

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN (CMP) FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN PROJECT MANAGERS

A Communications Management Plan (CMP) is the end-product of the project communication planning process, an early project planning phase employed to “determin(e) the information and communication needs of the stakeholders: who needs what information, when will they need it, and how will it be given to them” (from A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge. Upper Darby, Pa: PMI Standards Committee, Project Management Institute, 1996, available from <http://www.tks.buffalo.edu/pm/pmbok1996.pdf>, accessed on July 18, 2010).

Instructional Design Project Managers define a Communication Management Plan (CMP) to document what to communicate, when to communicate, and how to communicate with the key internal and external project stakeholders, such as the project client, SMEs, instructional designers, programmers, web developers, A/V producers, graphic designers, and quality assurance personnel.

Instructional Design Project Managers use CMPs to lead, motivate, inform and document throughout the entire project from launch to close; and as as part of their risk mitigation strategies to ensure that project decisions, changes, and progress are communicated to the right people at the right time and with the right level of detail.

Analogous to the instructional design process, creating a CMP includes an analysis, design, and develop phase, an implement phase and an evaluate phase.

Step 1: Analyze and Document

Step 2: Draft CMP

Step 3: Review and Revise

Step 4: Obtain Sign Off

Step 5: Disseminate CMP

Step 6: Periodically Review

Analysis, Design, Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Depending on the size of your Instructional Design project, the depth to which you delve into these steps and the level of detail that you include will vary widely. For smaller projects with few stakeholders, your plan may be a single page or contained in a single email communication. For larger projects, your CMP will likely be longer, more detailed, and more formal.

Common project communications for the Instructional Design Project Manager to consider are Project Status Reports, Budget Reports, Risk Reports, Weekly Deliverables & Issues, Project Issues, Completion of tasks/Schedule delay, Changes, and Meeting Notes.

As you design your CMP consider it as a tool to foster open and transparent communication during your ID project, but take care to avoid too much communication or an overly engineered process that does not match your communication goals.

CREATING YOUR CMP – STEP BY STEP TIPS

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- In Step 1 Analyze Your Stakeholders
 - Whom do you need to communicate with, and why do you need to communicate to them? Why do they need to know and what are the expected results of communicating this info?
 - What type of info do you need to communicate to each of your stakeholders (e.g. milestones/progress, expenses, decisions, changes)?
- Define Communication Methods/ Frequency
 - What format/vehicle will you use for this information (e.g. status update for boss via email, weekly conference call with contractors, bi-weekly in-person meeting with core project team)?
 - How often will you communicate this info, and who is responsible for ensuring that communication happens as scheduled?
- Document your findings
 - Consider using a Project Role Matrix or Stakeholder Directory to document contact info for key individuals, their project roles, and the communication deliverable they will receive.
 - Create a Communication Matrix of communication deliverables, audience, objective, delivery mode, frequency, and owner. The CMT forms the core of your CMP, detailing your communication deliverables.

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- In Step 2 Draft your CMP, which may contain these sections:
 - Revision History and CMP Approval or Signature Page.
 - Intro (CMP Purpose/ Scope/Objectives & Communication Constraints).
 - Role Matrix or Stakeholder Directory and Communication Matrix Table.
 - Other sections, such as meeting guidelines or glossary of acronyms.

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- In Step 3 Review: Share your draft with key stakeholders and revise as needed.

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- In Step 4 Sign off: Obtain approval of the plan from main project stakeholder(s), for example, the client and your boss.

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- In Step 5 Distribute: Provide access to key stakeholders and project team members. Consider who should have access and where the CMP will reside.

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- In Step 6 Review Periodically: Are there new stakeholders? Do you need more/less communication? Are you achieving communication objectives as documented in your CMP Introduction?

This sample Role Matrix lists the contact details for individuals involved in an ID project for a non-Profit client.

Partnership for a Nation of Learners					
Project Role Matrix/Stakeholder Directory					
Name	Title	Company	Role/Stakeholder Group	Contact	Deliverable
Kim Davis	CEO	SLS	Management (Internal Executive Stakeholder)	kim@sls.com; 310-555-5678	Status reports; Budget reports
Mary Paricer	Project Manager	SLS	Project Manager (Project Team)	mary@sls.com; 310-555-9988	Status reports; Budget report; Weekly Deliverable; Project Issues; Completion of tasks; Schedule delay; Changes; Meeting Notes
Ken Stenson	Director	PNL	Project Sponsor (External Executive Stakeholder)	ken.stenson@pnl.org; 202-778-9988 x 466	Status reports
Marla Mohan				marla@sls.com; 310-555-5678	Status reports; Weekly Deliverables; Project Issues; Completion

This sample Communication Matrix lists the ID project's communication audience, deliverables, objective, delivery mode, frequency, and owner.

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Communication Matrix Table					
Audience	Deliverable	Description/Objective	Delivery Mode/Media	Frequency	Owner
Management Project Sponsor Project Manager Project Team	Status report	PNL Project status update	E-mail	Bi-Monthly	Project Manager
Management Project Manager	Budget report	Report on PNL project expenditures	E-mail	Monthly	Project Manager
Project Manager Project Team	Weekly Deliverables; Project Issues	Progress reports; Updates on project issues; Personal material and information; Local meeting notes	Project Team Meeting	Weekly	Project Team
			Meeting	Weekly	Project Team
					Project Manager

