Identify and Manage Stakeholder Communications (Engagement);

By

Troy Stempfley

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Worldwide

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Dr. Robert Erickson - Instructor

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Introduction

The first part of the assignment is to "Thinking about Chapter 13 of Project Management: The Managerial Process, answer the following question: What type of information would different stakeholder groups want to have? What is the best way to deliver that information? Consider that you might collect the same data for each stakeholder and report it in different ways.

The next part of the assignment is "to think about Chapter 11 of the Project Management Communications Bible and answer the following questions: When putting together the communication plan, think about how you would want the team to communicate with each other, with management, and with stakeholders. What templates and tools would be most helpful? Look through the Project Management Communications Bible for examples."

Stakeholder Information

The communication or engagement types required for the project process will vary greatly with the needs of the stakeholder. The type of information, presentation and delivery method needs to be based on what is best for the individuals need for the communication. The Chief Executive for Finance (CFO) will need different information than the Chief Procurement Officer (CPO). And yet all of this information can be derived from the same sets of data. Deciding what, when and how the information is disseminated is the Project Managers responsibility. The message must be "tailored to suit the target audience to increase effectiveness." ("Communication strategies to engage a variety of stakeholders An Enterprise Rent-A-Car case study") Through a proper use of diagrams Project Managers can communicate a large amount of information and ensure accurate and adequate information without a large investment of the receiver's time and effort

Most senior executives are responsible for insuring the overall health of a company for which projects are being completed. This means making tactical and strategic decisions based on outside and inside information and predicting trends within an industry or business environment. This person deals with a broad spectrum of projects, programs and businesses, and can't be bogged down by the intricate details of a process for which they pay someone else to be concerned with. They need overall trend data on projects; things like what will the project cost, how will in benefit the company or corporation and at what point does it become more of a financial liability than a benefit.

The CFO will need to see data on how a project affects the overall business strategy; whereas the CPO will need to see data on needs for assets, services or resources. Although CFO decisions affect the CPO, the data each needs to perform their job vary in detail. The CFO will want to know if a project is on schedule and budget or not. The CPO is more concerned with why, what can be done to optimize performance and how to fix problems. This is where the difference in communication will take place.

A picture is worth a thousand words; diagrams and charts present a myriad of information and allow the receiver to pick what information and how much is important to them, like an information smorgasbord. Charts and diagrams allow communications at many different levels at once. As long as they are not too busy it's possible to use the same charts for multiple levels of communication. At one level the chart may be all that is needed; at another it will support additional information.

Development of an automated or semi-automated dash board may be the optimal way of discriminating the information throughout the project spectrum. Controls can be set to allow computer permissions to individuals for access their requested information.

Information accessibility is what we do best in this modern computer age age. People can access the web via computer and smart devices. Email and electronic documents have almost completely replaced hardcopy forms and information in almost everything including archiving. Even hand written documents can be scanned via smart phone or desktop scanners and placed into archives. So why not utilize these tools to keep management stakeholders informed.

The information gathered in charts, reports and schedules can be setup to automatically or with little input (semi-automatically) develop charts that can be hyperlinked to dashboard applications as they are being archived. In this case Anyone with the proper passwords can access the information at their leisure placing the most up to date information available at any time.

Of course there needs to be controls. IT personnel, which have become an integral part of any modern organization, can establish who has access to what reports and charts based up on the criteria spelled out in the communications Plan. A project team member can setup the report displays that are needed for each office based on the needs of the stakeholder.

How to Communicate (Engage)

The means of communication has drastically improved of the past decade. In the early days of computing email was all the rage, information was sent nearly instantaneously through computers. Current generations and use texting, email and social media as a substitute for verbal communications at times. Unfortunately there is so much information out there often time people have to back-track their messages because things they should have communicated privately were sent out over inappropriate electronic media and now the whole world has access to it.

People do communicate things whether in frustrations or while thinking out loud that they don't necessarily want the rest of the world to know. We need to be in control of our communication processes or risk failing to communicate our true intentions.

That doesn't mean that we don't use modern tools of communication. It means we need to control which media and how that communications process is handled. Social media is while the fast form of communicating with the masses is not the right place to spell out corporate strategies. But it may be perfect for communicating the corporate mission statement and goals.

After Communication (Engagement)

 "Communicating with stakeholders, sponsors, team members and other interested parties takes up quite a bit of project manager's time."(Duggirala, 2009) Today the whole emphasis is rapid, easy and convenient communication that makes it to the right people at the right time. Data collection and verification is done electronically these days. You can check the status of your tax return and you can verify filling of medical prescriptions. There are many tools to develop information gathering and display forms. Excel is one example of and can be developed into forms on a web page that allow control of the information by limiting who has access and what information is allowed to be input. Things that should be updated are Stakeholder Register, Issues logs and Organizational Process Assets documents and procedures

With smartphone technology dominating the landscape a web based form would allow the onsite task managers to make accurate timely updates to project deliverables and allow for comments. This information can be linked to excel data basis and linked to a broad spectrum of reports on multiple dashboards simultaneously. Of course this would take money and time to set up but once accomplished similar the same tools can be used for different projects simply by changing the addresses links and dashboard assignments.

Conclusion

Once stakeholder information is gathered and a reporting format is set, the process of reporting can be as devised; the use of technology can be helpful. We are in an instant communications age and the old days of hardcopy forms and telephone call logs that are difficult to archive are fading away. These old fashion methods of communications are not as convenient, fast or readily accessible as todays computerized communications process. Using modern tools we can communicate much more effectively and save time and money.

References

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