

Why Communication is Important in Project Management

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Imagine managing a project without any form of communication. Unless you're producing something on your own and for yourself, it would be wholly impossible because projects are often complicated with various layers of details, requirements, and decisions. Each step often requires a new task to discuss, because it's dependent on another task or decision—or even another person. Sure, you can make it so all of those decisions are funneled through your favorite project management planning tool, but just a plan or a tool won't help you to complete a project successfully. In order to be a successful project manager you have to use your communication skills first, and the tools second. That's right, PMs: if you're not making a strong effort to communicate with your team, you will likely fail.

Find Trust and Success Through Solid Communications

Project management is more than tools and process. It's also about also people and working with them to produce projects that meet or exceed requirements. Monitoring tasks is easy—anyone can do it. A savvy PM will have the skill to monitor those details through meaningful, strategic conversations on a project. You've got to be detail-oriented and strong with the administrative side of the role, but also be a clear, concise communicator who is comfortable with a variety of interactions, conversations...and personalities.

The most successful project teams are ones that are comfortable collaborating and using tools to do so. [Team collaboration software](#) can help your team share ideas and make decisions together. It's not easy, but it's well worth the effort. Our projects become stronger through those interactions, because they can help us to:

- articulate project goals
- set better expectations about those goals and how we'll meet them
- formulate a project process that works for everyone
- discuss task dependencies and how they'll be met (or not)
- communicate risks and issues—and solve them
- understand one another's roles and our impact on the project
- build strong a team bond
- enjoy our work

Be You. Earn Trust.

The foundation of good project communications starts with building trust with your team, and that is usually done through forming relationships with the team and stakeholders. Those personal relationships are built through conversations that not only focus on the project, its goals, and how you'll work together to meet them, but also through personal conversations and interactions. It's critical for a PM to make time to interact with their teams about non-project things. That's right—get personal. Tell jokes. Have some fun. Talk about your interests, your home life—anything that will help you to find common ground with your team. Of course, you'll want to do that at appropriate times and not only focus on that, but it's the little interactions that help to set the tone for how you'll work together, and more importantly, how you as the PM are deeply interested not only in the project logistics, but the people involved. After all, they're going to help you to deliver a successful project. And, as soon as those relationships are built, it's immensely easier to ask for things, have difficult conversations, and guide the project to success.

How Project Managers Communicate

Relationship building (and joke telling) aside, think about your project communications in terms of routines. As a

PM, you want to be sure that you're facilitating the flow of information in a way that feels expected. Doing so helps your team to share information more easily, or ask for it when it's needed. Some basic ways to ensure there is a consistent flow of information are:

1. Set project expectations

When you kick off a project, you'll want to make sure that your team and stakeholders are aware of what's expected of them through the course of the project—and for you to understand what's expected of you from the team as well. This can be done in a variety of ways: by sitting down to map the project with a RACI chart; by discussing your project goals and plan; discussing how you'll communicate on the project, and so on. What's most important is to get the details on the table and ask yourselves, "What does success look like for us and how might we fail on this project?" Being truly honest about what's going to make you all feel good about the project—from the administrative end of the project to the front-line project communications—when it's over will help you to set expectations early on.

2. Discuss deliverables

It's easy to check boxes off on a plan and do that on time. But if you're not actively checking in on those deliverables and reviewing them as a team, you're missing a huge opportunity to collaborate as a team and build a stronger product. When you're building your plan, make sure you're working in some time for team deliverable reviews. Sit down and discuss or critique your deliverables. This generates more confidence in what you're building and will also keep team members accountable for project decisions throughout the course of the project, even if they're not responsible for those items at the time. Essentially, through short review and discussion, you're eliminating the risk that a current deliverable will have a negative impact on your scope later in the project. It's well worth your time.

3. Conduct status

Status meetings (scrum, stand-ups—whatever you call them as a team) are necessary. Create a routine that will keep everyone informed about progress or blockers. Maybe you'll meet daily as a team, maybe it'll be weekly. You should be able to make that decision as a team to ensure a good flow of information. You'll want to do that with your stakeholders as well to ensure that they're seeing progress and know where they fit in the process. For more information about status reports, check out [Chapter 5 of the Guide to Project Management](#).

4. Ask Questions

Being a PM requires you to be inquisitive—you have to understand processes, people, and deliverables. Chances are, you'll work with someone who comes up with a new way of working or takes a new spin on a deliverable. That's great! Just make sure you understand it—and that you can articulate the what, why, when, and how of that new thing. And never be afraid to ask questions. Your team will likely be happy to share information or resources about the work to help you better understand it. And in the end, it's a win-win situation for you and your team, because the more you understand the work, the easier it is for you to advocate for it with stakeholders, or plan for similar activities in future projects.

PM Sets the Tone

No matter what you do, be open to discussion about how you communicate with your team. Knowing what's best for the project but also being open and willing to adapt for your team and stakeholders will set the tone for positive collaboration on a project. And that leads to success. What tactics do you employ to be a good communicator? Leave a comment and let's discuss. Want to save time on training tasks and spend more time communicating effectively with your team? Try using these [10 tips to automate draining tasks with online gantt charts](#).

Interested in a tool that allows for seamless collaboration and communication between team members? Try out

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