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PROJECT COMMUNICATION & NEGOTIATION

Communication Skills for Project Managers

By

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Communication Skills for Project Managers

- **Aims**
  - To analyse skills for effective communication for project managers
  - To explain activities relating to communication for project managers

- **Expected Outcomes**

  - Principles of effective communication can be understood
  - Methods of communication to be followed by project managers can be understood
  - Different aspects of communication planning can be understood
  - Activities relating to information distribution can be understood
  - Various components of performance reporting in project communication can be
  - Understood.
  - Issues regarding administrative closure can be learnt.
  - Barriers to communication and measures to overcome those can be learnt.

- **Other related Information**
  - Use of communication skills for achieving project goals.
  - Measures to be taken for effective communication can be understood and analysed.

- **References**
  - Panda, S. (2017), Managing Performance for Excelling Organization- A Practical Approach, Penerbit, Universiti Malaysia Pahang.
  - Campbell,, M. (2009), Communication Skills for Project Management, New York, NY: AMACOM.
  - Hames, D.. (2012), Negotiation: Closing Deals, Settling Disputes and Making Team Decisions, Sage.

Principles of Effective Communication

- As a professional in project management, a manager is expected to have an effective communicator.
- The project manager has to be an excellent oral as well as written communicator.
- Oral communication at workplace and written communication for generating reports, documents with accuracy are required for project manager.
- A project manager has to be equally impressive in oral and written communication.
- Communication can be considered as pillar for maintaining professional relationship.
- It is necessary to hone skills for effective communication.
- There are **7C's of communication** which are considered as principles of effective communication as:

  - Principle of Clarity
  There should be clarity in the message being sent to the receiver. The meaning of the message sent by the sender and received by the receiver should be same. There should not be any other meaning of the message. The clarity of thought, expression, content and context should be there in communication. The objective, message content, medium of instruction, process should be clearly understood for effective communication. The receiver should not make assumptions.

  - Principle of Completeness
  Communication should be completed from all perspectives. The complete message provides a complete understanding by the receiver. It is essential to avoid any confusion, assumptions and delay in taking proper action based on the message being communicated.

Principles of Effective Communication…

- Principle of Conciseness

Any lengthy message should be avoided in communication. If possible, minimum words to be used for effective communication. Conciseness helps in saving time which ultimately effects in taking proper action plan. When communication can be made within few lines, it should be made lengthy. The ultimate objective is to communicate the message. In this context, it is good to send the message with concise to have better understanding and proper action.

- Principle of Correctness

Accuracy should be maintained in communication. The information being communicated should be correct in all forms. The facts, figures, business format, grammar, spelling, punctuation, rules of the organization should be properly followed in communication. Any grave mistake is problem in communication. Utmost care should be taken to communicate correct message to the receiver.
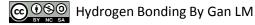
- Principle of Concreteness

Communication should be specific and definite. Any general statement based communication is not impressive. It should be avoided. The message being communicated should be equally supported by facts and figures with concreteness.

- Principle of Courtesy

The honest, open and communication with friendly gesture should be there. There should not be any hidden insults to the receiver. One has to keep the receiver's viewpoint and should be empathetic to the receiver's needs. It helps in building better relationship in project management.

- Principle of Consideration

In communication, a message should be prepared by considering the understanding level of the receiver. The socio-educational and psychological background of the receiver should be kept in mind in communication.

Methods of Communication

- Communication does involve in the interchange or exchange of thoughts, ideas or information among people.
- It is done either by speech, writing or signs. There are different methods of communication.
- Generally, there are three methods of communication viz; Verbal, Non-Verbal and Paralanguage. Each method is discussed below:

Verbal Communication
- In this method, words are used for communication. It includes written and oral communication.
- The pen and paper letters and documents, typed matter, e-documents, text message, language etc. are coming under this method of communication.
- This method is generally used for project management.
- The writing style, vocabulary, grammar, office formalities should be properly followed .
- The brochures, handbooks, documents, agreements, legal instructions, project proposals etc. are done by verbal communication.
- The oral form of verbal communication is the spoken communication. It is generally done either face to face or over telephone or any other medium using technology.
- The clarity and accuracy of information is essential for effective communication in oral form of communication.

Non-Verbal Communication
- The communication without using any verb is non-verbal communication.
- The sender sends message to the receiver which reinforce verbal communication.
- Physical non-verbal communication uses body language. It generally includes body posture, gesture, facial expression, emotions being expressed, eye contact etc.
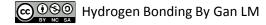
Paralanguage
- It includes voice quality, pitch, emotion, tone and style of speaking to the receiver. The way something is communicated and what is really communicated refers to paralanguage. For effective communication, this aspect has to be taken care of by the sender.

Barriers to Communication

- Communication can be effective when the receiver understands the message being sent by the sender. If the receiver understands the message in a different way, then the communication is not effective. It may create misunderstanding and confusion. In this context, it is essential to sort out the barriers in communication.
- The barriers in communication refer to the distortions, obstacles, obstructions or hindrances in communication. The internal or external audience should be kept in view before communication. Different types of barriers to communication have been discussed.
- The barriers are: **Physical, Semantic, Socio-Psychological, Personal and Organizational.**

Physical Barriers
- It is relating to the physical setting in communication. The closed doors, walls being erected, distance in communication etc. are the physical barriers.
- The layout, cubicles, office settings, siting arrangements etc. should be taken care of for effective communication. It reduces the barriers to communication. Collaboration in effective communication is required.
- The physical barriers are also known as mechanical barriers. Noise, distance, time, poor timings, working in different shifts, handing over of documents to the next shift personnel should be done with all care.
- Communication should be done timely. If any late in communication, it may lead to chaos in project.

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Barriers to Communication…….

Semantic Barriers

- This type of barrier refers to language barriers in communication. The language structure, vocabulary, jargon use, lack of coherence in sentence etc. are the semantic barriers. Clear, direct, focussed communication is generally done for effective communication. The technical use of word is jargon which should be used as per understanding of the audience.
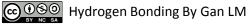
Socio-Psychological Barriers

- The feeling of person, attitude, family status, cultural differences, social status of persons should be considered in communication. Intuition and sensing should be considered in communication.

Personal Barriers

- Attitude, prejudices, pride, feelings, ego, personal value system etc. are considered as personal barriers to communication. Lack of confidence or over confidence, personal broad mind etc. are also the personal barriers to communication.
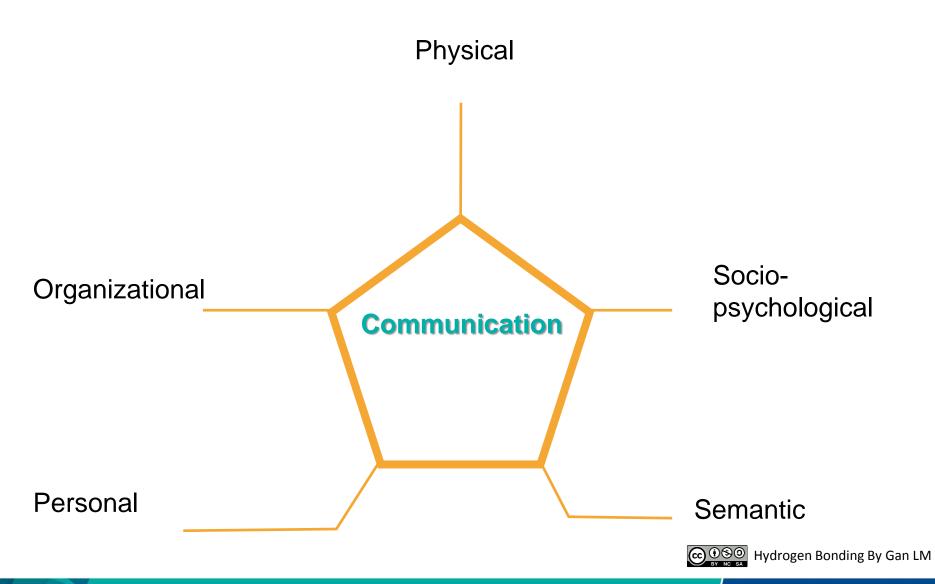
Organizational

- The rules and regulations, cultural practice of an organization should be respected for effective communication. Filtering, status, ways of communication should be considered in communication as per requirement.
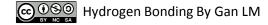
Physical

Socio-psychological

Organizational

Communication

Personal

Semantic

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Communication Planning

- Proper communication planning helps in attaining better results in project.
- The target audience or the receiver in the project should be considered. The level of understanding, knowledge, technology and cultural background of the receiver should be considered in communication planning.
- The suitability of communication channel should be taken into consideration in communication planning.
- The project leader has to assign different responsibilities to different project personnel.
- The hindrances in communication should also be kept in mind at the time of communication planning.
- Any confusion in communicating information can be avoided by suitable planning and its execution.
- The rule of priority, frequency, recency, emotion should be followed in planning.
- Analysing the target, planning the appropriate approach and delivering the correct message should be done in communication.

Communication Planning Format

Activity in a project	Person Assigned	Sub-activities	Time	Tools to be used	Status of completion
1	Mr. X	A1	2 days	Electronic	Yes
2	Mr. Y	A2	3 days	Paper work	No
3	Mr. Z	A3	5 days	Both	Pending
4	Mr. P	A4	7 days	Electronic	Assigned

Different activities are there in a project. The list of activities need to be prepared. Once the list is ready, as per the requirement and the competency of the suitable personnel, work is assigned. Accordingly, the concerned personnel has to make a list of tasks or sub-activities. If required s/he has to assign different works to other personnel. The time of starting the work, duration for completion of the work, medium of communication, flow of work, proposed receiver in the communication process, type, techniques and feedback response in the systematic pattern etc. need to b planned properly.

Template

Roles and Responsibilities in Communication Planning...

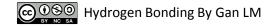| Project Phase	Overall Responsibility of	List of Activities	Proposed List of Executions	Anticipated Problems	Forum of Communication
Initial					
Planning					
Execution					
Controlling					
Finalization					
Planning	I	II	III	IV	V
Aspects	What	Whom	Who	How	When
Planning	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Aspects	Where	Which	How far	How much	Why

Guidelines for Communication Planning

- Communication planning should meet the objectives of the project.
- Communication planning should be as per the availability of the resources in a project.
- Communication planning should encourage participation of the project personnel when required.
- Communication planning should match with communication matrix of the project.
- Communication planning should be realistic.
- Communication planning should encourage the application of modern technology as per feasibility of the nature of the project and functional expertise of the project personnel.

Information Distribution in Project

- It is the part of project communication and management.
- The purpose of information distribution is for systematic planning and execution of different project activities with suitable monitoring mechanism by proper coordination among the project team members. It should ensure the achievement of project goals.
- The interest and importance of information to be distributed should be considered in project communication.
- Prioritizing various activities and information to be distribution should be done. The confidentiality of project information should be maintained as per requirement.
- The key player, communication manager, necessary staff for allocating the works should be properly done prior to distribution of project information.
- Information distribution is a part of project execution.
- The project status information, activities further required for completion to tasks etc. require information.
- The information distribution is required from top level to down level. When required, information should also be given from bottom to top level of a project.
- Different mediums to be used for information distribution.
- The project manager has to analyze the project organizational structure or chart, strategy for effective communication, stakeholder management strategy, needs for internal and external communication in the project and also the relationship among the project team members as per the nature of their respective functions.
- It is essential to crate suitable condition for information distribution.

Information Distribution continues….

- There are two aspects in information distribution in a project viz.,
- Project Team
- Project Stakeholders
- The relevant information are shared and distributed within and outside the project members.
- Information distribution is required through out the project. In other words, starting from initiation phase of a project to finalization of the project and handing over the project to the client, dissemination of information to different stakeholders of a project is required.
- There are three basic forms of communication for information distribution as:
   - Face to face communication: It is done among the project team members, discussion with client, community representatives, government officials etc. It can be done by organizing group or individual meetings.
   - Information can also be disseminated by use of technology i.e. e-mail, video conferencing or by hard copy i.e. letters, papers, documents, reports etc.
- It is important to select the suitable information, process and personnel for information distribution in a project.
- Information distribution can also be done by publishing the relevant information.
- Project information can be published through public computer communication networks.
- Seminars and webinars, telephonic conversations, meetings, audio and video conferences can also be organized to disseminate project information.
- Selected stakeholders can also be permitted to access websites. Project intranet sites can also be accessed.
- Accurate information should be communicated through stakeholder notifications, project reports, summaries, records, project presentations, feedback stakeholder log records, documents maintained for lessons being learnt in the project and related log books etc.
- Periodical updating of project information is vital function of a project manager. It makes aware of the progress and to have an overall idea about the project.
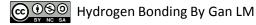
Performance Reporting

- The purpose of performance reporting is to inform regarding the status of the project activities being undertaken to the right personnel.

- Based on the reporting, further activities can be carried out. Proper follow-up action can be taken based on the performance reporting.

- It is quite obvious that person responsible for reporting, authority to be taking the reporting, verification of performance reporting like documents, status reports, progress reports, task force reports, exhibited and expected performance reports etc. need to be done properly and minutely. There should not be any iota of mistake.

- Checking and cross-checking of information provided in the report should also be done. It is in order to ensure the accuracy of performance reporting. However, the integrity and ethics of the project personnel should not be questioned.

- Performance reports to be prepared as per requirement of the stakeholders. If it is for the client, the report contents should be as per the requirement. If it is for Government, accordingly as per the format, the report should be prepared and submitted.

- Performance reporting is a process which is required in different stages of a project. Only thing is the reporting authority or stakeholder changes. Sometimes, performance information distribution is done from top to bottom. But, in case of performance reporting, it is generally done through upward communication. The performance reports may be: Simple or detailed, baseline or actual; completed or to be completed report. Proper documentation and context should be mentioned in preparing the reports.

- Performance reporting can be done by collecting, analyzing and distributing performance related reports. The extent of completion of project activities, analysis of the exhibited past achievements, risks, challenges and expected support either technically or financially to meet the contingency challenges also to kept in mind in performance reporting.

- Simple Report or Detailed Report: To be given as per requirement and contents to be developed.

- Baseline Report or Actual Report: To be submitted to the required concerned stakeholders .

- Work completed Report or Work to be completed Report: Reports to be generated according to the format required by the authority.

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Performance Reporting continues.....

Contents of Performance Report:

- Completed work as deliverables along with reference of schedule, cost and relevant important data as required by client/ any stakeholder.

- Comparison between current and future activities to be performed.

- Formats and templates to be followed and requisite data to be posted.

- Project policy, rule and regulation should be properly followed in developing the reports.

- Units of measurement, methods of communication, performance matrix and statistical analysis should be properly done.

- Statistical software should also be used as per requirement of the project.

- Forecasting methods should be followed to have accuracy in generating performance reports.

- Basic principles of effective communication should be followed for making the report relevant, accurate, significant and also interesting to follow.

- Corrective measures suggested in a particular report should be followed in developing subsequent reports of a project.

Administrative Closure

- Administrative closure is required at the end of each phase of a project.
- At the end of the finalization phase of a project, administrative closure has to be done.
- Documentation of results of a project refers to administrative closure.
- Documentation of the project works, confirming about the alignment of expected works with exhibited project works, analysis of success or failure of the project, effectiveness of project and its management process, learning lessons in the project.
- The vital information in the project, new skills learnt, innovative process explored should be updated and documented.
- Earned value analysis has to be done in assessing project performance.
- The final documentation including the process of organizing, indexing and archiving all relevant and necessary project materials .
- More or less, the archived materials should reflect performance of a project from initial phase to its final phase.
- The documentation demonstrating the project performance through out the life cycle of a project are included in the administrative closure.
- The project manager can measure the variances in the performance from the administrative closure documents.
- The customer, project sponsor can also verify the quality of products or services provided as an outcome of the project goals.
- The do ables and deliverables can be compared. A well organized, structured, indexed with accuracy of references shall create proper documentation.
- Successful administration helps in analyzing pitfalls throughout the project which ultimately strengthens in controlling functions in the future projects.
- Issues relating to procurement, contract, purchase order, invoices, warranties, financial documents, evaluation of individual/team performance and gist of the entire project should be properly documented.
- The lessons learnt in a project is of great use for the future projects.

Conclusion of The Chapter

- Conclusion #1
  - Communication skills are important for project management.
  - Various activities are involved in project communication.

- Conclusion #2
  - Principles of effective communication, different communication methods need to be followed for achieving project goals.
  - Communication planning, information distribution, performance reporting, administrative closure are important activities which need to be done properly.

- Conclusion #3
  - There are many barriers to communication and measures should be taken to overcome those are vital.

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