

Project Communications

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

It's the project manager's responsibility to be in constant communication with the project team and stakeholders. This tutorial will discuss:

1. Project Communications

A project manager should continually check with team members to make sure they have what they need to complete their work, and that nothing is acting as a roadblock.

Communication is critical because it helps identify issues early, which often makes troubleshooting problems easier. Some communication methods are email, meetings, presentations, and online communication tools.

In fact, the most important aspect of a project manager's role can be communications. Since everyone else is focused on their tasks, it's the project manager's duty to provide the connection between all the tasks, and that's done with communication. That's why the project manager develops a communication plan in the planning phase of a project, and it's why that plan must then be implemented well by the project manager.



BIG IDEA

Communications should be consistent and continuous throughout a project's lifecycle.

2. Status Report

One method that project managers use to communicate project status to the team and stakeholders is through a project **status report**. This report should be created and distributed on a regular schedule. This report contains the following details that communicate the current status of the project:

- State of the schedule and the budget already consumed by a project
- Progress on the deliverables
- Any issues that arose during the last reporting cycle, and how those issues are currently being addressed.

Below is an example of a status report:

Schedule	Planned	Actual

Behind	15% Complete	12% Complete
Budget	Planned	Actual
On Target	10% Spent	10% Spent
Activity/Task Last Period		Status
Discussions with Stakeholders		100%
Create Design Specification		75%
Develop System Modules		10%
Activity/Task Next Period		
Create Design Specification		
Develop System Modules		
Integrate System Modules		
Risk/Issue		Mitigation
System Modules more complex than anticipated		Added additional programmer

A status report can use a dashboard style of reporting. This is when a color coding system is used to visually communicate the status of a deliverable.

Color	Description
Red	Indicates a deliverable has a significant problem. If work is over budget, behind schedule, or the quality or performance of the deliverable does not meet expectations, then it should be coded red. The project manager must address the issue in the status report. The issue should be described, and the actions either taken or to be taken to resolve the issue should be explained.
Yellow	Indicates that the deliverable might be in danger. For example, the cost could be increasing, the task could be slipping, or risks are likely to occur that impact the deliverable.
Green	Indicates the deliverable is on track.

Project team members, especially leaders, should assist the project manager with the creation of the status report. Project team members can provide information on the work that has been completed in the last reporting period and the focus of the work during the next period.

TERM TO KNOW

Status Report

A formal document describing the progress of a project during a specific time period.

3. Status Report Timing and Storage

The project manager should work together with the project sponsor and the key stakeholders to determine when, and for what periods, status reports will be delivered and who will receive the status reports. This should be documented in the communication plan.

It's the project manager's responsibility to store and archive each status report throughout the project life cycle. Be sure that stakeholders can access the old status reports since questions often arise about the history of a project and the actions taken to resolve issues.



SUMMARY

This tutorial discussed how a project manager handles **project communications**. **Status reports** are like a dashboard method to visually indicate deliverable status, and it's important the project manager save each status report in a location that stakeholders can access.

Source: this work is adapted from sophia author jeff carroll.



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