

Creating a Project Communication Plan



Define deliberate mapping of audiences to information flows: what, channel, frequency, owner



Poor communication is the #1 project failure driver, risking **\$75M per \$1B spent**



Move beyond ad-hoc emails to a governed, audience-specific communication system



The High Cost of Poor Communication



- 1 in 3 project failures traced directly to communication breakdowns (PMI)



- \$75M at risk per \$1B spent due to ineffective communications



- Consequences extend beyond budget: delays, rework, fractured trust



- High performers create formal communication plans for nearly twice as many projects

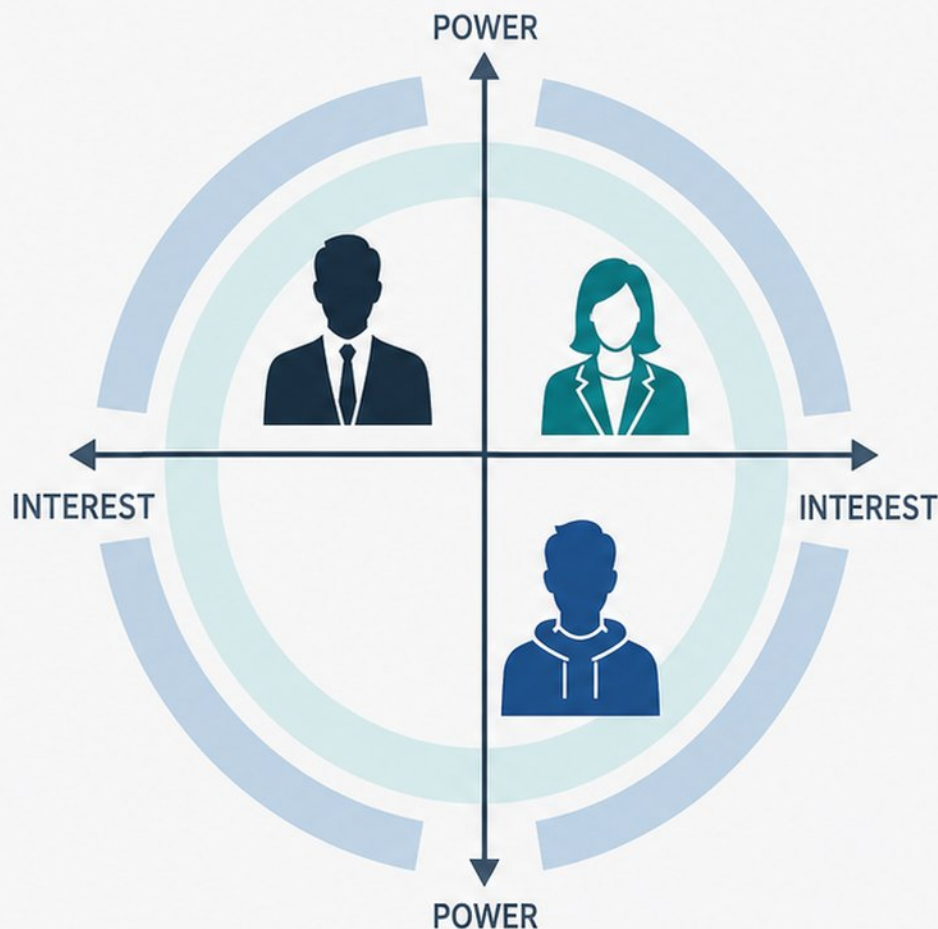


- Forensic case studies show cascading defects from early coordination failures





Audience Segmentation: Who Needs to Know



- Segment beyond names—categorize by influence, interest, and role (decision-makers, contributors, those impacted)



- Apply Power/Interest grid & RACI to match detail level: executive sponsor vs. developer



- Build a stakeholder register capturing channel preference, information appetite, and frequency tolerance



- Poor targeting causes over-communication or information voids that breed rumor and distrust



Crafting the Right Message for Each Audience



- ✓ Sponsors need business impact and key decisions, not daily task lists
- ✓ Teams need blockers and next actions, not high-level financial summaries
- ✓ Executive 1-page RAG dashboard differs critically from a technical sprint update
- ✓ Tailor depth, tone, and urgency to match each stakeholder's actual needs
- ✓ Establish escalation criteria to balance transparency with confidentiality

Setting the Rhythm: Cadence and Timing



- Match frequency to work velocity: fast-changing detailed work = daily updates; stable strategic overview = monthly reviews



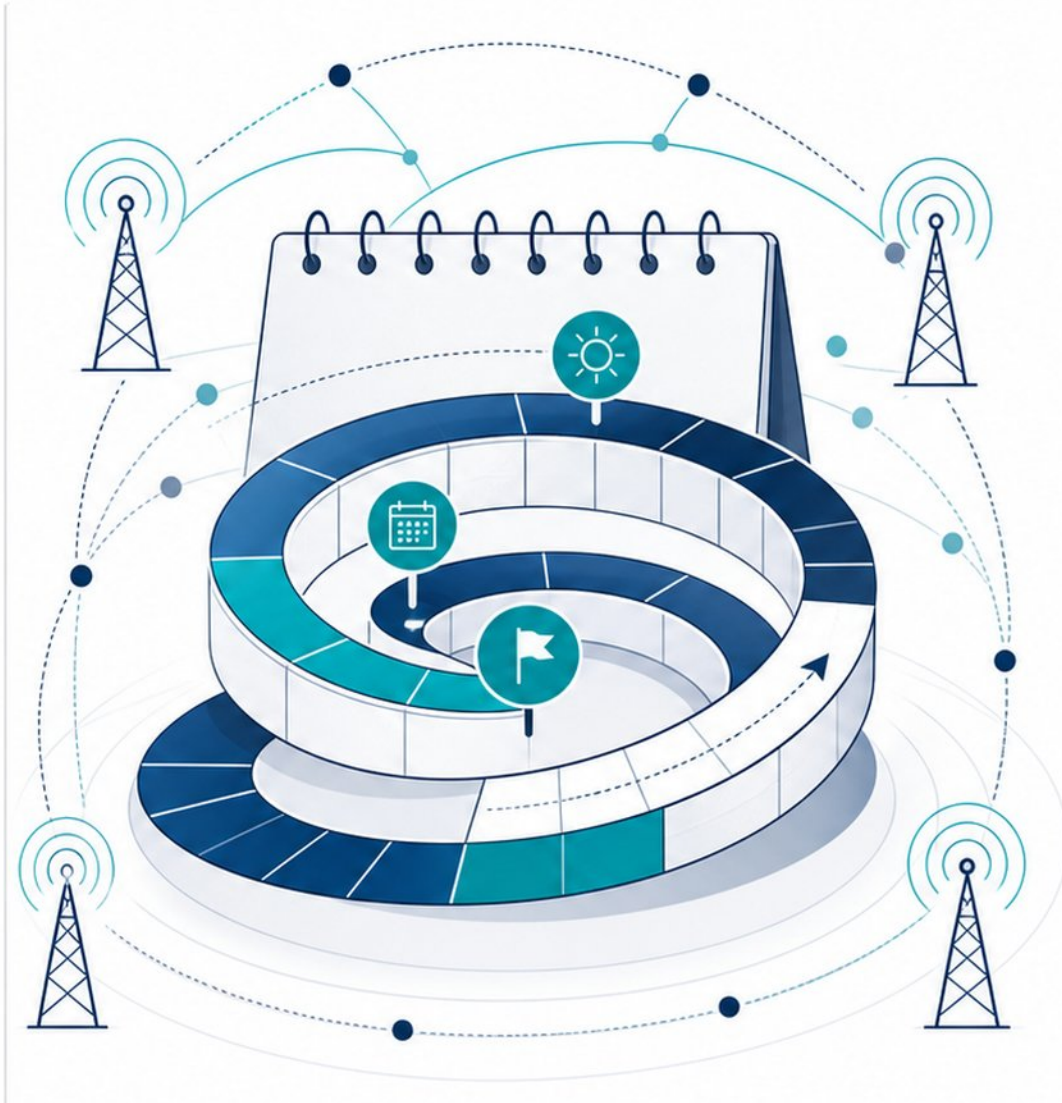
- Distinguish scheduled, milestone-based, and exception-driven (triggered) communications for risks



- Prevent information vacuums and stakeholder fatigue with a visual communication calendar



- Plan explicit cadence adjustments at phase gates and major change events



Choosing Effective Channels: Fit the Medium to the Message



- **Match urgency to medium:**
crisis → phone call;
routine update → async
written post



- **Use a decision matrix:**
map status, decisions,
risks, and recognition
to best-fit tools



- **Push vs. pull, sync vs. async:** choose based on
message complexity and
receiver habits



- **Integrate to avoid fragmentation:** attach
discussions to tasks,
files to channels



Assigning Ownership: Who's Responsible



- Replace collective 'we' with a single named owner for every communication item



- Apply RACI to separate drafter, approver, and sender for executive messages



- Build escalation paths with clear backup owners and time-bound triggers



- Governance ensures communication remains deliberate, not ad-hoc



The Core Artifact: Building Your Communication Matrix



The diagram features a bridge spanning the top of the table, with a central circular icon containing three people and speech bubbles. Dotted lines connect this icon to the 'Audience', 'Message', and 'Channel' columns. The table itself has six columns: Audience, Message, Channel, Frequency, Owner, and Format. Below the column headers, two rows of examples are provided. The first row represents an 'Executive Sponsor' with a 'weekly on-track/off-track email' owned by a 'PM' in 'email' format. The second row represents a 'QA team' with 'daily standup notes' in their 'project management tool', owned by a 'team member' in 'notes' format.

 Audience	 Message	 Channel	 Frequency	 Owner	 Format
Executive Sponsor	weekly on-track/ off-track email	email	weekly	PM	email
QA team	daily standup notes	their project management tool	daily	team member	notes



- Six critical columns: Audience, Message, Channel, Frequency, Owner, Format



- Executive Sponsor example: weekly on-track/off-track email, owned by PM



- QA team example: daily standup notes in their project management tool



- The plan lives in the team's workspace, not a forgotten folder



Getting Buy-In: Review and Sign-Off



Position the plan as a foundational governance document, drafted before the kick-off



Present at kick-off; ask stakeholders if the channel and cadence fit their constraints



Secure explicit commitment and distribute the finalized plan



Reference it in every status report header as the single source of truth



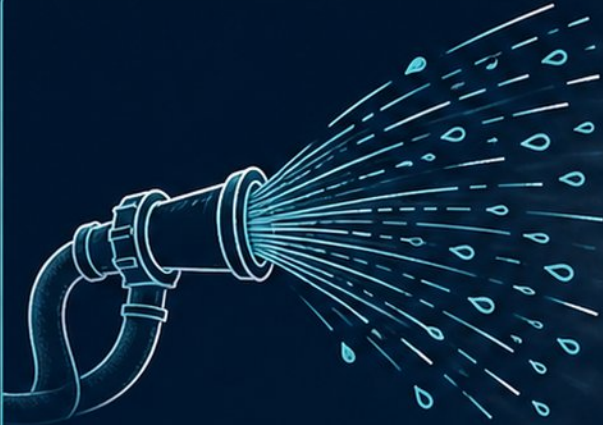
Execution, Feedback Loops, and Continuous Improvement

- Automate notifications from status changes using Zapier or Make to reduce manual work
- Measure effectiveness: track update requests, detail level satisfaction, and retro feedback
- Schedule mandatory reviews at every major milestone and after scope or sponsor changes
- Treat your communication plan as a living document with a named update owner





Navigating Common Pitfalls



- "Spray and Pray": Over-communication causes fatigue. Apply "right info, right audience" ruthlessly.



- "Information Void": No news breeds rumors. Stick to the cadence even with "on track" messages.



- "Static Planning": Plans decay fast. Treat it as a living doc with a named owner and scheduled updates.



- Schedule mandatory plan reviews at every phase gate and major scope change.

Your Action Plan and Toolkit



“Pick one active project: list stakeholders and define their core information needs first.”



“Download ready-to-use templates: communication matrix spreadsheet, channel selection guide, and escalation language.”



“Commit to a 30-day review cycle: on the first Monday, ask what worked, what was noise, and what must change.”



“Remember: A communication plan that never changes is not a plan.”



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