "HR skills for the PM", pg. 218
17. C
18. D
19. B
20. D