

Communication Management

Goals:

Apply specific techniques to assure an efficient communication between the members of the project's team.

Theory Overview:

See lecture notes (Chapter 8).

Communication management assures that all the members of a project receive and produce the information required for efficiently developing the project.

The communication management's processes are:

- **Communication planning** – establishes the information required, team members that need the information and who produces it, when that information is required and how it must be provided;
- **Information distribution** – assures that all the information is correct and available according to the schedule;
- **Performance reports** – collects and disseminates information concerning the performances reached by the project through:
 - Reports that indicate the current state;
 - Reports that indicate the recorded advances;
 - Reports for predictions;
- **Executive level closure** – generates, collects and disseminates the information required for the finalization of a phase/project.

During the communication plan's development you have to consider the following:

- The information disseminated must be correct (verified), clear, easy to understand, shorter as possible, but relevant (required and self-assured);
- The procedure of updating information shouldn't charge irrationally members of the project team (databases containing tables with a large number of fields which remain unused);
- The access to information must be simple, with configurable rights;
- The information must allow the general to detail approach;
- Oral communication shouldn't be discharged;
- Communication shouldn't be reduced to the formal one.

During the communication plan's implementation, the project manager should consider the abilities of its team members and try to propose alternatives of natural communication, which exploit the potential of the collaborator. Through the team's development process (included in the human resources management) it is followed to develop the team member's communication abilities.

Project's results have to be discussed periodically with the project's team, the superior managers and the purchasers. To achieve this, performance reports are developed for pointing out the progress of the project, its itinerary in a certain period of time and/or the prediction for its chances

to complete according to the established goals. Information included in these reports must be organized in a hierarchical manner (from general to detail, on audience levels: the top management, the team, the purchaser, according to the interest that each of them has for the project and to the right of access to certain specifically information) on interest domains (costs, human resources, technical resources, etc.).

Toward the end of the phases/project some reports are developed that synthetize the results and provide a basis for an internal/external audit.

Performance reports types

State Performance Reports indicate the progress of the project, without pressing for the covered itinerary – presenting only the important changes that intervened or if the actual progress differs from the desired one, are presented the causes and actions unfolded for the correction/change, as an explanation. In this last case, it is useful a summary prediction that illustrates the expected effects of deviating from the base plan.

Progress Performance Reports present the project's progress in a specified period of time, with more details on the deployed activities.

Prediction Reports forecast how to develop the project in the following period, leaving from the analysis of the current acquired results and the risks analysis.

The report's content differs according to its receiver (people in the company or outsiders, etc.) and the project's nature (very innovative/ a little innovative, scientifically/commercial, etc.).

There is no standard format for developing these reports. Although, some general ideas, useful for realizing these reports are listed below:

- Start from the receiver's expectations – WIIFM ("What Is It For Me"): in commercial projects, for reports addressed to top managers/purchasers insist on the impact, on the benefits, instead of technical characteristics; in scientifically reports insist on innovation and advantages/disadvantages of the employed methodology;
- Start with the end: picture the result and then the manner to achieve it and issues that were solved in order to achieve it, etc.;
- Imagine the presentation from general to detail;
- Use relevant performance indicators and a color code that indicates if the project's result is adequate to the specified indicator >> choose just the relevant indicators.

Indices examples:

No	Indicator	Formula	Normal State (Green)	Warning State (Yellow)
1	Scheduling deviation (honoring the schedule)	Computed using MP	-5%<...<5%	
2	% Revised items	[No of planned reviews/ No of preformed reviews] * 100	100%	85%
3	Revising area	No of revised modules/ No of modules	100%	85%
4	Specifications coverage	[No of implemented features / No of scheduled features] * 100	>98%	60%

5	NLOC (Code Lines Number) – relevant to point out project's complexity degree		NA	NA
6	Tested software modules [%]	[No of tested modules/No of modules] * 100	>95%	
7	The coverage degree in modules testing	Test reports	>75%	

- Use diagrams, graphics, etc. to suggestively illustrate the project's progress/phase of development.

A potential **structure for a state performance report** can be the following one:

- Project's name
- Project Manager
- Starting date, Closing date, Project's code, etc.
- Project's goal
- Abstract: global appreciation
- Summary description of the project
- Project's actual state on the following sub-domains:
 - „scope”: goals that are already fulfilled/modified/impossible to achieve, accomplished deliverables, WBS highlighting for delays/anticipations;
 - schedule: “baseline” comparison – explanations for anticipations/delays/prediction's effects;
 - budget: “baseline” comparison – explanations for exceeding/unutilized budget/ effects prediction (see the Earned Value Method in sub-chapter 8.2.3);
 - quality: %performed tests, %passed tests, etc.;
 - Risks issue: the degree of exposure to a risk, important risks, the contingency plans available for the highest importance risks;
 - Human resources issue: if there are problems related to their motivation, training, permanence;
 - Other resources issue: outsourcing, etc.;
 - Other problems.
- Serious problems that occurred and their resolution
- Unsolved problems, proposed solutions and their impact on the project
- Correction and changes proposals for a better development of the project – if there is the case
- Conclusions
- Appendix – project's plan, deliverables detailed description, etc.

Working plan:

For one of the applications, consider that the project passed through one or multiple phases (choose between design and testing). Develop a performance report (either state or progress). Use fiction data.