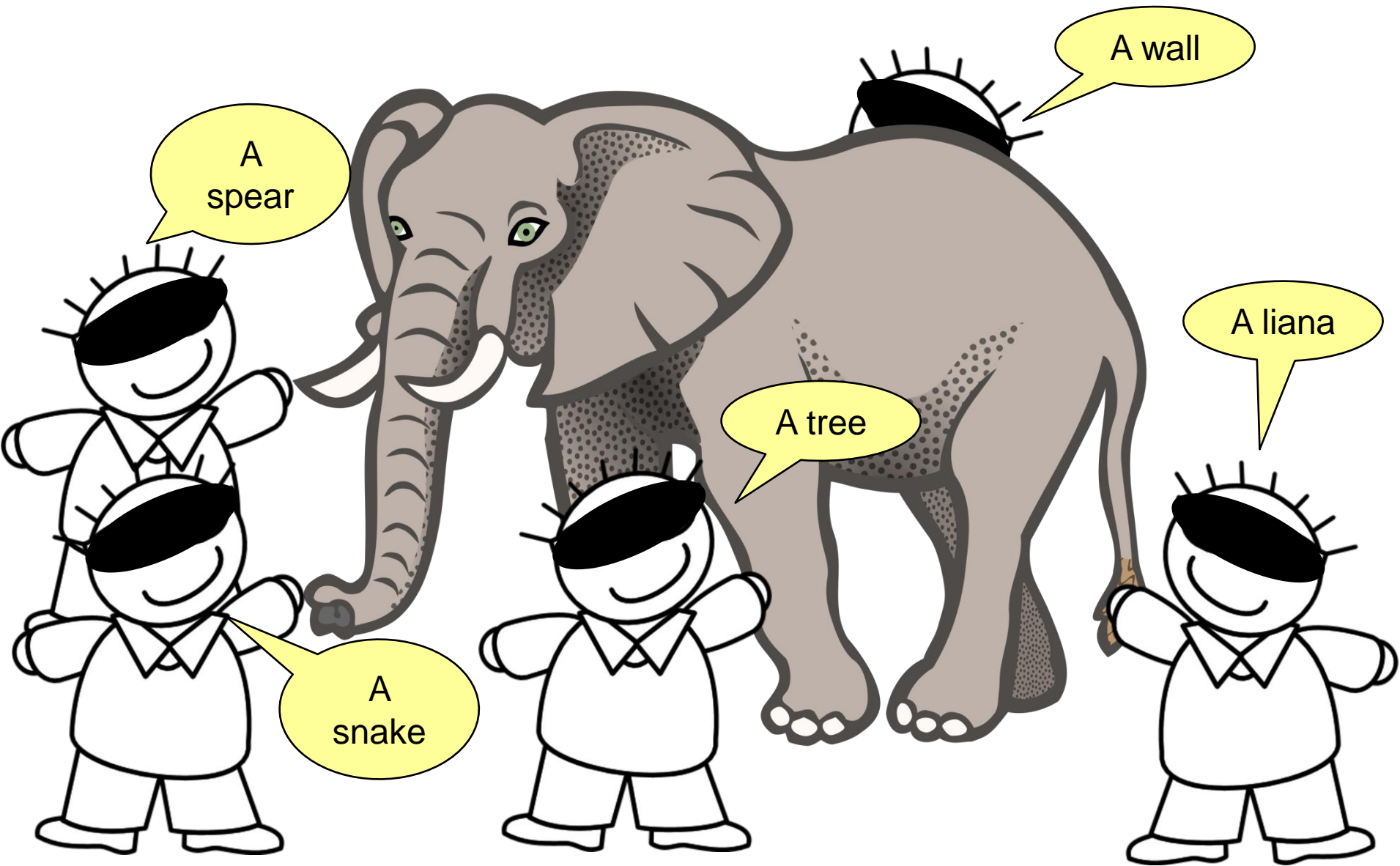# IT Project Management

Lecture 2-3 – Communication

Uwe Gühl

Communication

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Communication

- Communication means the exchange or transfer of information => essential for projects.

- Information must reach the people involved.

- Key of communication is in its effect,
  not in its purpose.

- Communication in a project
  - Information exchange
    - between people involved in a project,
    - within the project team.
  - Crucial success factor

Objectives of Communication

- Communication goals
  - Coherent transfer of content and ideas, to be able to understand even complex circumstances
  - Exchange of different views
  - Clarification of interpersonal and objective differences

Objectives of Communication

- Results of good communication in a project
  - Treating others with respect
    Project members listen to each other and let each other speak out.
  - Common understanding leading to common action
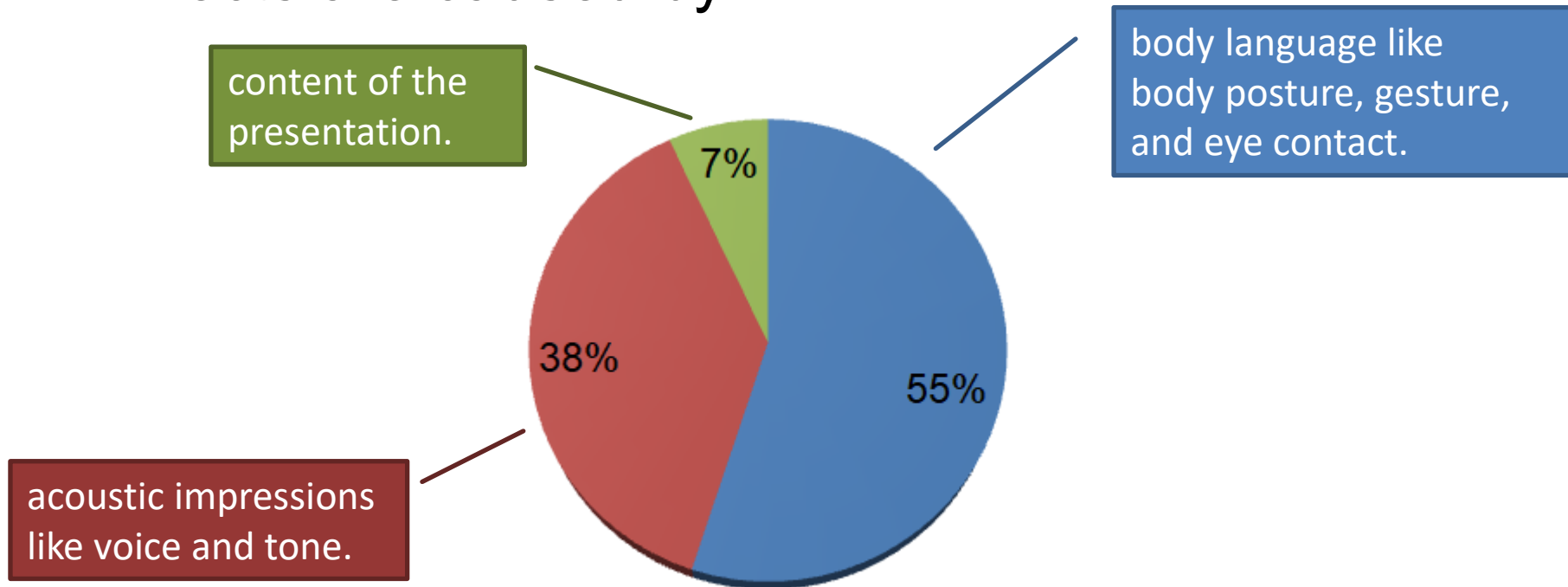 - Exposing and solving conflicts

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Aspects of Communication

- Communication consists of:
  - Verbal elements
    This is the linguistic content.
  - Nonverbal elements
    - ➢ facial expressions,
    - ➢ body language, and
    - ➢ tone of voice.

Aspects of Communication

- What is effective in convincing an audience during a presentation? [MF67]
  Effects are caused by …

content of the presentation.

body language like body posture, gesture, and eye contact.

7%

38%

55%

acoustic impressions like voice and tone.

Aspects of Communication

- Congruent behavior
  - Verbal and nonverbal content conform.
- Incongruent behavior
  - Verbal and nonverbal content do not conform.
- In practice:
  Do statement and external behavior comply?

Aspects of Communication

- Communication is error-prone,
  - information could be passed
    - ➢ simplified,
    - ➢ incomplete, or even
    - ➢ incorrectly.
  - might lead to misunderstandings or rumors.
    ⇨ To be considered
- Challenging in international projects:
  Consequent use of a common language.

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Good Communication

- Respect and acceptance
- Active listening
  - Repeat what you have heard in your own words.
  - Ask when you do not understand something.
  - Ask your dialogue partner to repeat what he has understood.
- Ask open-ended questions
  - Open-ended questions show interest in your dialogue partner and make it easy for him to engage in a specific topic.
  - Example: "How can we optimize the print?"

Good Communication

- Justified compliments
  - Praising is a particular level of respect
  - Praise what is concrete and well-founded
  - Example: A project member is strongly involved and has achieved a very good result.
- Understanding the perspective of other people
- Talking clear, specific, goal-oriented
- Being a role model
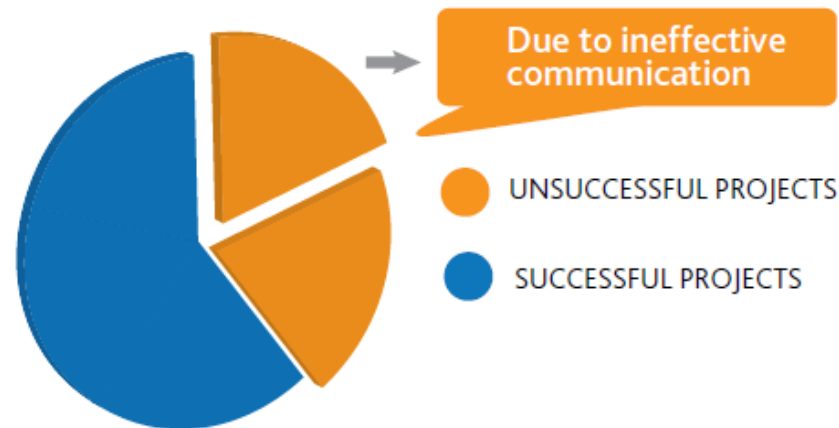
Good Communication

- I-messages
  - Reflect clearly your own thoughts and opinions
  - Example:
    "I am rather confused by the version you sent." instead of "You sent the wrong version."
- Address concrete situations/concrete behavior
  - No general statements like "You are doing everything wrong,"
  - Concrete specific facts like "The document you delivered to the customer was empty."
- Address topics directly and as close in time as possible.
- Stay within the given subject
  Do not digress; try to finalize a discussion on a subject.

Contents

Importance of Communication

- 90 % of the work of a good project manager is communication [Raj10]

- Communication is a (if not the) key to project success [PMI13]

Figure 4. One out of five projects is unsuccessful due to ineffective communications.

Image source: https://www.pmi.org/~/media/PDF/Business-Solutions/The-High-Cost-Low-Performance-The-Essential-Role-of-Communications.ashx

Daud Alam,
Uwe Gühl, 2020

IT Project Management
Communication

Importance of Communication

- Tom DeMarco: "The business we're in is more sociological than technological, more dependent on workers' abilities to communicate with each other than their abilities to communicate with machines." [ML87]
- Michael Campbell interviewed about 500 project managers [Cam09]
  - The most important success factor mentioned was communication
  - Concerning failed projects, poor communication was always identified as a critical factor

Improving Communication

As a project manager
- Be open minded
  - Always have an open ear for your project staff
  - Personal talks
  - Ask about progress and problems in the project
  - We talk about people: "How are you?"
- Be approachable
  - People can get in contact with you easily
  - Offer dates when you are reachable by all means
  - The place of work should be chosen directly in the project team
- Consider communication differences in international projects because of cultural differences
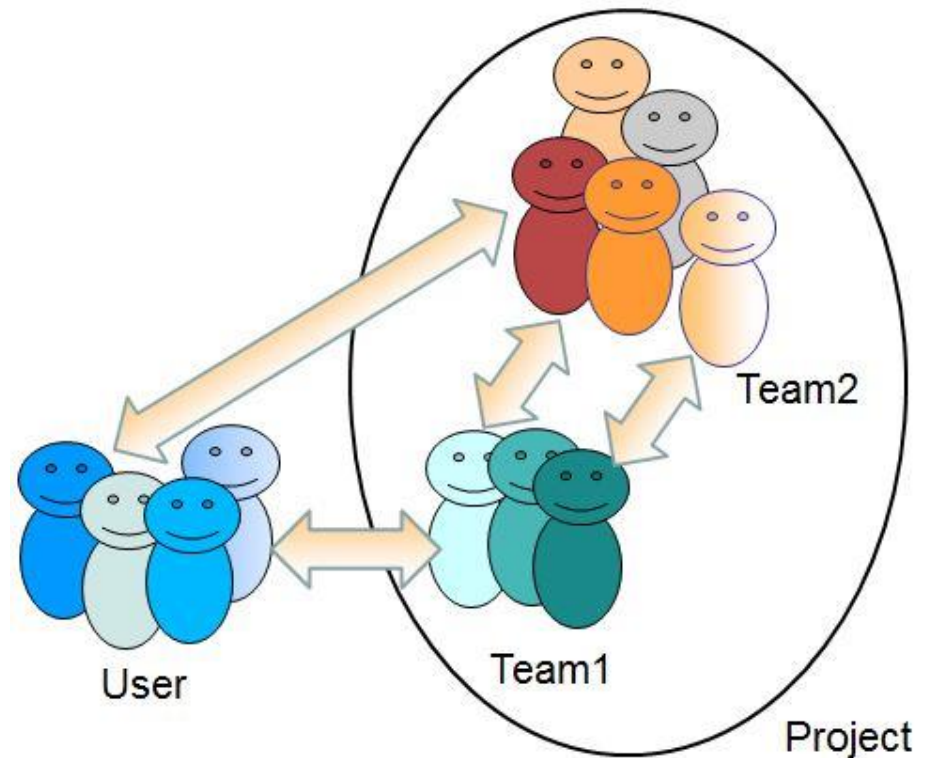
Improving Communication

As a project manager

- Set a good example
    - Role model for the project staff
    - Project manager is a major part in the visibility of the project to the outside world.
- Support continuous communication with the team and in the team
- Facilitate project members interchange Establish several opportunities like „sweeties corner" and coffee dispenser

Improving Communication

As a project manager
- Promote team building with the pair principle
  - Mentors take care of new project members
  - One person is working while another person is reviewing
    (e.g. pair programming)
  - Pairing project members with technical experts or end users
  - Regularly combine different pairs

Improving Communication

Communication hierarchy:

- Best is face to face communication
  Not only words are important, but body language, facial expressions, gestures and voice as well [MF67]
  Go to the desk of the person, if something has to be discussed

- Second is communication by phone / chat – bidirectional information

- Third is communication by text only like email

  – Beware of email communication.
    It is very easy to misunderstand what is said, even if emoticons (smileys) are used.

  – Use email to confirm topics, to summarize results discussed, to send information to be shared like minutes

Documentation

- Use documentation as basis for communication
- Example
  - **Project plan** to communicate with principal and project team
  - **Project report**
    - ➢ Executive summary for stakeholders
    - ➢ Details to principal and project team
  - **Newsletter**
- Try to understand: Who is the recipient of a document, who is interested?
  => People to contact concerning expectations and approval

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Glossary

- Usage of a project glossary
  - Common description of important terms, everybody should have same understanding
  - Follow an iterative approach
  - There should be only one glossary
  - Easy accessible for everyone in the project
  - There should be one responsible
  - Good basis for people new in the project
  - Could help even years after the project ended → Maintenance

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Communication Plan

- ***Communication plan***
  (**Synonym** *communication model):*
  focused approach to provide stakeholders with information

  – specifies
  - ➢ who should receive which kind of information
  - ➢ when as well as how information is to be made accessible to the project staff.
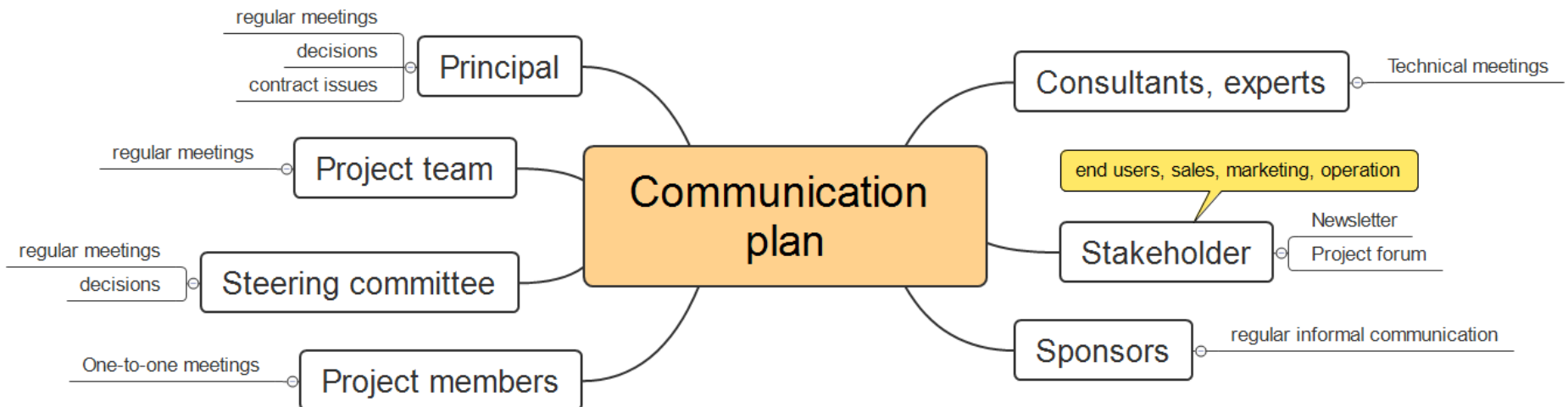
  – based on the environmental analysis   3-1 →

  – related to the project organization   3-2 →

Communication Plan

- ## With whom to communicate what? Example

Communication Plan

- ## Example

Kind of communication	Who	Purpose	Frequency
<Principal meetings>	*<Principal>*	*<Update, critical issues, approval requests>*	*<Biweekly, on request>*
<Project board meetings>	*<Project board>*	*<Status, approval requests>*	*<Every 2 months>*
<Project meetings>	*<Project members>*	*<Status, critical issues, risks>*	*<Weekly>*
<Core project meetings>	*<Core project members>*	*<Status, next steps, issues>*	*<Daily>*
<Status report>	*<Principal, project board, project members>*	*<General information>*	*<Monthly>*

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Project Meetings

- A Pig and a Chicken are walking down the road.
  - **Chicken**:   "Hey Pig, I was thinking we should open a restaurant!"
  - **Pig**:   "Hm, maybe, what would we call it?"
  - **Chicken**:   "How about 'ham-n-eggs'?"
  - **Pig** *thinks for a moment:*
        "No thanks. I'd be **committed**, but you'd only be **involved**."

Source: http://www.agilejedi.com/chickenandpig

Project Meetings

- For your meetings:

  - Look for "pigs": developers, designers and testers who **commit** to the actual work.

  - Avoid "chicken": Everyone else who makes intellectual **contributions** but does not commit to any work.

Source: http://www.agilejedi.com/chickenandpig

Project Meetings

- Preparation
  - Good organization
  - Invitation list
  - Agenda with time schedule
    - Topics to be discussed
    - Proposals for decisions
  - Depending on importance and context consider
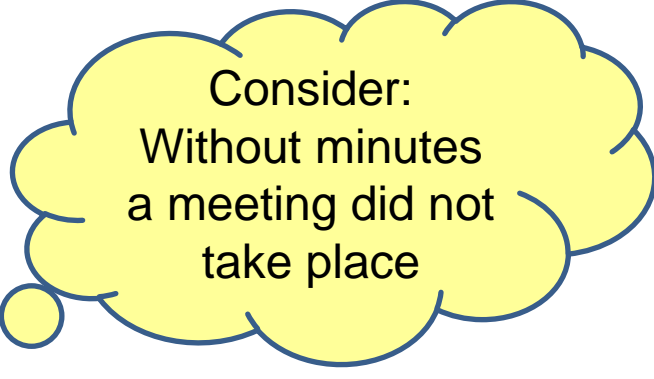   - Moderator
    - Keeper of the minutes

So parties could prepare

Project Meetings

- Execution
  - Moderator responsible for a successful meeting
  - Following the agenda
    People should not wander from the subject
  - Keeping time schedule
  - Tasks identified during the meeting should be assigned only to participants

Project Meetings

- Minutes after a meeting
- Keeper of minutes to be determined in the beginning of the meeting
- Best practice
  - Taking minutes during the meeting, differentiation:
    - ➢ Information
    - ➢ Task: Who is doing what until when?
    - ➢ Decision: What has been decided?
  - Presentation and alignment of the minutes as last activity
- Important: Getting a common understanding of the results of a meeting
- Additional documents as attachment

Consider:
Without minutes a meeting did not take place

Project Meetings

Example for minutes

Minutes

Project name	*<Name of project>*		Project No.	*<Number of project>*
Location	*<Location of meeting>*		Date	*<dd.mm.yyyy>*
Minute taker	*<Name of minute taker>*		Version	*<n.m.p>*
Topic	*<Topic of meeting>*			

Attendees	*<Att1 Name, department, mail, phone>*
	<Att2 Name, department, mail, phone>
	...
	<Attn Name, department, mail, phone>
Distribution list	*<Dis1 Name, department, mail, phone>*
	<Dis2 Name, department, mail, phone>
	...
	<Disn Name, department, mail, phone>

No.	(A)ction Item (D)ecision (I)nformation	Description	Responsible	Due date
<1>	*<A>*	*<Description of action item>*	*<Name>*	*<dd.mm.yy>*
<2>	*<D>*	*<Decision taken concerning specific topic>*	*<Name>*	*<dd.mm.yy>*
<3>	*<I>*	*<Description of topic to inform about>*	*<Name>*	*<dd.mm.yy>*

Project Meetings

Hints:

- Better regularly short meetings than unregularly long meetings (→ daily Scrum) `4.1` →

- "Working meetings" to solve issues

- "Presentation meetings" to inform

- Delegate problems, for which not all participants are needed, to a be discussed outside a meeting and results should be presented in a follow-up meeting

- Task list to prepare, execute and document project meetings

Project Meetings

Task list (*Synonyms: to-do list, action item list*)

- Use a task list to collect and trigger the action items to do

- Regularly check the status of the tasks, e.g., in project meetings or personal alignments

Project Meetings

- Tasks in task list
  - Clear description:
    What is it about, what is expected?
  - Who expects a result, who is the requester?
  - Who is responsible for the realization?
  - By when should it be finished?
  - What is the status ?
    open, in progress, completed
  - When a task is completed: what is the result,
    where is it available?

Project Meetings

Task list example

No.	Task	Category	Respon-sible	Start date	Due date	Prio-rity	Status	Results	Comments
1	Task No. 1	Admin	Joe	15.03.	22.03.	high	in progress		
2	Task No. 2	Admin	Lee	15.03.	15.03.	medium	done	Plan	
3	Task No. 3	Work	Jim	15.03.	29.03.	low	open		in discussion

- Additional fields (not visible):
  – Requestor: Who asked for the task?
  – Along with: Who is going to support?

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Means of Communication

- Use marketing techniques to convince people about your project
- There are never too much supporters of your project
- Utilize even unusual communication tools to promote your project like
  - appearance in internet, intranet, facebook, twitter …
  - conferences, specialist meetings, support of technical groups, webinars
  - open house day
  - flyer, poster, booklets
  - advertising media like cups, pens, bottle opener, writing pads, t-shirts
  - performances

Contents

1. Objectives of Communication
2. Aspects of Communication
3. Good Communication
4. Communication as a Task of the Project Manager
5. Glossary
6. Communication Plan
7. Project Meetings
8. Means of Communication
9. Summary

Summary

- Many projects fails because of communication issues
- Basic communication rules should be followed, most important: Respect and acceptance
- Several tools and methods could be used to improve the communication like
  - regular meetings and
  - a task list
- A communication plan shows the communication channels in the project
- Project meetings should be conducted efficiently, minutes summarize the most important results and task