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Template Guide

What is a Communications Plan?

A Communications Plan is a document that describes the anticipated approach for the communication of messages and events for a project, to the appropriate people, at the right times. It sets out the communications goals, stakeholders and strategies, as well as the communications activities and timeframes.

The Communications Plan describes:

The communications objectives

How those objectives will be accomplished

The timeframes and effort involved

Measurement guidelines, which are used to gauge the success/quality of communications

A clear Communications Plan is vital to the success of an organization. It is also critical to the success of projects, as it ensures that all of the staff, managers, suppliers and customers are kept properly informed of the progress of a project.

When to use a Communications Plan

If you have a wide variety of project staff, suppliers, customers and managers, then it is a worthwhile effort to create a formal plan for the communication of key messages to your stakeholders. By communicating in a more structured fashion, you will ensure that the communications needs of each stakeholder are properly met.

Of course, this plan does not negate the need to communicate informally on a project, or within a department, as well. You will still need to talk to your team about how they are doing with their assigned work, call managers and inform them of critical risks or issues, or schedule informal meetings to report on progress. Regardless of whether the communication is formal or informal, communicating properly can go a long way towards ensuring the success of your team objectives.

How to use this template

This document provides a guide on the topics usually included in a Communications Plan. Sections may be added, removed or redefined at your leisure to meet your particular business circumstance. Example tables, diagrams and charts have been added (where suitable) to provide further guidance on how to complete each relevant section.

Note: For smaller projects, your communications will be simple and may not require a lot of proactive effort. But as your projects become larger and more complex, communications events will need to be planned in advance, taking into account of the needs of particular stakeholder groups. It is for larger more complex projects that a Communications Plan, such as this one, is required.

1 Summary

[Summarise your Communications Plan by describing:

- The basis for creating the plan
- The current status of communications in your team
- The communications objectives, events and responsibilities
- The feedback measures and success criteria
- Any planning risks and issues]

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

[Describe the context in which this Communications Plan has been created. The context is important, as it “sets the scene” for the plan, helps you to get buy-in from stakeholders and builds enthusiasm from your team. Set the scene for your communications plan by describing the:

- Vision and objectives for the Organization
- Goals, timeframes and scope of your projects
- Current and past communications activities
- Existing communications staff and stakeholders
- Current communications tools, activities and events
- Means of reviewing communications effectiveness
- Results of past communications surveys
- Reasons for requiring more formal communications planning
- Desired outcome of the communications planning process]

2.2 Situation Analysis

[After setting forth the basis for creating the Communications Plan, the next step is to perform a “Situation Analysis” by describing the *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities* and *threats* that exist in your communications environment. For instance:

- **Strengths:** Your team may be particularly good at identifying the type of information that people need to receive and the timeframe in which it should be delivered.
- **Weaknesses:** But your team may for instance need to improve the frequency that the information is distributed, or make the information more selective to the target audience.
- **Opportunities:** There may be opportunities for improving project awareness, company profile or public knowledge. You may also be able to build support for your project activities, help gain funding or boost productivity.
- **Threats:** Threats that may exist can include; messages not being interpreted as expected, change to your team culture depending on how they are portrayed or other departments not reacting positively to the communications sent out.

It is important that you clearly identify all strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, so that you can gain a complete picture of the environment in which you are about to issue formal communications.]