

Project Communications Management

- **Greatest threat to many projects is a failure to communicate**
- **You cannot separate technical skills and soft skills when working on projects**
- **For projects to succeed, every project team member needs both types of skills**

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Key to Good Communications

- **Project managers spend as much as 90 percent of their time communicating**
- **Several important concepts can help**
 - Focus on group and individual communication needs
 - Use formal and informal methods for communicating
 - Distribute important information in an effective and timely manner
 - Set the stage for communicating bad news
 - Determine the number of communication channels

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Focusing on Group and Individual Communication Needs

- People are not interchangeable parts
 - As illustrated in Brooks' book *The Mythical Man-Month*, you cannot assume that a task originally scheduled to take two months of one person's time can be done in one month by two people
 - Nine women cannot produce a baby in one month
- Every person is unique, so you cannot simply generalize based on a personality profile or other traits
 - Seek first to understand, as author Stephen Covey suggests in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
 - Put yourself in someone else's shoes before you can truly communicate

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Project Communications Management

Project Communications Management includes **the processes necessary to ensure that the information needs of the project and its stakeholders are met through development of artifacts and implementation of activities designed to achieve effective information exchange.**

Project Communications Management consists of two parts.

- The first part is **developing a strategy to ensure communication is effective for stakeholders.**
- The second part is **carrying out the activities necessary to implement the communication strategy.**

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Project Communications Management

1. **Plan Communications Management** : The process of developing *an appropriate approach and plan for project communication activities based on the information needs of each stakeholder or group, available organizational assets, and the needs of the project.*

2. **Manage Communications** : The process of *ensuring timely and appropriate collection, creation, distribution, storage, retrieval, management, monitoring, and the ultimate disposition of project information.*

3. **Monitor Communications** : *The process of ensuring the information needs of the project and its stakeholders are met.*

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Project Communications Management Overview

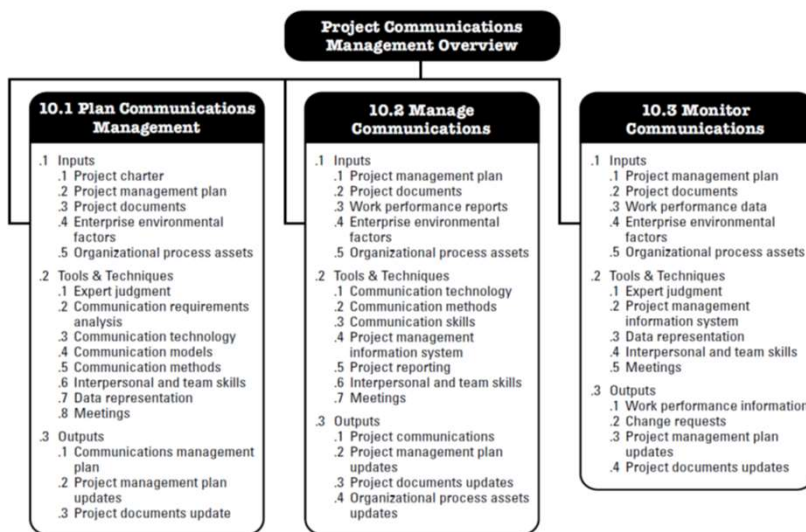


Figure 10-1. Project Communications Overview

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Key Concepts

Communication is the exchange of information, intended or involuntary.

Communications encompass the various methods through which information can be transmitted or received. This includes both *interactive communication activities like meetings and presentations, as well as tangible artifacts such as emails, social media posts, project reports, and project documentation.*

The information exchanged can be in the form of ideas, instructions, or emotions.

The mechanisms by which information is exchanged can be in:

- **Written form** : Either physical or electronic.
- **Spoken** : Either face-to-face or remote.
- **Formal or informal** (as in formal papers or social media).
- **Through gestures** : Tone of voice and facial expressions.
- **Through media** : Pictures, actions, or even just the choice of words.
- **Choice of words** : There is often more than one word to express an idea; there can be subtle differences in the meaning of each of these words and phrases.

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Communications Management : Dimensions

Communication activities have many dimensions, including but not limited to:

- **Internal** : Focus on stakeholders within the project and within the organization.
- **External** : Focus on external stakeholders such as customers, vendors, other projects, organizations, government, the public, and environmental advocates.
- **Formal**: Reports, formal meetings (both regular and ad hoc), meeting agendas and minutes, stakeholder briefings, and presentations.
- **Informal** : General communications activities using emails, social media, websites, and informal ad hoc discussions.
- **Hierarchical focus** : The position of the stakeholder or group with respect to the project team will affect the format and content of the message, in the following ways:
 - **Upward** : Senior management stakeholders.
 - **Downward** : The team and others who will contribute to the work of the project.
 - **Horizontal** :Peers of the project manager or team.
- **Official** : Annual reports; reports to regulators or government bodies.
- **Unofficial** : Communications that focus on establishing and maintaining the profile and recognition of the project and building strong relationships between the project team and its stakeholders using flexible and often informal means.

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5 C's of Written communication

- The project's communications are supported by efforts to prevent misunderstandings and miscommunication and by careful selection of the methods, messengers, and messages developed from the planning process.
- Misunderstandings can be reduced but not eliminated through using the **5Cs of written communications** in composing a traditional (non-social media) written or spoken message:
 1. **Correct grammar and spelling** : Poor use of grammar or inaccurate spelling can be distracting and can also introduce distortions in the message, diminishing credibility.
 2. **Concise expression and elimination of excess words** : A concise, well-crafted message reduces the opportunities for misunderstanding the intent of the message.
 3. **Clear purpose and expression directed to the needs of the reader** : Ensure that the needs and interests of the audience are factored into the message.
 4. **Coherent logical flow of ideas** : A coherent logical flow of ideas and using "markers" such as introduction and summaries of the ideas throughout the writing.
 5. **Controlling flow of words and ideas** : Controlling the flow of words and ideas may involve graphics or just summaries.

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Communication Skills

The 5Cs of written communications are supported by communication skills, such as:

- **Listening actively.** Staying engaged with the speaker and summarizing conversations to ensure effective information exchange.
- **Awareness of cultural and personal differences.** Developing the team's awareness of cultural and personal differences to reduce misunderstandings and enhance communication capability.
- **Identifying, setting, and managing stakeholder expectations.** Negotiating with stakeholders reduces the existence of conflicting expectations among the stakeholder community.
- **Enhancement of skills.** Enhancing the skills of all team members in the following activities:
 - Persuading a person, a team, or an organization to perform an action;
 - Motivating people and providing encouragement or reassurance;
 - Coaching to improve performance and achieve desired results;
 - Negotiating to achieve mutually acceptable agreements between parties and reduce approval or decision delays; and
 - Resolving conflict to prevent disruptive impacts.

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Attributes of Effective Communication

- **Clarity on the purpose of the communication:** defining its purpose;
- **Understanding as much as possible about the receiver of the communications, meeting needs, and preferences;** and
- **Monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of the communications.**

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Trends and Emerging practices

Implementing appropriate communication strategies is vital to maintaining effective relationships with stakeholders.

Trends and emerging practices for Project Communications Management include :

- **Inclusion of stakeholders in project reviews.**
- **Inclusion of stakeholders in project meetings.**
- **Increased use of social computing.**
- **Multifaceted approaches to communication.**

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Tailoring Considerations

Because each project is unique, the project team will need to tailor the way that Project Communications Management processes are applied. Considerations for tailoring include but are not limited to:

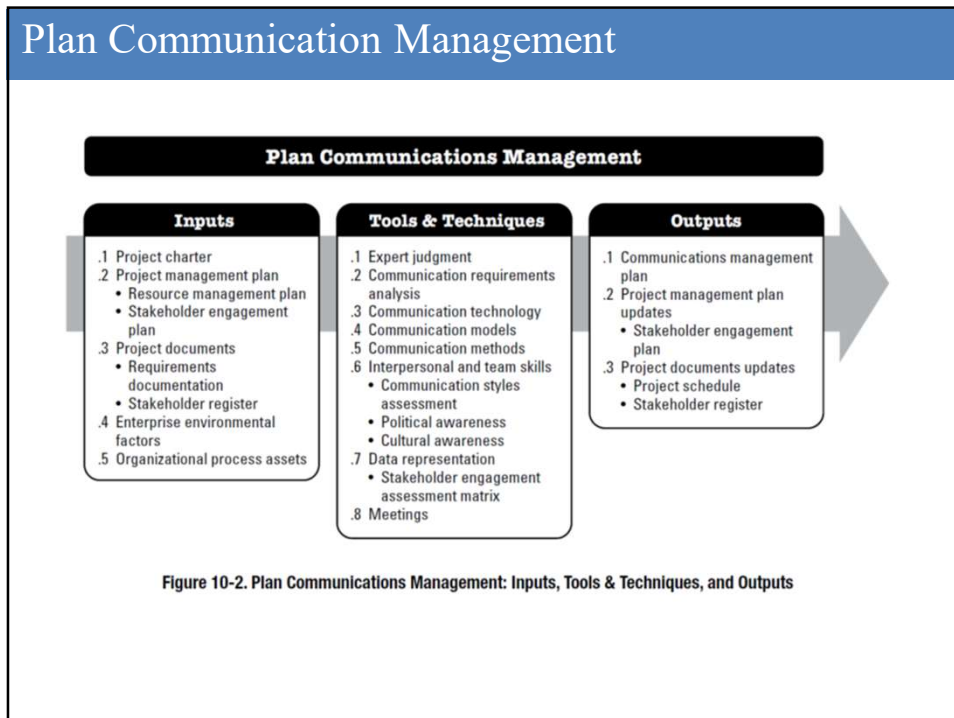
- **Stakeholders** : Are the stakeholders internal or external to the organization, or both?
- **Physical location** : What is the physical location of team members? Is the team colocated? Is the team in the same geographical area? Is the team distributed across multiple time zones?
- **Communications technology** : What technology is available to develop, record, transmit, retrieve, track, and store communication artifacts? What technologies are most appropriate and cost effective for communicating to stakeholders?
- **Language** : Language is a main factor to consider in communication activities. Is one language used? Or are many languages used? Have allowances been made to adjust to the complexity of team members from diverse language groups?
- **Knowledge management** : Does the organization have a formal knowledge management repository? Is the repository used?

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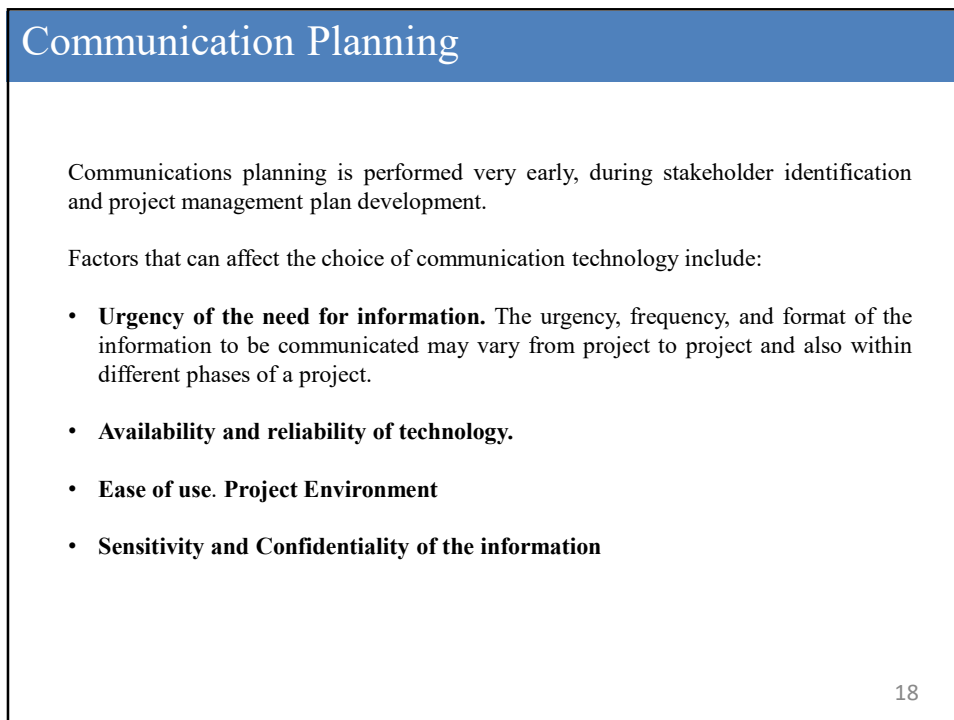
Agile/ Adaptive environments

- Project environments are dynamic and subject to various elements of ambiguity and change have an inherent need to communicate evolving and emerging details more frequently and quickly
- Posting project artifacts regularly in a transparent fashion, and holding regular stakeholder reviews are intended to promote communication with management and stakeholders

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Communication Planning

Communications management plan contents

- Stakeholder communications requirements
- Information to be communicated, including format, content, and level of detail
- Who will receive the information and who will produce it
- Suggested methods or technologies for conveying the information
- Frequency of communication
- Escalation procedures for resolving issues
- Revision procedures for updating the communications management plan
- A glossary of common terminology

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Communication Planning

Stakeholders	Document Name	Document Format	Contact Person	Due
Customer management	Monthly status report	Hard copy and meeting	Tina Erndt, Tom Silva	First of month
Customer business staff	Monthly status report	Hard copy	Julie Grant, Sergey Cristobal	First of month
Customer technical staff	Monthly status report	E-mail	Li Chau, Nancy Michaels	First of month
Internal management	Monthly status report	Hard copy and meeting	Bob Thomson	First of month
Internal business and technical staff	Monthly status report	Intranet	Angie Liu	First of month
Training subcontractor	Training plan	Hard copy	Jonathan Kraus	November 1
Software subcontractor	Software implementation plan	E-mail	Najwa Gates	June 1

Table 10-1 Sample stakeholder communications analysis

Comments: Put the titles and dates of documents in e-mail headings and have recipients acknowledge receipt.

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Communication Models

- Cross-cultural communication presents challenges to ensuring that the meaning of the message has been understood.
- Differences in communication styles can arise from differences in working methods, age, nationality, professional discipline, ethnicity, race, or gender.
- People from different cultures communicate using different languages (e.g., technical design documents, different styles) and expect different processes and protocols.
- The communication model incorporates the idea that the message itself and how it is transmitted are influenced by the sender's current emotional state, knowledge, background, personality, culture, and biases.
- Similarly, the receiver's emotional state knowledge, background, personality, culture, and biases will influence how the message is received and interpreted, and will contribute to the barriers or noise.

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Communication Model

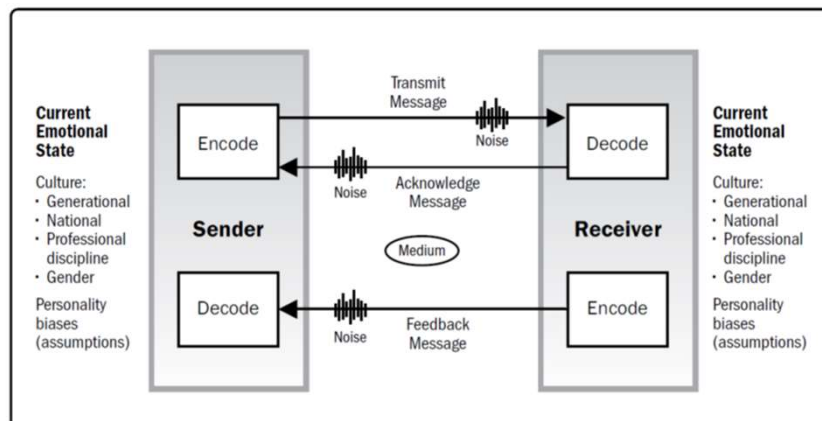


Figure 10-4. Communication Model for Cross-Cultural Communication

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Communication Methods

Natural disasters often disrupt communications around the world

- Japan's communications infrastructure damage after a 9.0 magnitude earthquake in March 2011 was unprecedented
- During the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal, people turned to older technology like ham radios to communicate.

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Communication Methods

There are several communication methods that are used to share information among project stakeholders.

- **Interactive communication:** *Between two or more parties performing a multidirectional exchange of information in real time.* It employs communications artifacts such as meetings, phone calls, instant messaging, some forms of social media, and videoconferencing.
- **Push communication :** *Sent or distributed directly to specific recipients who need to receive the information.* This ensures that the information is distributed but does not ensure that it actually reached or was understood by the intended audience. Push communications artifacts include letters, memos, reports, emails, faxes, voice mails, blogs, and press releases.
- **Pull communication :** *Used for large complex information sets, or for large audiences, and requires the recipients to access content at their own discretion subject to security procedures.* These methods include web portals, intranet sites, e-learning, lessons learned databases, or knowledge repositories.

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Communication Methods

Interpersonal communication : Information is exchanged between individuals, typically face-to-face.

Small group communication : Occurs within groups of around three to six people.

Public communication : A single speaker addressing a group of people.

Mass communication : There is a minimal connection between the person or group sending the message and the large, sometimes anonymous groups for whom the information is intended.

Networks and social computing communication : Supports emerging communication trends of many-to-many supported by social computing technology and media.

Communication artefacts : Notice boards, Newsletters/in-house magazines/e-magazines, Letters to staff/volunteers, Press releases, Annual reports, Emails and intranets, Web portals and other information repositories (for pull communication), Phone conversations, Presentations, Team briefings/group meetings, Focus groups, Face-to-face formal or informal meetings between various stakeholders, Consultation groups or staff forums, and Social computing technology and media.)

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Communication Management Plan

- Stakeholder communication requirements;
- Information to be communicated, including language, format, content, and level of detail;
- Escalation processes;
- Reason for the distribution of that information;
- Timeframe and frequency for the distribution of required information and receipt of acknowledgment or response, if applicable;
- Person responsible for communicating the information;
- Person responsible for authorizing release of confidential information;
- Person or groups who will receive the information, including information about their needs, requirements, and expectations;
- Methods or technologies used to convey the information, such as memos, email, press releases, or social media;
- Resources allocated for communication activities, including time and budget;
- Method for updating and refining the communications management plan as the project progresses and develops, such as when the stakeholder community changes as the project moves through different phases;
- Glossary of common terminology;
- Flow charts of the information flow in the project, workflows with possible sequence of authorization, list of reports, meeting plans, etc.; and
- Constraints derived from specific legislation or regulation, technology, organizational policies, etc.

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Manage Communication

- **Writing style:** Appropriate use of active versus passive voice, sentence structure, and word choice.
- **Meeting management :** Preparing an agenda, inviting essential participants, and ensuring they attend. Dealing with conflicts within the meeting or resulting from inadequate follow-up of minutes and actions, or attendance of the wrong people.
- **Presentations :** Awareness of the impact of body language and design of visual aids.
- **Facilitation :** Building consensus and overcoming obstacles such as difficult group dynamics and maintaining interest and enthusiasm among group members.
- **Active listening:** Listening actively involves acknowledging, clarifying and confirming, understanding, and removing barriers that adversely affect comprehension.

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Enterprise Environmental factors

- **Sender-receiver models :** Incorporating feedback loops to provide opportunities for interaction/participation and remove barriers to effective communication.
- **Choice of media :** Decisions about application of communications artifacts to meet specific project needs, such as when to communicate in writing versus orally, when to prepare an informal memo versus a formal report, and when to use push/pull options and the choice of appropriate technology.
- The enterprise environmental factors that can influence this process include but are not limited to:
 - Organizational culture, political climate, and governance framework;
 - Personnel administration policies;
 - Stakeholder risk thresholds;
 - Established communication channels, tools, and systems;
 - Global, regional, or local trends and practices or habits; and
 - Geographic distribution of facilities and resources.

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Tools and Techniques

- Factors that influence the technology include
 - whether the team is colocated,
 - the confidentiality of any information that needs to be shared,
 - resources available to the team members,
 - The environment in which meetings and discussions are normally held.

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Key to Good Communication

- Project managers say they spend as much as 90 percent of their time communicating
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 - Set the stage for communicating bad news
 - Determine the number of communication channels

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Formal and Informal Methods

- Many people prefer informal communications:
 - Several colleagues and managers want to know the people working on their projects and develop a trusting relationship with them
 - Oral communication also helps build stronger relationships among project personnel and project stakeholders
 - Effective creation and distribution of information depends on project managers and project team members having good communication skills

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Determining the number of Communication Channels

- As the number of stakeholders increases, the complexity of communications increases
 - Number of communications channels = $\frac{n(n-1)}{2}$
(where n is the number of people involved)

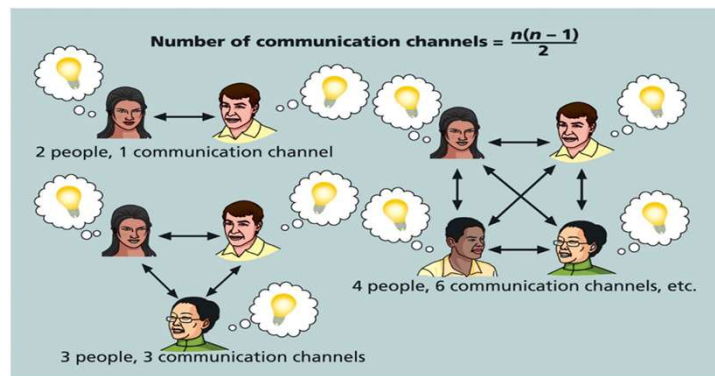


FIGURE 10-2 The impact of the number of people on communication channels

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Communications Training

Most companies spend a lot of money on technical training for employees, even when employees might benefit more from communications training

- Individual employees are more likely to enroll voluntarily in classes to learn the latest technology than in classes that develop soft skills
- As organizations become more global, they realize they must invest in ways to improve communication with people from different countries and cultures
- It takes leadership to improve communication

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Suggestions to improve Project Communications

- Good communication is vital to the management and success of projects
 - Develop better communication skills
 - Run effective meetings
 - Use e-mail and other technologies effectively
 - Employ templates for project communications

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Media Snapshot

- 93 percent of recruiters check out social media profiles of prospective hires.
- 2014 article in *Money* magazine provides a list of “10 Social Media Blunders That Cost Millennial a Job or Worse”
 - Posting something embarrassing on the corporate Twitter feed
 - Sexual oversharing
 - Revealing company secrets
 - Blowing your own cover
 - Talking smack about a job before you’ve even accepted it
 - Making fun of clients or donors
 - Making fun of your boss/team
 - Posting while you’re supposed to be working
 - Complaining about your job

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Running Effective Meetings

- Guidelines to help improve time spent at meetings
 - Determine if a meeting can be avoided
 - Define the purpose and intended outcome of the meeting
 - Determine who should attend the meeting
 - Provide an agenda to participants before the meeting
 - Prepare handouts and visual aids, and make logistical arrangements ahead of time
 - Run the meeting professionally
 - Set the ground rules for the meeting
 - Build relationships

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Using Technology for Communications

- Guidelines to use e-mail as a more effective communication tool
 - Be sure to send information to the right people
 - Use meaningful subject lines and limit the content of emails to one main subject
 - Be as clear and concise as possible
 - Reread your e-mail before you send it
 - Limit the number and size of e-mail attachments
 - Delete e-mail that you do not need to save or that does not require a response
 - Make sure the virus protection software is up to date
 - Respond to e-mail quickly

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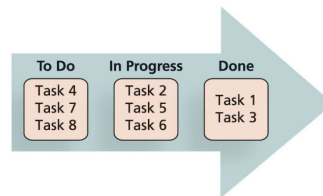
Using Technology for Communications

- Guidelines to help use other communication tools more effectively.
 - Make sure that your team is using a good tool
 - Be sure to authorize the right people to share your collaborative documents
 - Make sure that the right person can authorize changes to shared documents and that you back up files
 - Develop a logical structure for organizing and filing shared documents

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Good Practice

- One of the main features of kanban is visualizing workflow, which is often done by using kanban boards
- People using kanban boards can tailor the concepts to meet their needs



Source: Kathy Schwalbe, *An Introduction to Project Management*, Fifth Edition (2015)

FIGURE 10-3 Sample kanban board

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Using Templates for Communications

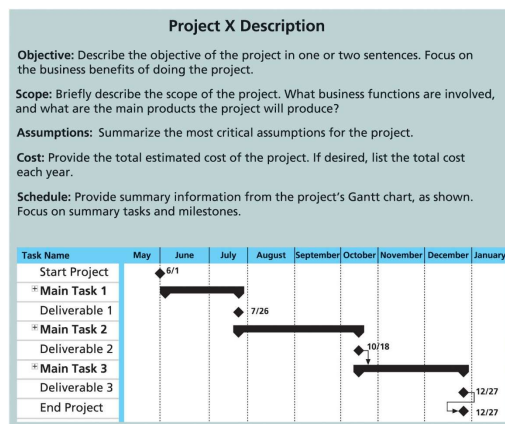


FIGURE 10-4 Sample template for a project description

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Using Templates for Communications



Source: Atlassian

FIGURE 10-6 Jira agile reporting

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Considerations for Agile/ Adaptive environments

- Communications should be up to date, easily available, and reviewed regularly with stakeholders
 - Many projects involve people who do not work in close proximity to each other
 - Effectively planning for good project communications and using appropriate technology become even more important in these situations

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Considerations for Agile/ Adaptive environments

- Communication is among the more important factors for success in project management
 - Technology can aid in the communications process and be the easiest aspect of the process to address, it is not the most important
 - Improving an organization's ability to communicate is vital; often requires a cultural change in an organization that takes a lot of time, hard work, and patience

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Thank You

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