

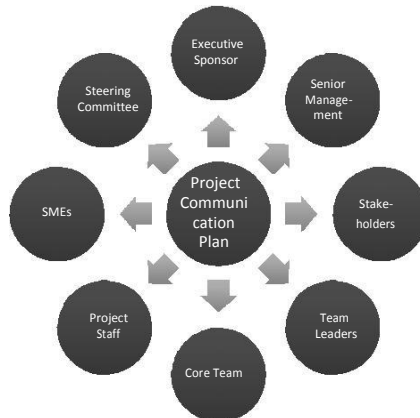
Scaling Up Your Project Toolkit: *Communication Is Key*

As projects get bigger, their complexity grows exponentially. The tools and techniques you use to keep a small project under control are not necessarily going to be effective when you are dealing with a major initiative that involves a lot of stakeholders from many parts of the organization. There are far more moving parts and competing agendas to manage; the risks for both the individuals and the organization as a whole are much greater, and even where there is agreement on the overall goals of the project (which may itself be difficult to achieve) it is probably going to be hard to maintain alignment on how to get there.

A big project relies on basic project management tools as much as a small one—but they're not enough. The bigger your project, the more people are involved in it, the more important it becomes to place communication at the center of your approach.

Meet with the Executive Sponsor every week

The success of a major initiative depends on strong, visible sponsorship at the top, and on the willingness of people across the organization to commit time and effort to the project. A regular half-hour meeting with the executive sponsor keeps them engaged as well as informed, and provides the opportunity to enlist their support against the elements who are pushing back against your project priorities. Don't waste executive time on low-level details: focus on the high-level accomplishments vs. goal, and what support you need to maintain progress over the next week.



An effective project communication plan addresses all the players in a project with role-appropriate tools and messages

Communicate regularly with senior management

The senior managers in the business units your project touches have the power and influence to allocate or withhold resources you need, and to be important allies or opponents. You need to communicate clearly at the start the benefits they will receive as a result of this initiative. Take a little time to identify how your project can address the pain experienced in their area. On a continuing basis keep them informed of your progress and any opportunities that have been identified for their area. Make sure you establish an open two-way communication to promote trust and cooperation.

Establish a communication plan that involves all levels of the project

In addition to the executive and senior management, you need to communicate regularly with the steering

committee, process owners, subject matter experts, project team, and staff. For each of these groups it is important to plan the frequency, method, message, and style of communication that will best serve the project goals. For example, in addition to weekly meetings with the executive sponsor you should also meet weekly with the core team, circulate weekly summaries to management by email, and review progress on deliverables regularly.

Communicate pro-actively

Frequent contact and careful expectations management can prevent minor issues from growing into major fires. Remember that informal conversations can be as important as formal meetings and memos—or more so. Make that work to your advantage, not against you.