

B2B: 6 Tips on Project Communication Management

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However bright your managers are, however well you perform, it won't make your project successful unless you communicate right.

Having had a finger in many pies as an outsourcing project manager, I am sure that bad communication is the reason why nearly 50 percent of projects fail to achieve the necessary results.

What should you do to avoid such a mistake?

Align the expectations. Make sure that all the expectations of the project's stakeholders are the same or at least do not contradict each other. Make sure that all your team members know exactly what is expected of them. It will spare you a lot of mistakes and keep your nerves calm.

Make your communication regular, make it predictable. If you don't spare a time slot for project communication in your schedule in advance, you won't find time for it later or it will be hectic. The same goes for your project team members and the customer representatives. It's easier for them to exchange the news on a weekly basis at a certain hour than to cram your unexpected meeting into an already full calendar.

Ask questions. "How's it going?" is not enough. Don't assume you know everything, the situation changes quickly. Ask specific questions: Where are we with the materials? With the personnel? With the deadlines?

Use different channels, so you can reach different audiences and align your ways of communication with the team's needs. Moreover, you have to change the channels of communication as people get used to them and lose interest. Switch from letters to telephone, from telephone to videoconferences, choose new ways to deliver your message.

And I must say that there is nothing like personal contact. Unfortunately, no means of communication can replace a face-to-face meeting. I have a rule: If you exchanged letters twice and still have questions, drop the writing and call your interlocutor or arrange a meeting. A telephone conference or a cozy chat over a cup of coffee will clear up any misunderstanding there may be.

Repeat. Don't be sure that if you've said it once, everybody heard and understood your message. People have a bundle of work to do and a lot to think about; they forget quickly, they misinterpret, they may have not been listening to you at the moment or may have been distracted while reading your letter. Say what you want to say once, then sum it up and repeat later. Write down all the things you agreed on with your team members and customers to ensure that you understood each other correctly.

Be quick. Deliver the news as soon as it happens. If your team members have a different picture of what is going on, at least their actions won't be coordinated. But more likely a lot of mistakes will be made, a lot of time and resources wasted. Feed your people with information as attentively as a mother nourishing a baby. Everybody should know what's going on and what to expect at any time. If anybody is surprised about a project status review, you must have made a mistake somewhere.

But even if you make a mistake, do not cry your eyes out. As soon as you become an experienced project manager, you will learn to forgive yourself. Any mistake is curable.

You see, a good project communication is very simple. Simple, clear and transparent. But to make it simple is hard enough.

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