**COMMUNICATION PLAN**

Status, Meetings, Info Access, and Reviews

**Introduction**

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| What This Is? |
| A plan created by the team early in project to indicate their agreement on how the team will communicate important information during the project—status, meetings, issues, access to deliverables, and design and document reviews. |
| Why It’s Useful? |
| Successful projects involve significant amounts of communication among various team members. The project manager needs Management to understand project issues and needs. Management needs to understand whether a project is on target and meeting its goals to deliver value to the company. Cross-functional team members need to get inputs and information from other team members, and give their opinions and input on critical design factors such as manufacturability and usability. Specifications must be reviewed to ensure the project will meet customer requirements. Designs must be reviewed to ensure they meet the requirements. Each element of a project may impact others at the technical design level. Team members need to participate in reviews of designs and other documents to help find defects and ensure what is being developed will work.  A Communication Plan is used to help the team think through what kind of communication mechanisms they will need for a successful project. It helps establish expectations of proactive communication between team members and documents what the team agrees to do: what status reporting will be done, what team meetings will be held, how decisions will get documented, who will participate in various reviews. The Communication Plan not only makes it clear to the core team how the project communication will work; it also lets people outside the core team know what to expect. It can also document communication that should occur between related projects.  If your project will make use of outside partners, the Communications Plan can also be very important for documenting the communication necessary to stay aligned and synchronized with the partner. |
| How To Use It? |
| Use the outline in the sample document on the following pages to create a communication plan for your project. The amount of communication may vary depending on the size of your team and the complexity and nature of your project. General guidelines for deciding your team communication:   * Identify the stakeholders who need to be involved in project communication. Don't forget executive sponsors, outside clients and partners/vendors, and cross-functional team members, in addition to core team members. * Think about what mechanisms will ensure the best communication for your particular company and team. For example, are team members scattered across locations? If so, what tools do you need to aid information transfer (e.g. online collaboration spaces, teleconference access, email distribution lists)? * Decide how often your team needs to communicate in such areas as status, action item tracking, and project plan updates. Document how it will be done in the plan. * Make sure you understand what information Management wants to receive, and how often. * Pay attention to design reviews, especially those that need to involve the entire team (or core team) in some fashion. Make sure minimum expectations for reviews of designs and deliverables are established in the communication plan. * Identify how the team will involve contractors or outside developers in team meetings, project status tracking, and reviews. Manage off-site and part-time resources carefully. Watch for warning signs related to their participation, such as missing or late deliverables. * Consider also any ground-rules for "informal communication" such as emails, informal conversations etc. Much information gets exchanged (and decisions made!) in informal settings. Ensure all team members have the right access to this informal communication, and that the team is aware of any need to document decisions, share the results of such communication with others, etc. Guidelines can be established for things such as maximum response time to emails or voice mails, which can have huge productivity impacts in a virtual team environment! |

Communication Plan - Example Outline and Contents

Project Name and Overview Description: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Stakeholders

This project has approximately \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ stakeholders. They consist of members of one of the following 3 classes:

* Core Team Members (CT):
* project manager
* client
* representatives from each cross-functional group *(list here)*
* project executive sponsor/champion
* individual technical contributors on the project

*(Alternatively, if the project team is larger, the core team members may be a technical lead from each technical group participating in the project).*

* Extended Team Members (ET): Includes any experts/consultants to be included in reviews, functional managers of Core Team members, administrative personnel, key vendor representatives, and 3 key customers we have chosen to include in some activities.
* Partner Team Members (PT): Includes team members from our development partner Company X who are supplying customized hardware and software for the project.

**2.0 Project Communication Resources:**

* Collaboration space

This project will utilize a collaboration space at url: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

This space will be accessible through our intranet. It will also be accessible to the outside stakeholders listed above, with password protection on the space and any other security as required by company policy.

The space will be used to store:

* Project Status summaries
* Action item lists
* Any project review documents that the core team needs access to
* Internal design review documents at the discretion of the functional groups
* Other information as determined by the project manager
* Email distribution list

All core and extended team members will be included on an email list with the name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The project manager will set up and maintain any changes to this list. Any team member can use this list to communicate easily with the team on matters that affect the entire team.

* Teleconferencing system/account

The team will access the company teleconferencing account in order to hold team meetings that include remote team members.

**3.0 Formal Project Communications—Project Management Related**

Formal "project management" related communication will consist of *written status reports, project plan updates, project team meetings,* and *monthly reports to the Executive Committee*. All written communication will be emailed to all indicated stakeholders.

* Weekly status reports

**Responsibility and Format:** All core team members will generate a weekly status report in the standard company format: One to two pages max, with succinct bullets in the categories "Progress this week, Issues needing assistance, goals for next week/upcoming milestones.”

**Who receives the communication:** The following classes of stakeholders have access to these reports: CT, XT

**Media/Tools:** Status reports are published in Microsoft Word and must be compatible with Word97, since some extended team members do not have Word2000. *(Note: Another option here is for team members to create this status in simple email format and send to the project manager, who compiles the status into one document. The goal here is to communicate status in whatever way gets important information to the right people, without overloading team members with document creation.)*  
**Ground Rules:** Status reports are due no later than the end of each week.

* Weekly Team meetings

**Responsibility and Format:** The project manager is responsible for calling and leading a weekly meeting of Core Team and Partner Team members. The meeting will follow a published agenda listing key objectives of the meeting, subjects to be covered and time allotment for each, and any materials team members should bring with them.

**Who attends:** All core team members and designated Partner Team members. Extended team members may request attendance or may be invited as appropriate.

**Media/Tools:** Meetings will be held face-to-face, except for remote core team members and partner team members, who will participate via teleconference. The project manager will schedule the conference room and publish the conference room and a call-in conference line number via email no later than the day before the meeting.

**Ground Rules:** Meeting minutes with action items will be distributed the following day.

* Weekly project plan updates

**Responsibility and format*:*** The project manager is responsible for generating an updated version of the project plan each week based on information received from team member weekly status reports and the project core team meeting.

**Who receives the communication:** The following classes of stakeholders have access to these reports: CT, XT, PT

**Media/Tools:** All plans are published in Word 97 compatible format and stored in the project collaboration space.

**Ground Rules:** The updated plan documents will be posted and a notification email sent the day after the team meeting.

* Monthly Executive Committee Meeting

**Responsibility and Format:** The project manager will produce a summary project report for this meeting and review it with the Project Sponsor/Champion before the meeting. The project manager will present this report at the Executive Committee meeting. The Partner Team project manager may be requested to attend some of these meetings. The report will follow the company format of several PowerPoint slides covering the following highlights:

* Project Vision statement summary
* Progress against project milestones (milestone name, original date, and completion date or current forecast date)
* Upcoming milestones (milestone name, original date, current forecast date, responsible person)
* Changes to Project Vision parameters in last period, and justification
* Issues threatening upcoming milestones and/or overall project success

**Who receives the communication:** The following classes of stakeholders have access to these reports: CT, XT, PT.

**Media/Tools:** Status reports are published in Microsoft PowerPoint and must be compatible with PowerPoint97, since some extended team members do not have the later version.

**Ground Rules:** Slides for this meeting must be turned in to the Executive Committee's administrative assistant 2 days before the monthly meeting.

**4.0 Formal Project Communications—Design and Deliverables-related**

Design and Deliverables-related communication consists of activities such as Design Reviews, and reviews of project deliverables such as specifications and test plans.

* Design Reviews:

Our CT and PT together will hold the following major project design reviews, which will be attended by all CT members, specific PT members, and invited XT members:

* Preliminary System/Project Design Review (see ProjectConnections templates for Preliminary Design Review Checklist and PDR Agenda)
* System Detailed Design Review (See ProjectConnections checklist for Detailed Design Review)
* Final System Review (See ProjectConnections checklist for Final Design Review)
* Document Reviews:

Our CT and PT will use a focus group review/ team review process to ensure our review time is used wisely on the process. A small sub-team of those closest to the specification or technical design first review the document. When this team is satisfied that all issues are resolved and the document contents are complete, they will bring the document to the core team for a higher-level briefing on key issue and results.

**5.0 Informal Project Communications**

Informal project communication includes phone calls, faxes, emails and informal face-to-face conversations. The primary communication collaboration paths will be CT–CT, CT–PT, and CT–XT. The media and tools required for each type of communication are listed below:

* Core Team Member to Core Team Member and Core Team to Partner Team

**Media/Tools:** Core team and Partner team members must maintain access to the following media and tools: email, voice mail and Microsoft Word.

**Ground rules:** Core team and Partner Team members will check email once daily and reply within 24 hours. Core team and Partner Team members will check voice mail daily and reply within 12 hours.

* Core Team Members to Extended Team Members

**Media/Tools:** Extended Team Members are required to maintain the same media and tools as the Core Team Members

**Ground rules:** Extended Team Members will follow the same Ground rules as the Core Team members.

Appendix A: Guidelines for Defining Communication with Partner Team Members

As the communication plan for the project is developed, the following items should be addressed:

* Who talks to whom, and how often? e.g. Project Managers, Executive Champions, functional lead counterparts …
* How will documents be exchanged? Who gets what documents and in what form?
* How will document changes be controlled? *(This may be addressed in a separate plan for configuration control, depending on size of the project.)*
* How will the team deal with exceptions and issues at different points in the project?
* Who participates in design reviews? Which ones will be held; which ones are the partner team members responsible for?
* How will design review outcomes be documented?
* If this project has regulatory implications (e.g. medical devices), who is responsible for keeping the design history file?
* How will the status of verification and validation testing activities be communicated and reviewed?