Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the practice of **Communication Management** and to describe the practice overview, requirements, best practices, activities, and key terms related to these requirements. In addition, templates relevant to this practice are provided at the end of this guide.

Practice Overview

Effective communication is a key component of successful project management and delivery. It is often estimated that eighty percent of a Project Manager's job revolves around communication with the project team, client, and executive management. Without effective communication, vital information may not be exchanged effectively. A lack of communication may even delay or prohibit the execution or completion of scheduled tasks. Project success increases exponentially by avoiding communication issues.

The goal of communication management planning is to define the project's structure and methods of information collection, screening, formatting, and distribution. It also outlines understanding among project teams regarding the actions and processes necessary to facilitate the critical links among people, ideas, and information that are necessary for project success. Effective communication planning and management helps ensure:

- Information needs of project stakeholders are met
- Project performance is tracked and reported on
- Project results are formally documented
- Enthusiasm and support for the project

Most projects will require some form of internal and external communication on a regular basis to sustain momentum on the project and to fulfill organizational reporting requirements. To effectively accomplish and manage this, a Communication Management Plan (CMP) should be developed.

A CMP is a platform for understanding between project participants; it documents the methods and activities needed to ensure timely and appropriate collection, generation, dissemination, storage, and ultimate disposition of project information among the project team and stakeholders. The CMP also defines who will not have access to information and what type of information will not be distributed.

The Project Management Institute's (PMI) Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) defines a CMP as a document that describes: the communications needs and expectations for the project; how and in what format information will be communicated; when and where each communication will be made; and who is responsible for providing each type of communication. Key elements of a CMP include answers to the following types of questions:

- WHO do you need to talk to?
- WHY are you talking to them?
- WHAT do they need to know?
- WHEN do they need to know it?
- HOW do you communicate with them?
- WHERE do you tell them (communication medium)?

The CMP documents a consistent method for communication and the management of that communication throughout the project's life and should be developed in coordination with, and be accessible to, all project team members and stakeholders.

Developing the Communication Management Plan

The process of developing a CMP is primarily concerned with the actions necessary to define, integrate, and coordinate all project communication and communication methods into a single management

planning document. The CMP is usually drafted by the project manager, reviewed by the project team, and approved by the project sponsor.

A good CMP is not necessarily lengthy. A CMP can be very short and still have great value. The content of the CMP will vary depending upon the complexity of the project. The size of and time invested to develop a CMP should be balanced with the size and complexity of the project. Large, more complex projects justify a significant effort in developing a comprehensive CMP and may even justify the creation of separate subsidiary communication plans for some sections of the CMP. If this were the case, the subsidiary plan would be referenced in the appropriate section of the CMP.

When developing the CMP it is important to consider all obvious and not so obvious audiences to ensure quick and effective communication with internal and external stakeholders. The CMP should address the following:

- **Stakeholder Identification and Analysis** – Summarizing both the project's internal and external stakeholders, their relationship to the project, and their required information needs is one of the most important steps in effective communication planning. Communications planning begins with an understanding of who the project stakeholders are, what their relationship to the project is, and their information needs.
- **Communication Matrix** – Describe the communications approach for each communication vehicle and include information on target audience, distribution/purpose, and frequency, owner, and distribution vehicle, whether the communication should remain internal or is allowed externally, and any additional comments. Include items such as project meetings, project reporting, product documentation, test results, metrics, etc.
  - o **Project Meetings** – Describe the project's internal and external meetings, meeting schedule, and informational requirements for each meeting. Meetings should never substitute for ongoing communication between the project manager, project team, client, senior management, and/or any other project stakeholder needing information. Meetings are simply formal time set aside from the rest of the week to concentrate solely on the project. Include descriptions and distribution policies for items such as:
    - *Project kick-off meeting* – The project kick-off meeting is the most important project meeting to be held. It is the first time the whole project team is assembled and an opportunity for the project manager to meet his team and gain their commitment to the project. The kick-off meeting is a team building exercise for the project team and used to clarify project goals and objectives, individual roles and responsibilities, interdependencies with other projects, contact point within the project team, and to commit to project success.
    - *Team meetings* – It is best practice for project team meetings to be held at least weekly by the project manager for the project team and bi-weekly for senior management. The meeting's purpose is to communicate risk, issues, resource concerns, schedule, deliverables, milestones, interdepartmental dependencies, etc.
    - *Client/Sponsor meetings* – Client/Sponsor meetings should be held at an interval that satisfies the client's need for information. The purpose is for the project manager to communicate with the client about risk, issues, schedule, deliverables, milestones, etc. and for the client to do the same in return.
  - o **Project Reporting** – Describe the project's internal and external reporting, reporting schedule, and informational requirements for each report. Reports should never substitute for ongoing communication between the project manager, project team, client, senior management, and/or any other project stakeholder needing information. Include descriptions and distribution policies for items such as:
    - *Status reporting* – It is best practice for the project manager to distribute formal project status reports at least weekly. The purpose of status reporting is to communicate project progress, risk, issues, etc.
    - *Project schedule* – The project schedule documents key goals of the project and tasks to be accomplished and controls the progress of the project.

- o **Other Communication Vehicles** – Describe any other internal and/or external communication vehicles that the project may utilize, their distribution schedule, and information requirements.

Best Practices

The following best practices are recommended for **Communication Management Plan** development:

- **Collaborate** – The CMP should be developed in collaboration with all project team members and stakeholders
- **Accessible** – The CMP should be accessible to all project team members and stakeholders
- **Include** – All work required for execution of the CMP should be included in the Project Plan
- **Work** – All information in the CMP should be consistent with the Project Plan and any other related planning documents
- **Update** – Update the Communications Plan when significant changes occur
- **Survey** – Survey stakeholders to determine if they are getting appropriate information when it's expected
- **Approve** – Obtain proper approval before disseminating project information

Practice Activities

For software development projects the following practice activities are appropriate:

- **Audiences** – Identify both internal and external communication audiences
- **Needs** – Determine who needs what information, when, and in what format
- **Sources** – Identify sources of information for developing project communications
- **Responsibility** – Assign responsibility for collection, presentation, and dissemination of information
- **Distribution** – Identify the best methods of distribution for each type of project communication
- **When** – Define when communications will be distributed and by whom
- **Approval** – Document and define the approval process, if needed, for any types of communication
- **Process** – Develop a process for handling ad hoc request for project information
- **Library** – Identify a location for a library of project information

Practice Attributes

This section provides a list of practice attributes to help project teams determine when and how development of a **Communication Management Plan** impacts a project.

Practice Owner	CDC UP Project Office – NCPHI
Criteria	All projects regardless of type or size should have some type of communication management plan.
Estimated Level of Effort	Moderate
Prerequisites	N/A
Practice Dependencies	N/A
Practice Timing in Project Life Cycle	Developing a Communication Management Plan is an activity that takes place during the planning phase of the project life cycle.
Templates/Tools	Communication Management Practices Guide, Communication Management Plan Template, Communication Management Checklist
Additional Information	N/A

Key Terms

Follow the link below to for definitions of project management terms and acronyms used in this document.
http://www2.cdc.gov/cdcup/library/other/help.htm

Related Templates/Tools

Below is a list of template(s) related to this practice. Follow the link below to download the document(s).
http://www2.cdc.gov/cdcup/library/matrix/default.htm

- Communication Management Plan Template
- Communication Management Plan Checklist
- Stakeholder Analysis Log Template
- Communication Matrix Template
- Status Report Template
- Status Report Instructions
- Meeting Agenda Template
- Meeting Minutes Template
- Project Kick-Off Meeting Checklist/Agenda Example
- Project Meeting Checklist/Agenda Example
- Sign in Roster Template