

# Chapter 10

## PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT

(Chapter Summary)

Failure to communicate is often the greatest threat to the success of any project, especially information technology projects. Communication is the oil that keeps a project running smoothly. Project communications management involves identifying stakeholders, planning communications, distributing information, managing stakeholder expectations, and reporting performance.

It is important to identify stakeholders and determine strategies for managing relationships with them in order to satisfy their needs and expectations. A stakeholder register and a stakeholder management strategy are key outputs of this process.

A communications management plan of some type should be created for all projects to help ensure good communications. Contents of this plan will vary based on the needs of the project.

The various methods for distributing project information include formal, informal, written, and verbal. It is important to determine the most appropriate means for distributing different types of project information. Project managers and their teams should focus on the importance of building relationships as they communicate project information. As the number of people that need to communicate increases, the number of communications channels also increases.

Reporting performance involves collecting and disseminating information about how well a project is moving toward meeting its goals. Project teams can use earned value charts and other forms of progress information to communicate and assess project performance. Status review meetings are an important part of communicating, monitoring, and controlling projects.

To improve project communications, project managers and their teams must develop good conflict management skills, as well as other communication skills. Conflict resolution is an important part of project communications management. The main causes of conflict during a project are schedules, priorities, staffing, technical opinions, procedures, cost, and personalities. A confrontational or problem-solving approach to managing conflict is often the best approach. Other suggestions for improving project communications include learning how to run more effective meetings, how to use e-mail, instant messaging, and collaborative software more effectively, and how to use templates for project communications.

New hardware and software continues to become available to help improve communications. As more people work remotely, it is important to make sure they have the necessary tools to be productive. Enterprise project management software provides many features to enhance communications across the organization.

## Quick Quiz

1. What do many experts agree is the greatest threat to the success of any project?
  - a. lack of proper funding
  - b. a failure to communicate**
  - c. poor listening skills
  - d. inadequate staffing
2. Which communication skill is most important for information technology professionals for career advancement?
  - a. writing
  - b. listening
  - c. speaking**
  - d. using communication technologies
3. Which of the following is not a process in project communications management?
  - a. information planning**
  - b. information distribution
  - c. performance reporting
  - d. managing stakeholders
4. What popular book illustrates the concept that people are not interchangeable parts and uses the analogy that you cannot take nine women and produce a baby in one month?
  - a. Covey s *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
  - b. Goldratt s *Critical Chain*
  - c. Gates s *Business @ the Speed of Thought*
  - d. Brooks s *The Mythical Man-Month***
5. If you add three more people to a project team of five, how many more communications channels will you add?
  - a. 2
  - b. 12
  - c. 15
  - d. 18**
6. A \_\_\_\_\_ report describes where the project stands at a specific point in time.
  - a. status**
  - b. performance
  - c. forecast
  - d. earned value
7. What tool can you use to help manage stakeholders by ranking scope, time, and cost goals in order of importance and provide guidelines on balancing these constraints?
  - a. triple constraint matrix
  - b. expectations matrix**
  - c. issue log
  - d. priority log
8. You have two project stakeholders who do not get along at all. You know they both enjoy traveling, so you discuss great travel destinations when they are both in the room together to distract them from arguing with each other. What conflict-handling mode are you using?
  - a. confrontation
  - b. compromise
  - c. smoothing**
  - d. withdrawal
9. Which of the following is not a guideline to help improve time spent at meetings?
  - a. Determine if a meeting can be avoided.
  - b. Invite extra people who support your project to make it run more smoothly.**
  - c. Define the purpose and intended outcome of the meeting.
  - d. Build relationships.

10. A \_\_\_\_\_ report is a reflective statement documenting important things that people learned from working on the project.
- a. final project
  - b. lessons-learned**
  - c. project archive
  - d. progress

## **Key Terms**

**Blogs** — easy to use journals on the Web that allow users to write entries, create links, and upload pictures, while readers can post comments to journal entries

**Collaborating mode** — a conflict-handling mode where decision makers incorporate different viewpoints and insights to develop consensus and commitment

**Communications management plan** — a document that guides project communications

**Compromise mode** — using a give-and-take approach to resolving conflicts; bargaining and searching for solutions that bring some degree of satisfaction to all the parties in a dispute

**Confrontation mode** — directly facing a conflict using a problem-solving approach that allows affected parties to work through their disagreements

**Expectations management matrix** — a tool to help understand unique measures of success for a particular project

**Forcing mode** — using a win-lose approach to conflict resolution to get one's way

**Forecasts** — used to predict future project status and progress based on past information and trends

**Google Docs** — online applications offered by Google that allow users to create, share, and edit documents, spreadsheets, and presentations online

**Groupthink** — conformance to the values or ethical standards of a group

**Issue** — a matter under question or dispute that could impede project success

**Issue log** — a tool to document and monitor the resolution of project issues

**Lessons-learned report**— reflective statements written by project managers and their team members to document important things they have learned from working on the project

**Progress reports** — reports that describe what the project team has accomplished during a certain period of time

**Project archives** — a complete set of organized project records that provide an accurate history of the project

**SharePoint portal** — allows users to create custom Web sites to access documents and applications stored on shared devices

**Smoothing mode** — deemphasizing or avoiding areas of differences and emphasizing areas of agreements

**Stakeholder register** — a public document that includes details related to the identified project stakeholders

**Stakeholder management strategy** — an approach to help increase the support of stakeholders throughout the project

**Status reports** — reports that describe where the project stands at a specific point in time

**Wiki** — a Web site that has a page or pages designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify content

**Withdrawal mode** — retreating or withdrawing from an actual or potential disagreement