Communications

TEN

How often do you skip sending a message thinking you'll get to it later? Or maybe you've sent a message but summarized the communication instead of including all the details. If someone needs more data, they'll ask for it, right? Or have you ever received a message and reviewed it quickly thinking you understood the main point? Project communications can sometimes feel like overkill, especially when communication is constantly going on throughout any given day. Many beginning project managers rely on a mix of these casual exchanges and some type of formal reporting as a way to manage all necessary communication needs. But this almost always leads to missed information, which ultimately results in a negative impact on the project.

It's no surprise that project managers typically identify communication-related issues as the #1 problem they experience most frequently on projects. Add to that the list of factors that impact communications. Here are just a few examples:

- The sheer number of communications involved on a project indicates there will be communication problems. Almost everything we do involves communication.
- Projects often involve virtual teams, leading to more complex communications strategies.
- The rapid rate of change on projects causes the need to continually revisit communications strategies and past communications.
- The growing number of diverse communication tools that project managers and their teams have at their disposal.

Only one solution results in a successful outcome: communications must be planned, managed, and continuously monitored throughout the life of a project. Managing communications may include assessing the communication needs of stakeholders and determining what methods will be best for the project. Communication channels will also need to be reviewed, along with the frequency and level of detail of all project communications. Most importantly, project managers need to ensure effective communications so they are understood and appropriate feedback loops are completed.

QUICKTEST

- Communications management process
- Communications management plan
- Flow of communication
- Communication types
- Communication models
- 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
    - » Progress metrics
    - » Retrospective findings
    - » Lessons learned
- Communication blockers
- Knowledge sharing
  - Information radiators

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Communications TEN

Effective project managers create communications management plans that go beyond formal and traditional reporting structures. They also continually reassess stakeholder communication needs, communicating face-to-face whenever possible to establish good ongoing relationships. These positive working relationships ease the effectiveness of each opportunity to exchange information and move project goals forward. Effective project managers also frequently revisit communications strategies to limit the potential for communication problems. To pass the exam, you should have this type of mindset about communicating on projects.

The following tables should help you understand how communications management fits into the overall project management process.

PMBOK® Guide: Communications Management	Done During
Plan Communications Management	Planning process group
Manage Communications	Executing process group
Monitor Communications	Monitoring and controlling process group

ECO Domain II: Process
Task 2: Manage Communications

These tables illustrate that the communications management process from the *PMBOK® Guide* can be most closely mapped to the *Examination Content Outline* (ECO) task 2, Manage Communications. However, the management of resources and stakeholders closely align with tasks related to communications management. For examples related to stakeholders and resources, see domain I (People) tasks 4, 5, 9, and 13 and domain II (Process) tasks 4, 12, and 16. The following domain I tasks all require a project manager to have an understanding of communication models and blockers along with careful attention to communication types, technology, and methods: manage conflict (task 1), lead and build a team (tasks 2 and 6), support team performance (task 3), build shared understanding (task 10), and engage and support virtual teams (task 11). In fact, communications management is involved in almost everything you do on a project.

Although this chapter is not particularly difficult, it is one you should take seriously. Be sure to find your gaps regarding project communications, and be aware that communications questions are frequently combined with other topics. For example, a WBS, story backlog, and release maps are used as communications tools although they are primarily scope tools (see the "Scope" chapter). Another example is risk response strategies, which should be communicated to stakeholders (see the "Risk" chapter). You may also see questions linking communications management to stakeholder engagement.

To prepare for the exam, it's important to solidify your knowledge and understanding of the basics and overall foundation of project communications.

The Foundation of Communications PAGE 360

To effectively conduct and facilitate project communications, you need to have a good understanding of the foundation and basics of communications. This means 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). Let's first look at a model of how the flow of communications should work on projects.

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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.

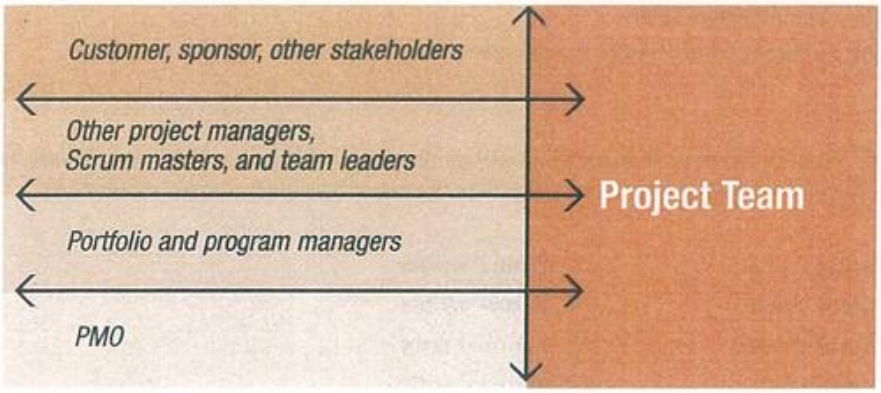


FIGURE 10.1 *Flow of communication on a project*

Communication Types The first step in effective communication is choosing 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 charter, planning documentation, backlogs, contracts, and reports; can be physical and electronic
Formal verbal	Planned meetings and stakeholder briefings; stand-up meetings and retrospectives; 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

10.1 Exercise Test yourself! What is the best type of communication in the following situations? Write the answer in your Exercise Notebook.

Situation
1. Updating project communications strategies
2. Giving presentations to management
3. Trying to solve a complex problem
4. Updating the product backlog
5. Making notes regarding a telephone conversation
6. Making changes to a contract
7. Scheduling a meeting
8. Clarifying a work package
9. Requesting additional resources

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Situation
10. Trying to discover the root cause of a problem
11. Sending an email to ask for clarification of an issue
12. Holding a milestone party
13. 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 exercise table.

1. Formal written	8. Formal written
2. Formal verbal	9. Formal written
3. Formal written	10. Informal verbal
4. Formal written	11. Informal written
5. Informal written	12. Informal verbal
6. Formal written	13. Formal written
7. Informal 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 Many of us do not think systematically about our communications. For example, we may 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 complete 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 working with different languages and cultures are important, but even the receiver's perception of the message, everyday distractions, or 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 can 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. Keep the interactive model of communication, as shown in figure 10.2, in mind when answering communications questions on the exam.

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Sending 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 aware of cultural differences, including age, gender, and nationality, and take those factors into account when planning, transmitting, and interpreting communications.

If a message is not understood, the receiver should acknowledge the message by saying something like, "I'm 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.

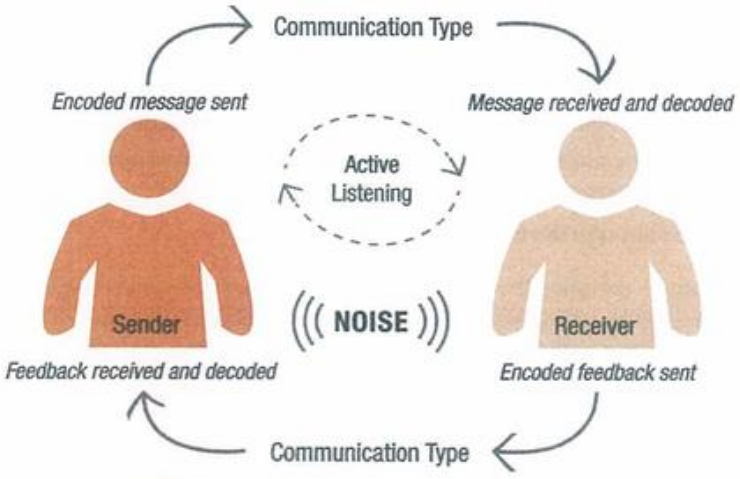


FIGURE 10.2 *The interactive communication model*

These factors apply to individual interactions as well as to project communications. 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. A project manager provides guidance to stakeholders regarding what to communicate and when to communicate it. It can be included in planning documents, information radiators, and verbally, and may also include direction on how to confirm the understanding of communications.

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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, accurately reflects back on the speaker's remarks, expresses agreement or disagreement, and asks for clarification as necessary.

Communication Blockers[1] Like noise in a communication channel, 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

Communication Technology Communications 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. A key aspect of planning communications is determining the optimal technology with which to communicate information. Agile emphasizes more face-to-face communication, while more formal written communications are necessary when utilizing a predictive approach. You can use the following list of questions to determine the appropriate technology based on the situation:

- 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 and how often 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?

It's also important to consider the complexity of the information that needs to be communicated. Alistair Cockburn developed a communication effectiveness model that compares common communication methods in terms of their effectiveness and their richness, or "temperature."[2] Figure 10.3, which is based on Cockburn's model, maps two key factors—interactivity and information density—for several communication technologies. This concept is especially important in agile environments where complex information is communicated in less formal methods. Interactivity and information density on this model indicate a communication technology's ability to transfer complex information efficiently.

In the figure, paper-based communications are the lowest in terms of interactivity and information density. Written documents take a long time to create and, because they are not interactive, the documents have to be written in such a way that all project stakeholders can understand the information, regardless of their level of knowledge or expertise. Paper documents are also low in bandwidth, so they typically do not convey the writer's emotional tone, feelings about the information, or implicit assumptions.

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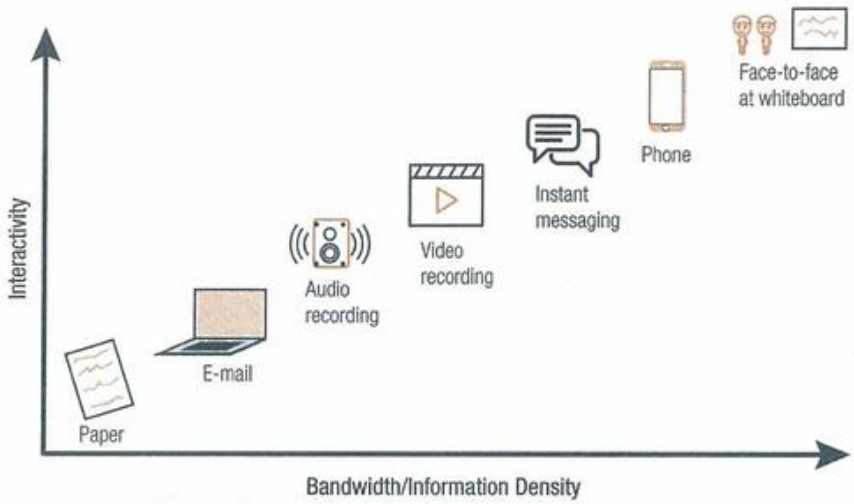


FIGURE 10.3 *Information transfer efficiency via technology*

At the other end of the scale, face-to-face communication at a whiteboard has the highest efficiency. Here, the participants (such as the project team, for example) can both converse and draw their ideas on the whiteboard. They can use shortcuts for well-understood concepts to speed the exchange of information, and they can ask each other questions and get immediate feedback. Such conversations convey a lot of emotional bandwidth through nonverbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Face-to-face communication allows for the most information to be transferred in a given period of time, but it is less convenient than other forms of communication. Can you see how this approach would be helpful for the project team, but may be impossible with all of the stakeholders on a project? Think about how you would use this model for your real-world projects.

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 that project communications requirements for all stakeholders must be collected, analyzed, and accounted for on an ongoing basis. And while face-to-face communication is often most effective, we also often work with dispersed teams. For example, can you guess what "push communication" might be before reading the next section?

Communication Methods When planning communications, it's also important to determine the communication method. These methods can be grouped into the following categories:[3]

- **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.
- **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.

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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.



Communication Channels[4] 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:

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

Note that n equals the total number of stakeholders.

Let's practice using this formula with an example. If you have four people on your project 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 Planning PAGE 366

PMBOK® Guide
PG: Planning
Process: Plan Communications Management

ECO
Domain: II
Task: 2

When determining what to include in your communications management plan, it's important to consider the overall communications approach for your project. The plan should also be based on the information needs of stakeholders and of the project. It should have flexibility to change as the project progresses and those needs change. The plan should also identify what systems and processes are already in place to support communications, 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. Ultimately, the plan will guide you and the project 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.

You'll need to refer to the project charter and other relevant documentation, such as requirements documentation, the stakeholder register, and plans for stakeholder engagement. Your communications plan should explain how project communications will support this other related area.

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 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.

Project size, life cycle, and development approach are all factors for consideration in communications planning. You'll need to be equally comfortable with planning communications for large projects as well as small projects, and using predictive, adaptive, or hybrid development approaches. A large project may have

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a team of 300 people located in different countries, speaking different languages, and with diverse approaches to communication that are influenced by their culture. A small project may be accomplished entirely from one location. It is critical to thoroughly plan communications but to also tailor that planning effort depending on the project.

In hybrid environments, for example, project managers communicate some project information through both predictive and agile methods. Leaders of agile teams in hybrid environments must often produce weekly status reports, update Gantt charts, and create earned value reports in addition to tracking agile metrics, like throughput and velocity. Also keep in mind that an important role of a project manager is to protect the team, which will allow them to operate in a more agile way.

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 communications 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. It shouldn't be difficult for you—as long as you feel comfortable recognizing the type of project from the information in the question and answering accordingly. A basic concept is that communications should be efficient (providing only the information needed), 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.
- Tailor standardized communication practices within your organization to project size, complexity, life cycle, and development approach.
- Use multiple methods of communicating.
- Plan how you will confirm communication is received and understood.
- Realize that communication goes in multiple directions, to and from people at all levels, and internal and external to the organization.
- Analyze how factors such as location, culture, security, privacy, and language will impact communications on the project.
- Plan communications for each stakeholder or group based on individual needs and interests.
- Have a system for storing, maintaining, and retrieving project information.

10.2 Exercise Test yourself! In your Exercise Notebook, write down what information and documents need to be communicated on a project.

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Answer

Some possible answers are:

- Project charter
- Project management artifacts like plans, release maps, and other documentation
- Impacts to and from other projects
- User stories, backlog, WBS, network diagram, and dependencies
- When resources will be needed
- Team norms
- Working agreements
- Definition of done
- Burn charts
- Information radiators
- Meeting schedule
- Work assignments
- Status
- New risks uncovered
- Uncertainties
- Problems
- Successes
- Changes to project scope and product scope
- Schedule of management reviews and planning updates
- Results of change requests
- Upcoming work such as scheduled WBS components or iteration backlogs
- Delays
- The date of the next milestone completion
- Performance reports
- Retrospective results and lessons learned
- Issue logs
- Configuration management issues
- What types of emails will be sent to each stakeholder or group
- Contact information for stakeholders

Communications Requirements 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 personas
- Stakeholder engagement plan
- Locations of stakeholders
- Number of communication channels

Finalizing Communications Planning As a result of planning on your project communications, you should have a documented description of the communications needs of stakeholders and a strategy to meet those needs. Components of this 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 may also include tailored approaches related to language and cultural differences, and may have information on how the effectiveness of project communications will be evaluated.

Because communications are so complex, a communications management plan should be in writing for most projects. Figure 10.4 shows some of the considerations for what you might include in communications planning.

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

FIGURE 10.4 *Sample portion of a communications management plan*

Effective Communications PAGE 379

The communications needs of stakeholders are determined and documented. Then, ongoing throughout the project, you and the project team will meet these needs through meetings and other in-person communication, as well as through the distribution of communications artifacts, such as reports, graphics, information radiators, and emails.

PMBOK® Guide
PG: Executing
Process: Manage Communications

Communication is the process through which project constraints are managed, and work to build the product of the project gets completed. Almost nothing on the project gets done without communications. It also includes making sure information is flowing back and forth on the project in accordance with the documented strategy. Communicating effectively is about facilitation and practicing flexible approaches in dynamic environments. It also includes providing opportunities for stakeholders to request additional information and clarification. While project reports and other formal written communications are archived as part of the project's historical records, they should not require a lot of dedicated time from a project manager, agile coach, or team member.

ECO
Domain: II
Task: 2

Communicating effectively also means adapting messages. For example, in hybrid environments, a project manager might discuss "points," "planning poker," "velocity," and "blockers" with the project team while using more traditional terminology like "completed work," "progress," "team estimates," and "threats" with a more traditionally focused PMO. The long-term goal is to educate both sets of stakeholders and facilitate collaboration, so briefly using and explaining the alternative term can help.

Let's review another example. When working with their team, a project manager might say, "I have a stakeholder meeting to discuss progress. I'll be taking our average feature completion rates and velocity data to calculate percent complete figures." Likewise, with the PMO, a project manager might say, "At the daily stand-up meetings where the team discusses progress and issues, the problem of not being able to talk to the business to confirm requirements has been raised several times as a 'blocker' or threat to timely delivery." By exposing each group to new words along with explanations in familiar terms, the barriers to communication are removed.

Using the appropriate technology, models, and methods established for the project is vital to successful communications management. It is important to make sure communications are received, effective, efficient, and understandable. The communications management plan, project documents, work performance reports, and everyday interactions 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 an integrated change control process, a project manager will need to follow the communications management plan to effectively share information.

Although a communications management plan provides good practices for project communications, the project manager may need to tailor their communications 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.

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Be aware that as an outcome of your communications management efforts, you may need to update your communications plan to reflect changes in the approach to managing communications on the project and to changing stakeholder requirements. You may also need to use an issue log, which documents issues regarding communications.

Communication Tools Interpersonal skills, meetings, and reports are just some of the tools and techniques used to communicate effectively on projects. 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.

Meetings Meetings are often key elements of the effort to manage communications. Early in the project, the project manager and the team are likely to decide how information will be communicated on the project.

Keep in mind that hybrid environments may present unique communication challenges in relation to meetings. Let's say an agile team is working within a largely predictive environment. In this situation, the agile team's normal practices might not provide enough communication to the stakeholders. One way to resolve this issue is to invite stakeholders to observe the agile team's daily stand-up meeting. This type of attendance is a great way to learn about the team composition and current work activities. Think about this example. Does this approach apply to your real-world projects?

When handled properly, meetings provide a way to communicate efficiently and effectively with stakeholders. It's also equally important to understand that meetings may have a negative impact on a project if a team is unclear about the goal (or purpose) and appropriate duration. That's why having a strategy for meetings that includes how and when meetings will be conducted, who needs to attend, and when they're appropriate is so critical to overall meeting success.

When planning meetings, consider the following rules:

- Schedule recurring meetings in advance.
- Meet with the team regularly as appropriate.
- Have a purpose for each meeting.
- Adhere to inherent rules for particular types of meetings (such as a daily stand-up, for example).
- 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.
- Make all participants, not just the meeting facilitator, responsible for enforcing the rules.
- Assign deliverables and time limits for all work assignments that result from meetings.
- Document and publish meeting minutes, as appropriate.

Project Reporting Project reporting involves communicating to stakeholders about how the project is going and how it is projected to go in the future. Much of that information comes from work performance reports. 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. Outside of daily interactions and information radiators, this communication may take the form of presentations, blog updates, or

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written 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 about reports. They should:

- Provide information and at the level of detail required by stakeholders.
- Be designed to fit the needs of the project.
- Use the most appropriate communication method when sending information.
- Include measurements against the performance measurement baseline set for the project, phase, or iteration.
- Be truthful and not hide what is really going on. This seems logical, but because untruthful reporting sometimes occurs, there may be exam questions relating to reports and professional and social responsibility.
- Provide information on cost, schedule, scope, and quality performance.
- Help team members know when they need to recommend and implement corrective actions.
- Help team members and the sponsor determine what preventive actions are needed.

In addition, feedback from stakeholders who receive reports as part of this process should be analyzed to allow for tailoring of future communications to better meet their needs.

Types of Reports There are different types of reports used in project management. 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**[5] This report examines project results over time to see if performance is improving or deteriorating.
- **Forecasting report**[6] This report predicts future project status and performance.
- **Variance report**[7] A variance report compares actual results to baselines.
- **Earned value report**[8] An earned value report integrates scope, cost, and schedule measurements to assess project performance.
- **Progress metrics** Reports such as Cumulative Flow Diagrams and burnup charts are used to assess performance.
- **Retrospective findings** This report is used to inspect, adapt, and improve project and team performance.
- **Lessons learned** Lessons learned report on performance and may be used for future projects.

Knowledge Sharing Knowledge sharing is a key component of agile methods; this is an important concept to consider when managing project communications. Information (i.e., knowledge) is a basic component of any project, so it must be distributed and shared. Have you managed a project in which the project team communicated that they didn't have all necessary information? Let's say a team member was unable to complete a task or activity because of missing information or knowledge. How would that impact the project? What could have been done differently to avoid such an issue? If the project team properly shared knowledge, that team member may have asked the project team for more information until they gathered enough knowledge in order to complete their work.

Agile projects embrace knowledge sharing using several tools: daily stand-ups, product demos, Kanban boards, information radiators, personas, and wireframes are examples of knowledge-sharing tools that may be used when managing projects. These tools all support knowledge sharing by ensuring the

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project information is available. In a similar way, agile emphasizes collaborative planning, estimating, and retrospectives, which allows the project team to have and share key project information.

Information Radiators[9] Information radiator is an agile term for highly visible displays of information, including large charts, graphs, and summaries of project data. These tools, sometimes referred to as visual controls, are usually displayed in high-traffic areas to maximize exposure, where they can quickly inform stakeholders about the project's status.

Data displayed on an information radiator may include:

- The features delivered to-date versus the features remaining to be delivered
- Who is working on what
- The features selected for the current iteration
- Velocity and defect metrics
- List of threats and issues
- Story maps
- Burn charts

TRICKS OF THE TRADE **Retrospective Findings** Retrospective findings may also be included on an information radiator. In hybrid environments, retrospective findings serve as an ongoing lessons learned log. Project managers in this environment are expected to gather and produce lessons learned reports at the end of the project, so they often build this content using the project's retrospective findings. Teams in hybrid environments usually hold retrospectives that gather information and ideas on how processes are performing and what experiments should be run. This information can be very useful for generating final lessons learned artifacts.

Monitor Communication Effectiveness PAGE 388

PMBOK® Guide
PG: Monitoring & Controlling
Process: Monitor Communications

The project manager should 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 plan provides details on how to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of communications. If you're not familiar with data collection and evaluation techniques, you'll need to think about how you would use them on a large project and how they may differ on other types of projects.

ECO
Domain: II
Task: 2

This process involves measuring to determine whether the communications management plan is being followed, confirming communications and feedback are understood, and whether communications are meeting the needs of the stakeholders. If not, you need to identify where communication is breaking down, and adjust as necessary to meet those needs. How can you tell if communication is breaking down? In addition to the metrics you've established, you may rely on soft skills as an alternative approach. Encourage stakeholders to tell you whether the project communications are meeting their needs. Project stakeholders may let you know, for example, if they're not getting the reports or information they're meant to receive. Or you'll be informed if the project team isn't following-up on action items established through earlier communications. Do you encourage this type of feedback on your projects?

As mentioned earlier, you should ask stakeholders for feedback on project 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.

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10.3 Exercise Test yourself! Based on what you've learned, do you understand what you need to monitor communications? In your Exercise Notebook, write how these inputs are used within the process of monitoring project communications.

Inputs

- Project managment plan
- Project communications
- Issue Log
- Lessons learned register
- Work performance data
- Enterprise environmental factors
- Organizational process assets
- Stand-up meetings

Answer

Input	How Is It Used in Monitor Communications?
Project management plan	The communications management plan and other planning components are important to this process. They provide details on what needs to be distributed, why, how, when, and to whom, along with information on roles and responsibilities, and allow you to compare actual communication against what was planned.
Project communications	Compare actual communications to the communications management plan. How do the various reports and other communications hold up against the plan ? Are they providing the intended outcomes?
Issue log	An issue log documents and tracks issues on the project—areas of confusion, disagreement, conflict, and concern that require attention. It is updated to reflect issue resolution. The issue log helps you assess the causes of issues and their impacts on the project. It can also assist in 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 unnecessary changes.
Lessons learned register	Actively documenting lessons learned (or retrospective findings) during a project can help you learn from previous problems and avoid repeating the same mistakes. These should be shared for other ongoing projects as appropriate. They become part of the historical records and the organization's lessons learned repository, and thereby provide to future projects the benefit of past experience with communications issues.
Work performance data	Work performance data is information about what has occurred during a project. It can help you measure the efficiency and effectiveness of communications against planned metrics. You can also use it 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.

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Input	How Is It Used in Monitor Communications?
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.
Stand-up meetings	Stand-up meetings may be used to share information between team members and other stakeholders. They may also be used to learn about progress, opportunities, threats, and issues.

Confirmation of communication effectiveness will result in work performance information, possible change requests, and possible updates to the project management plan and project documents.

This concludes the Project Communications 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 plan. As the project work is being done, the project manager or agile coach and other project stakeholders need to follow the plan to distribute information about the project, make sure communication is flowing as planned, feedback loops are complete and appropriate, and adjust the communications approach as necessary.

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