

FT PRESS PROJECT MANAGEMENT SERIES



# MASTERING PROJECT HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Effectively Organize and Communicate  
with All Project Stakeholders

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# Mastering Project Human Resource Management

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## Planning Communications Management

### Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be familiar with:

- Importance of project communications management planning
- Scope of project communications management planning process
- Mechanism of project communications management planning process
- Communications management planning tools
- Characteristics of effective communications
- Communication requirements analysis techniques
- Communication channels
- Communication technology
- Communication methods
- Communication management plan

*“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.”*

- Alan Lakein

Communication is the most important skill that every project manager should have because a project manager spends more than 90 percent of her time communicating with the project team members

and diverse internal as well external stakeholders. Also, a project manager must ensure that the project information is properly planned, collected, created, stored, retrieved, managed, controlled, monitored, and disseminated. Project communications management contains the following three processes to facilitate effective and adequate project communications:

- Planning communications management
- Managing communications
- Controlling communications

This chapter focuses on the planning communications management process. The other two processes are covered in Chapter 8, “Managing Project Communications,” and Chapter 10, “Controlling Project Communications.”

## Purpose

Effective communication is important for the success of a project, and proper planning is a prelude to effective communication. Poor planning of the project communications can lead to communication delays, transmission of wrong information, distribution of the project information to wrong recipients, inadequate communication, and misinterpretation of the message conveyed.

Planning for project communications management produces a project communications management plan that acts like a blueprint for executing the project communications management and controlling processes. In other words, the project communications management plan provides the project manager guidelines on how to manage and control the project communications throughout the life of the project. The project teams today are the melting pots of diverse personalities, cultures, languages, nationalities, geographical locations, and levels of expertise, interest, and influence. Without proper planning for communications management, it would be a nightmare to manage and control the melting pot. A good communications management plan would help a project manager to ensure that right information

is communicated to the right audience in a timely manner for the success of the project.

The planning is also important for keeping all project stakeholders on the same page by coordinating them through standard communication standards, policies, and procedures.

## Scope

To achieve effectiveness in project communications, the planning process should be initiated early in the project life cycle and should address the following questions:

- Who needs to receive the information?
- What information needs to be shared?
- Who is authorized to access the information?
- When is the information needed by the recipients?
- Where should the information be stored?
- What is the format for storing the information?
- How can the information be retrieved?
- What time zones, languages, cultures, and communication types should be taken into consideration?

## Timing

Started early in the project life cycle, the project communications management planning process is performed throughout the project life cycle for ongoing improvements in the communications management performance and also for incorporating the specific communication styles and preferences of the new team members.

## Mechanism

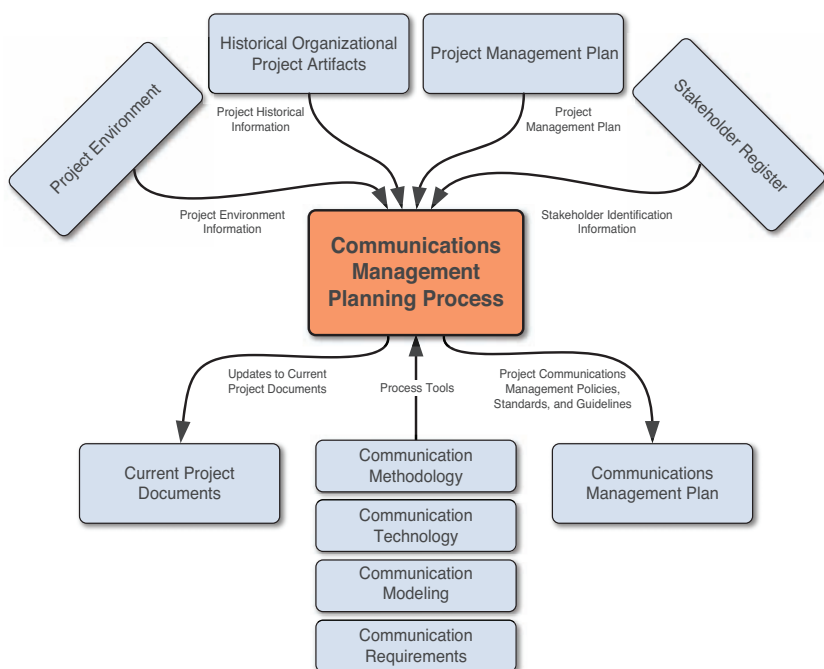
This section explains how to plan project communications management.

## *How to Plan Project Communications Management*

The project communications management planning process contains the following key steps:

1. Review the project management plan.
2. Obtain stakeholder information from the stakeholder register.
3. Understand the project environment.
4. Review the historical organizational project artifacts.
5. Utilize appropriate project communication methods and tools.
6. Develop a communications management plan.
7. Update the current project documents.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the project communications management planning process flow.



**Figure 3.1** Project Communications Management Planning Process Flow

## ***Review the Project Management Plan***

The project manager must review the information contained in the project management plan as the first and foremost step in planning for the project communications management because this plan provides guidelines on how all project processes will be executed, monitored, and controlled, and communications management planning is one of the project processes.

First, the project manager needs to understand the big picture by learning about the project life cycle, project phases, and the processes in each of those phases.

Second, for the communications management planning process, he needs to know how the work will be executed and how the change requests will be handled; that is, how the changes will be monitored and controlled, how the configuration management will be performed, how the integrity of the project planning baselines will be maintained, and what the needs and communication styles or methods of the stakeholders are.

All this information is contained in various project plans that are part of the overarching project management plan that covers the execution, monitoring, and controlling methodologies for the entire project.

## ***Obtain Stakeholder Information from the Stakeholder Register***

The stakeholder register provides information on who the stakeholders are, what their information needs are, and what their communication styles and preferences are. It is described in detail in Chapter 1, “Stakeholder Identification and Analysis.”

## ***Understand the Project Environment***

Project communications are not the same for all stakeholders; they need to be customized according to the project environment. The structure of an organization (functional, matrix, or projectized) influences the project environment greatly. Project communications need to be planned to suit the needs, styles, and culture of an organization. For example, a government tax collection organization such as California Franchise Tax Board needs to maintain much higher standards for information security and confidentiality because the communication usually contains the taxpayers' personal information. Thus, the project environment information must be considered as input to the project communications management planning process because during the planning phase, it is important to understand what the project environment is and how it can impact the project communications. Some key elements of the project environment include the following:

- The culture of the organization
- The structure of the organization (functional, matrix, or projectized)
- Government laws and regulations
- Organizational information security policies
- Industry and product standards
- Geographical locations and time zones of the project team members and other stakeholders
- Local, regional, or global trends and practices
- Already existing communication standards

## ***Review the Historical Organizational Project Artifacts***

The historical project artifacts of the host organization are considered as input to the project communications management planning process because they can influence communications