

# Developing Your Project Communication Plan

Kay Roman, PMP

This is the last installment in a 4-part series on Communication Planning for Project Success. Part 1 focused on the reasons project communication planning is so important. Part 2 provided tools to help you analyze your project stakeholders and part 3 examined how to determine which communications vehicle will best meet the needs of your stakeholders. In part 4, we outline how to develop a project plan that incorporates the key elements necessary to maintain effective communication throughout the duration of your project.

Communication planning is much like baking your grandmother's famous Thanksgiving dessert. You may have all of the ingredients. Your family has high expectations. But without grandma's recipe, you're lost.

Such is the case with successful communication planning. Even though you may have identified and analyzed your stakeholders and determined the most effective communications vehicles – without a well-developed and implemented communication plan, you may have a recipe for disaster.

So how do you develop a communication plan to ensure your project's success? In this article, we outline the two types of communication plans to support and enhance communications throughout your project. As discussed in previous installments, the first step in building your plan is to identify your project stakeholders and determine the best communications vehicle. Next, you build your plan.

## Two Types of Communications Plans for Your Project

For all sized projects, a well-structured communications plan is a must from the beginning. Projects offer multiple opportunities for communications to your key stakeholders, and we recommend exploring two types of communication plans for your project to exploit these opportunities.

1. Regular or Ongoing Communication Plan
2. One-time or Event-driven Communication Plan

## Building Your Plan

### Regular or Ongoing Communications

Regular, or ongoing, communications include those opportunities you have to communicate to your project team members, sponsors, steering committee members, and other key stakeholders on a regular basis. These types of communication could include your regular status reports, scheduled project team meetings, monthly updates with the steering committee, or regularly scheduled campus updates on a project.

Use your stakeholder analysis to develop these routine and ongoing communications for the project. Review this plan at regular intervals (quarterly) to ensure that you are adequately communicating to those stakeholders who are closest to the project.

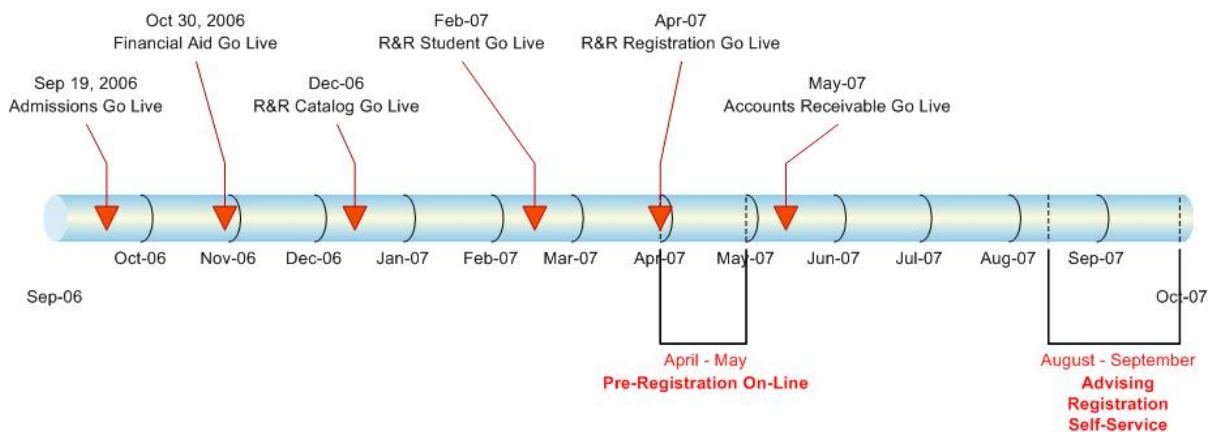
The chart on the next page provides an example of the types of communications to consider for your regular and ongoing communications. Don't forget to include your regular meetings and even one-on-ones that you may have with your sponsor

Communication	Purpose	Audience	Author	Communication Vehicle Location	Frequency
Monthly status report to campus executives	To keep the senior leadership of the campus informed of the project's progress and key upcoming activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive sponsors</li> <li>Steering Committee</li> <li>Executive Committee</li> <li>Computing Advisory Groups</li> </ul>	Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email to list</li> <li>Posting on project website</li> </ul>	Monthly
Weekly schedule metrics	Monitor and report progress on scheduled tasks. Troubleshoot problem areas and solve or escalate issues as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project management team</li> <li>Steering Committee</li> <li>Others, as appropriate</li> </ul>	Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email to list</li> <li>Posting on website</li> <li>Steering Committee meetings</li> </ul>	Weekly
Project team calendar	Keep project participants aware of key project dates and to help them manage their schedules. Maintain training calendars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All project participants (project management team, steering team, university community)</li> </ul>	Project Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post in project folders</li> </ul>	Updated as needed

### One-time or Event-driven Communications

During the life of any project, opportunities arise for one-time or event-driven communications. Work with your project team to identify those opportunities, like the example timeline. This plan could also include critical issues sessions, vendor meetings, training schedules, and roll-out schedules.

To gain the most advantage from the communications opportunities for your project, review this portion of your communication plan every month with your project team. Review the past month, and then look forward at least six months to ensure that as your project plan changes, you are able to capitalize on every communication opportunity.



Use the following template to identify one-time communications opportunities

<b>Opportunity</b> <i>(Examples)</i>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Vehicle(s) &amp; Methods of Communication</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Message</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>
Go Live Dates					
Training Dates					
Registration Deadlines					
Completion Deadlines					

When developing your communications plan keep in mind that the key is to always have the receiver as the focal point—not the sender. Make your communications deliberate and focused.

By making sure that your plan is clear and thoroughly outlined, you can help reduce the number of problems and surprises that pop-up and have a project as successful as a perfect soufflé.



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