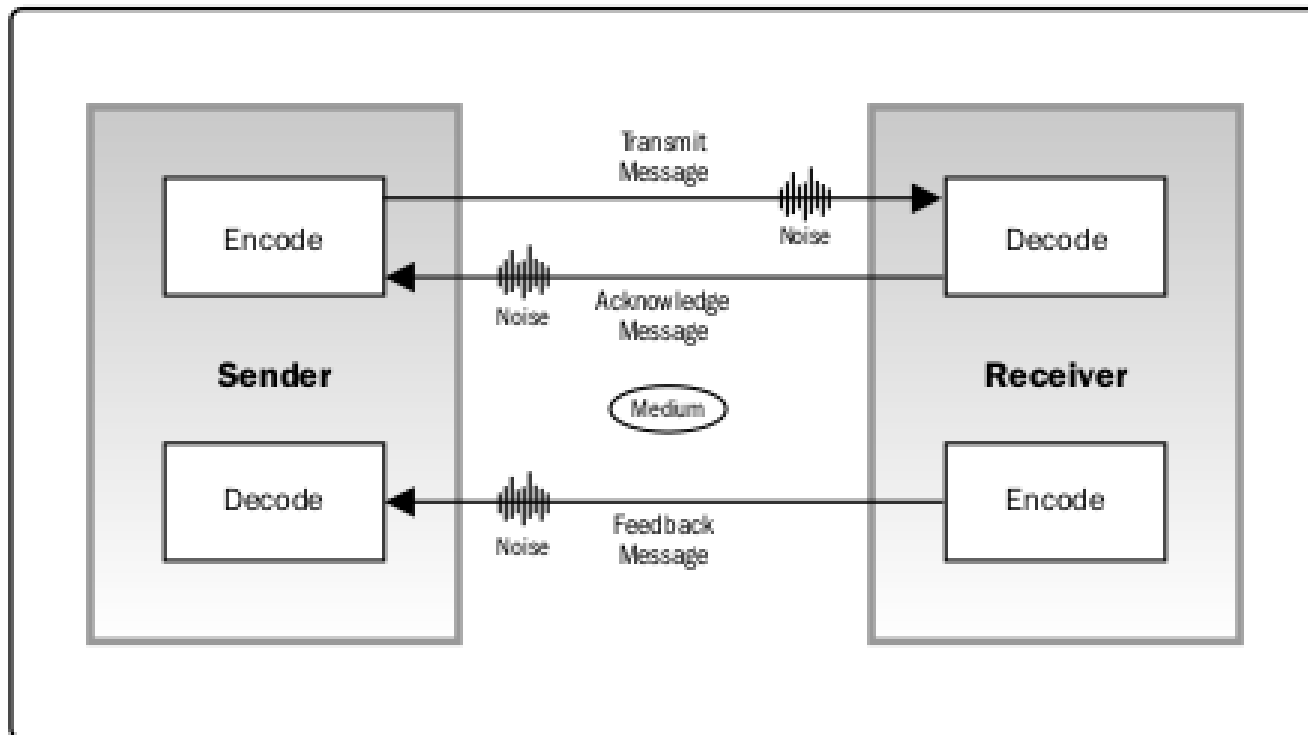


# Quality in Communications

# Communication -

The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior. (Merriam-Webster, Wikipedia)

## Communications Model



(PMBOK)

# Project Communications -

The exchange of project-specific information with the emphasis on creating understanding between the sender and the receiver. (CalTrans)

Behavior and techniques used to motivate, lead, delegate, and inform all stakeholders working on the project. (Tech Republic)

Processes that ensure timely and appropriate planning, collection, creation, distribution, storage, retrieval, management, control, monitoring, and disposition of project information. (PMBOK)

“Up to 90% of a project manager's time is spent on communications” (Source, anyone?)

3 main processes, per the PMI PMBOK:

**Plan Communications** – Develop an approach and a plan for the project's communications

**Manage Communications** – follow the plan!  
Create, collect, distribute, store, retrieve, and dispose of project information, according to your plan.

**Control Communications** – Monitor and control communications, throughout entire project, to ensure the information needs of all the stakeholders are met.

Primary missed opportunity for quality project communications is at the “Plan” stage – usually a lack thereof.  
Too many projects have no Communications Plan.

Secondary – no Control, in the PMBOK sense.

Most people concentrate on the Manage Communications processes

# Considerations for a Communications Plan:

Should be done early as part of the overall Project Plan.

Plan for effective communications (providing the appropriate information to the right audience in the right format and at the right time).

Plan for efficient communications (providing all the information needed and only the information needed).

Analyze the project's communications requirements -

What information does each shareholder need? (All stakeholders are already identified, right?)

What are they authorized to receive?

When do they need it?

What is the best means and format to deliver it? \*\*

What information should be stored? Where? What format? How retrieved?

When purged?

What assets/processes/policies/tools/techniques does the organization have in place/require/forbid?

## Dimensions:

- Scope - Internal (within the project) vs. external (customer, vendors, other projects, organizations, the public);
- Direction -
  - Upwards, to mgr and executives (condense/highlight, prioritize, obtain approvals/buy-in/resources),
  - Downwards, to team members, vendors (Provide direction, highlight tasks due, schedules, responsibilities/delegation),
  - Lateral, to clients, Functional Mgrs, other PM's, vendors (negotiation, requirements, statements of work, contracts) );
- Style - Formal (reports, minutes, briefings) vs. informal (e-mail, memos, ad-hoc discussions);
- Official (newsletters, annual report) vs. unofficial (off the record communications);
- Mode - Written and oral, vs. verbal (voice inflections) and nonverbal (body language);
- Method – Interactive (Meetings, phone calls, IM) vs. Push (e-Mail, blog, voicemail) vs. Pull (Websites, knowledge bases, databases). Which is texting? Social media site? Twitter?

## Skills/Techniques needed:

- Listening – Active Listening, listening effectively;
- Questioning and probing to ensure better understanding;
- Fact-finding to identify or confirm information;
- Educating;
- Setting and managing expectations;
- Persuading a person, a team, or an organization to perform an action;
- Motivating to provide encouragement or reassurance;
- Negotiating to achieve mutually acceptable agreements;
- Coaching to improve performance and achieve desired results;
- Resolving conflict to prevent disruptive impacts;
- Summarizing, recapping;
- Identifying next steps.

Consider the person/people – the individual(s) – on the other side of your communication:

- Language differences

Even within the same language (table it if you have any doubts)

Learn and remember people's names!

Assess and take into consideration the individual's grasp of project's primary language

Plan for English training/practice as part of project? Multicultural Awareness training? (Education is part of Project Communications...)

- Cultural differences – views of hierarchy, time/punctuality, etiquette, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance...

- Age differences – Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Millennials

- Personality differences – What's your color? Your type quadrant?

(Personality Color Index, Myers-Briggs Type Index)

Differences along several axes, e.g. Extrovert/Introvert, Thinking/Feeling, Sensing/Intuition.

All are possible sources of “noise” in the communications model above – factors that compromise the transmission of the message from one person to another – as much as are physical sources of “noise”.



“Analyze the project's communications requirements” – know your stakeholders!  
(Is this always possible?)

If you want to ensure the quality of project communications (conveying information, gathering information, motivating, obtaining approvals, resolving conflict... all of it!), you will have to mitigate any impacts of the above – so plan for it!

Project managers should to be sensitive to different cultures, personalities  
All project members should have some cultural sensitivity / cultural awareness training!

Strength of relationships between team members will affect trust between team members, which will affect the impact of the inevitable misunderstandings  
(Project HR Mgmt)

# Control Communications

Monitor and control the planned communications to ensure they are effective  
Can trigger iterations of the Communications Mgmt process (Plan & Manage)  
and revisions to the Communications Mgmt Plan

Continuous Quality Improvement!

(Not just for your current project, but forward to future projects and across the organization to other projects)