

WBS 8.2 Blog: Communication Tools In Use;

By

Troy Stempfley

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Worldwide

PMGT 502

Dr. Robert Erickson - Instructor

March 7, 2015

In my work as an Air Traffic Control (ATC) Watch supervisor my job is to observe, manage and facilitate the safe daily conduct of Air Traffic Control in the facility I work in. Communication is our business. We ensure pilots are provided safe instruction on how to get from point A to B without crashing into other aircraft or terrain. Utilization of the communication techniques discussed in the project Management Communication Bible are second nature. The tools of communication are a different story.

Government work has its own tools for communicating many of them are similar to project management tools but go by a different name. For example, project management uses and organization chart the government or in my case the military uses a chain of command. They both serve the same function there is just more implied to the terms chain of command that deals with military rank and people wear their rank on their work clothes creating an indirect chain of command sometimes not directly tied to where you work. There are other examples but that isn't the purpose of this assignment.

Having to choose a couple tools and techniques to use at work to make life easier, I've decided to talk about the feasibility study and communication requirement plan. Both of these tools I believe I use within my work environment.

The last part of this blog will consider the use of PMBOK guide knowledge area/process group matrix and how I will employ it in my course final, the professional portfolio. My understanding of project tools found in the PMBOK are ever evolving. I get better with each class but this assignment caught me by surprise. The process group is something I thought of as common since and never really analyzed it. So this portion of the assignment has been enlightening.

Communications Tools to Use

Feasibility studies are used to identify the value, possibility and functionality of a new idea. No matter where you work someone is always coming up with a new idea. Those can make life easier or more difficult. The process often is entered into without really looking at the consequences or possible outcomes of the new idea. This leads to an overabundance of skepticism of new plans or ways of doing things within the organization. In deed it may be an underlying part of the resistance to change we all feel with a new process is presented.

In ATC, like many other jobs, there are many functions which are evolving with technology. Insisting on a feasibility study for these new processes can do several things to aid in the development of new processes. First, getting those who will be using the equipment or process to provide input into the development or potential use, second it creates enthusiasm and positive energy for the product to come and third will allows the project manager to see different aspects of how the product will or can be used and may provide for design modifications to make it better.

The users of a process or product are essentially the owners of the process or product. No matter who pays for it financially, the one who swings the hammer knows how it feels and what its capable of and therefore owns its function. Communicating with users allows the customer to be an integral part in discovering feasibility.

Between the FAA and military there are slight difference in the equipment because the FAA utilized these feasibility studies to find out what FAA ATC controller preferred. Where military systems were all developed based on the decisions of a few. For this reason many changes have to be readdressed when it is discovered that the equipment or process is too cumbersome or uncomfortable and unused to its potential by the user.

“The feasibility study is also a mechanism... to provide management an opportunity to shut down a project.” (Dow & Taylor, 2013, p492) It can also be used to modify the project as is the case for the Air Force ATC Tower simulator.

This is a product with endless training potential however it is mainly unused. There has been a great deal of money spent over the years on the product and processes but its technology failed to meet expectations specifically in voice recognition. Manually running the simulator takes a great deal of effort which can be simplified by not using the device and going back to the moving strips of paper to represent aircraft around a drawn simulation of the airport.

A feasibility study should be conducted on the process to find out if it can be fixed or should be scrapped. This would entail finding out exactly what software is available allowing the user to test it and provide input as to its functionality then either putting the corrective process in place or removing it and salvaging the equipment and buildings for other uses. The key to this feasibility study would be communicating with the users; which leads me into my next topic, communications plans.

Planning to communicate keeps the processes moving and organized. Where I work there are several reports evaluations and communications processes at work in my place of employment. The communication directives are spread out between several regulations and instructional guides but most are called a communications plan.

We have a schedule for communication in place. That is the sum of what we have for a communications plan. Understanding the rest of the process has provided some insight in to some improvements that could be realized with the development of a complete communications plan.

Inexperience in communication is the weakest link in our chain. Most know when the communication is to take place but understand why and the intricacies of how are the problems. Many of the reports are written in a chronological narrative with no topic or significance. This can be changed by incorporating in a communications plan better format or forms which guide the lesser communicative savvy to produce a more readable report.

Specifically spelling out the need for the communication and how that need can be met will give the report sender a map to steer the communication in the proper direction. It will eliminate unnecessary information, provide more accurate useful information, and save time deciphering what was trying to be communicated.

These reports mostly have to do with training and evaluation. There is a legal ramification if the communication is inaccurate. Having a specific guide on the proper, format, protocols and communication tone will keep the organization on solid ground in the case of removing a person's qualifications or not allowing a certification or proceed.

Conclusion

All of these facets demonstrate how a communication plan will benefit where I work. Tying in the scheduled communication with the purpose, correct process and proper tone will improve the overall effectiveness of the communication. Who those reports are sent to is already part of the process but could be reiterated in a communications plan.

References

Dow, W., & Taylor, B. (2008). Project management communications Bible. Hoboken, N.J.:

Wiley;.

Gray, C., & Larson, E. (2014). Defining the Project. In Project management: The managerial process (Sixth ed., pp. 118-122). New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Project Management International. (2013). A guide to the project management body of knowledge (5th ed.). Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.