# EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION AT THE PROJECT TEAM LEVEL – A CONDITION FOR PROJECT SUCCESS

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**ABSTRACT:** *The project manager must possess exceptional leadership qualities to comprehend the project in its entirety, from inception to completion, and to lead, organize, coordinate, and control resources and work teams. The project manager needs strong interpersonal communication skills, familiarity with activities at each project stage, and a general understanding of methods, techniques, and technology used in the communication process. Their ability to communicate effectively with the project team and guide them toward an efficient and pleasant communication process is a fundamental condition for successfully completing the project to the benefit of all involved parties.*

## 1. COMMUNICATION IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Communication in project management is an increasingly emphasized component in both specialized literature and practical project implementation. Communication is an integral part of a project's leadership system. Identifying techniques, tools, and key directions for internal and external project communication is one of the essential conditions for success. Effective communication also results in the creation, maintenance, and development of positive relationships with all parties involved in the project, including various stakeholders, both internal (employees, collaborators) and external (clients, partners, suppliers, representatives of local authorities, local communities, mass media, etc.).

Communication within projects focuses on the relationships among all project participants. In general, communication serves the following roles (Ghicajanu, 2021):

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- Identifying and establishing communication needs and requirements within the organization related to project implementation;
- Ensuring the transmission of relevant information to all individuals/stakeholders involved in the project;
- Establishing interpersonal relationships for collaboration, coordination, decision-making, and problem-solving;
- Providing a monitoring and reporting system for the project implementation process, including aspects such as resources, costs, timelines, and stages of achieving objectives, etc.
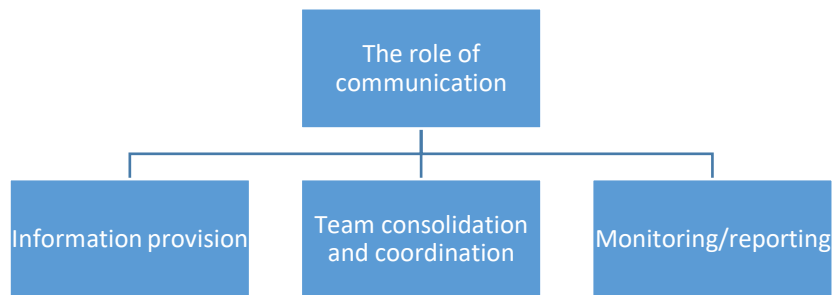


**Figure 1. The role of communication in project management**

Successfully managing a project from start to finish requires certain key skills. Scheduling, time management, and the ability to negotiate with internal and external parties are all critical competencies. Leadership, risk management, and critical thinking similarly top the list. ""But the ability that is perhaps most crucial for project management and underlies all others is communication" (Jouber, 2020). "*Communication is the most important aspect in project management because what project managers do most of the time is communicate to coordinate the efforts of the entire team*" (Joubert, 2020). Practice highlights that in over 80% of leadership situations, the project manager communicates (McLachlan, 2020). "*To coordinate efforts, one must gather a lot of information and disseminate it to all teams involved in the project*" (Joubert, 2020). Without this communication, efforts may be duplicated by multiple individuals or teams involved in the project, important objectives and stages may be missed, resources may be incorrectly allocated, or the project's scope may begin to creep beyond the specified area, deviating from what was initially defined. The end result is that projects can stall, or worse, fail altogether. Therefore, the project manager must have the ability to build an effective and suitable communication mode within their team (to foster good working relationships, collaboration) and with external members.

## 2. COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF THE PROJECT MANAGER

Project managers must meet a series of criteria to be selected for this position, among which the essential defining element is: the ability to communicate effectively and guide the team towards an efficient and pleasant communication process. Fulfilling all the functions of a project manager is conditioned by the existence of communication

activities through which these functions can be successfully achieved, namely (Edelhauser & Ghicajanu, et al., 2018, pp. 298):

▪ The planning function involves the existence of internal and external organizational information, the clear formulation and transmission of strategic objectives, plans, and directions of action to execution levels within a project. Numerous meetings and discussions are necessary within the planning function.
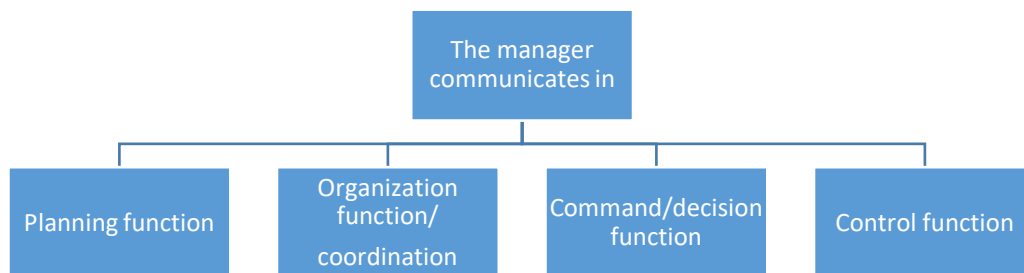


**Figure 2. Communication present in the exercise of managerial functions**

▪ The function of organization/coordination also involves building the relational framework, the informational system, receiving, requesting, and providing useful feedback, goal motivation - all of these activities being achievable through communication;

▪ The command function is realized through decision-making and the transmission of clear and precise orders and instructions. The coordination function, which must ensure that activities and resources work harmoniously to achieve organizational objectives, is conditioned by adequate communication, delegation of responsibilities, creating a collaborative climate, and staff motivation;

▪ The control function, which assesses whether the organization is achieving its objectives and makes necessary corrections, is carried out through communication activities such as evaluation and comparison, presentation, or writing of activity reports.

The communication skills of the project manager manifest themselves in all stages of project implementation, but especially in situations such as negotiation and contractual agreements, delegation of authority, influencing and persuading team members and collaborators, and building strong team cohesion, conflict resolution.
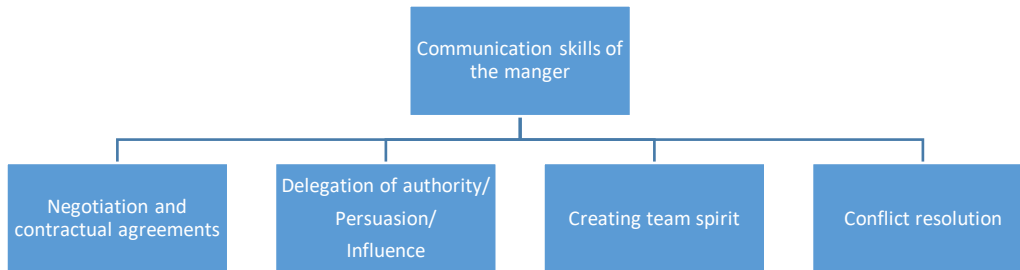
**Figure 3. Communication skills of the project manager**

Among the essential communication skills, I first mention writing and speaking because managers need to be able to create and orally present specific presentations, informative or creative meetings, use appropriate, professional, and correct language, and be able to write, structure, and create written content in the form of reports, emails, notes, etc. Therefore, a project leader must create a working environment that promotes open, efficient, and cooperative communication through their leadership style, thus encouraging others to follow with confidence and activate a team spirit, aiming to achieve their set objectives. To avoid a reduction in the quality of communication, it is essential for the manager and team members to consider the defining elements of the communication process, ensuring that the messages transmitted can be decoded by the receiver. For this, the message must adhere to the 7Cs (clear, correct, concrete, complete, concise, courteous, and coherent) (Romith, 2016).

**Table 1. Responsibilities of sender and receiver**

| What the sender must do | What the receiver should do |
|---|---|
| Well structured, clear ideas | Active listening without interrupting |
| Identifies the purpose of the communication | Create a permissive framework for discussion |
| Adaptation to the environment and interlocutors | Listen to understand, not to oppose |
| Plan communication with others | Eliminate distractions |
| He is also aware of what he is communicating through body language | He is empathetic and understanding |
| Consideration for the interlocutor's needs | Patient, he keeps his cool |
| Encourage feedback | Takes constructive criticism and doesn't take offense easily |
| He practices what he says | Ask questions |
| He is also a good listener | He is also a good listener |

## 3. TEAM BUILDING IN PROJECT TEAMS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Communication is the binding force within any group and the essential link among its members (Isac&Guță, 2018). Communication serves several essential

functions, playing a fundamental role in the group by adjusting behaviors, facilitating better individual task performance, motivating, and strengthening group unity (Guță, 2019). A project team represents a group of individuals who can be members from within or outside the organization, collaborators, or project members for the duration of the project. The project manager must instill in team members and maintain their sense of motivation and engagement, whether they work on the project full-time or part-time. The temporary nature of such teams, the vastly different levels of knowledge, differences in members' interests, and their shared loyalty make leading such a group a very challenging task.

Forms of communication among project team members can manifest through:
- Official/formal commnication channels (*meetings, various documents, agendas, reports,newsletters,memos,statements, press releases, intranet, video conferences, phone, email*);
- Informal communication channels (which can also occur through intranet, *email, coffee breaks, messages and calls, unplanned casual discussions, chat rooms, groups formed on online platforms*).
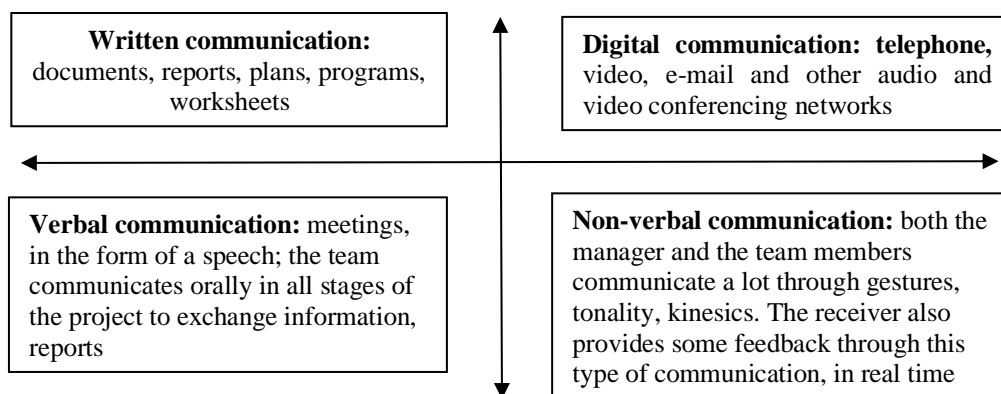
| **Written communication:** documents, reports, plans, programs, worksheets | **Digital communication: telephone,** video, e-mail and other audio and video conferencing networks |
|---|---|
| **Verbal communication:** meetings, in the form of a speech; the team communicates orally in all stages of the project to exchange information, reports | **Non-verbal communication:** both the manager and the team members communicate a lot through gestures, tonality, kinesics. The receiver also provides some feedback through this type of communication, in real time |

**Figure 4. Forms of communication between project team members**

Managers not only need to skillfully coordinate group meetings, but they also have to manage communication processes and ensure quality both within the team and between the team and the departments supporting its activities.

Developing the personal values of team members - happiness and job satisfaction Values play a well-defined role as a compass that guides us when making choices to gradually build a life we can enjoy every day. This aspect of emotional intelligence development, specifically awareness, identification, and development of personal values, helps us accept differences between us as individuals and thus develop feelings of compassion, respect, mutual assistance, and tolerance.

Richard Barret conducted sociological research with data obtained from nearly 2,000,000 people globally through a Personal Values Assessment questionnaire from the Barrett Values Centre (https://www.barrettacademy.com/). As a result of the research, 7 levels were defined, each containing different specific needs of the human condition in the development of personal consciousness. This approach is based on Abraham

Maslow's motivational theory. These needs are precisely the generators the human mind needs to shape its own values and give rise to the 7 types of internal dialogues. The stages of development and levels of consciousness according to the Barrett Values Center are presented in the following table.

**Table 2. The stages of development and levels of consciousness**

| Development stages | Levels of consciousness and positivenegative internal dialogues |
|---|---|
| Survival ( physical and mental health, financial stability, sports, care) | Level 1: Survival Consciousness (communion, understanding, giing, equality, tolerance/violance, corruption, power struggle, territoriality, etc.) |
| Conformity ( safety, family, friends belonging, harmony) | Leve 2: relational consciousness ( harmony respect, understanding, joys, happiness) |
| Differentiation (recognition, self-image) | Level 3: Self-Esteem Awareness (skill, empathic communication, integrity/arrogance, authoritarian power, rigidity, appearances) |
| Individualization (freedom, autonomy, adaptability, personal values and objectives) | Level 4: Transformation Awareness (courage, self-evaluation/revenge, obsessions) |
| Self-dissolution (integrity, trust, creativity, authenticity) | Level 5: Internal Cohesion Awareness(passion, honesty,trust, creativity/destruction) |
| Integration (collaboration, alliances, partnerships, empathy, mentoring) | Level 6: Affirmation Awareness(fruitful communication, maintaining relationships, preservation of relationships/manipulation, intrigue) |
| Service (compassino, forgiveness, understanding, transmitting values, and preparing future generations) | Level 7: Unselfish Service Awareness (selflessly transmitting knowledge and useful information to others/unintentionally transmitting misinformation) |

*Source: adaption from https://www.barrettacademy.com/*

By knowing and closely examining these values, both individually and collectively, or alongside the team manager, project team members can use these values to enhance themselves. This improvement will undoubtedly reflect in their professional lives, implicitly impacting the project they are involved in. Understanding team members is beneficial to the collective as a whole and can be an excellent tool for development and achieving remarkable results.

## 4. TEAM FEEDBACK

The communication that is not followed by feedback is called one-way communication, but this does not bring many benefits, especially in a project team where it is necessary to receive responses, draw attention to possible mistakes, and exchange useful information. Thus, it is evident that the ideal communication process should be

bidirectional, containing feedback and sufficient effort and well-developed communication skills from both the sender and the receiver. Project managers often have to take on both roles during the communication process, demonstrating both communication skills and active listening.

Feedback has been defined by Gamble as: "all verbal and non-verbal messages that a person consciously or unconsciously transmits in response to the communication of another person" (Gamble, 2012).

I will now list the essential characteristics of feedback, from a utility perspective, that can help improve communication:

Specificity - feedback should be formulated clearly for a given situation. For example, it is more advisable to say to a colleague in the project team, "I think you could omit slide 5 from your presentation and insert an image between slides 8 and 9 with the budget," rather than saying, "Yes, it works, but it seems a bit overloaded."

- Trust between the sender and receiver-undoubtely, when we feel comfortable around someone analyzing us, we will be more receptigve to their message..
- Realicstic, achievable objectives- do not ask the interlocutor to do something with slim chances of success due tothe lack of certain resources.
- Appropriate timing- it is recommended not to provide negative feedback to a colleague during a general meeting to avoid undermining their self-confidence;we can wait for a favorable moment.
- Verification- if we are not sure that we have correctly understood what someon wanted to convey, it is essentialto revisit the issue through a question or rechecking the message.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The formation and leadership of the project team are among the most important tasks of the project manager, upon which the success of the project depends. The project team consists of individuals who are assigned roles and responsibilities for the completion of the project.

Internal communication within the project must be organized and planned as it significantly influences the manner in which activities involved in a project unfold. Internal communication helps project team members organize their activities to achieve goals and is vital in socialization processes, decision-making, and problem-solving for the successful implementation of the project.

Communication within the team (leader-members, members-members, members-leader) should be open, constructive, and bidirectional. Additionally, a strong leader with a constructive attitude, prioritizing the team's interests over their own, and having a vision represents the balance and "engine" of the team. Efficient delegation of tasks, i.e., dividing tasks within the team, is another important stage in the project's evolution.

The roles of communication can be summarized as follows:

- provides project team members and collaborators with importnat information about the position/role they hold in the project, the purpose and objectives of the

project they are working on, information about the external environment, or other project or company-related aspects.

- contributes to motivating the project team and collaborators, consolidating trust, creating a common identity, or increasing personal involvement in the efficient implementation of the project.
- Assists in monitoring and evaluating project members.
- Helps in the development and retention of competitive and high-performing teams.
- Provides individuals participating in the project with a way ro express their felings, share hopes and ambitions, and celebrate and remember achievements.
- Constitutes the means by which individuals and groups get to know and understand each other better, implicitly aiding in a better understanding of the project's objectives and activities.

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