Project Communication and Documentation

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Chapter 8

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Learning Objectives

- Suggestions for enhancing personal communications
- Effective listening
- Various types of project meetings
- Formal project presentations
- Project reports
- Project documentation
Real-World Discussion

- According to many experts:
  - Communication skills are crucial for success.
  - Effective communication skills begin with active listening.
  - As the United States competes on a global basis, the importance of effective communication continues to increase.
  - Without effective communication, projects are often doomed to failure.
Personal Communication

- Can occur through words or nonverbal behavior.
- Can be face to face or use some other medium.
- Can be oral or written.
Oral Communication

- Provides a forum for discussion.
- Body language and tone are important.
- Body language can be used by the listener to give feedback to the speaker.
- Body language can be positive or negative.
Oral Communication (Cont.)

- Awareness of other cultures’ customs is important.
- One must not use offensive remarks.
- Oral communication should be straightforward.
- The timing of oral communication is important.
Written Communication

- Carried out through internal memos and external letters.
- Are ways to efficiently communicate with a group.
- May be appropriate as a follow-up to a face-to-face conversation or a phone call.
- Should be used mostly to inform, confirm, and request.
- Should be clear and concise.
Effective Listening

- The heart of communication is not words, but understanding.
- Not only to be understood, but also to understand.
- Half of making communication effective is listening.
Common Barriers to Effective Listening

- Pretending to listen
- Distractions
- Bias and closed-mindedness
- Impatience
- Jumping to conclusions
Improving Listening Skills

- Focus on the person talking.
- Engage in active listening.
- Ask questions.
- Don’t interrupt.
Types of Project Meetings

- Status review meetings
- Problem-solving meetings
- Technical design review meetings
Status Review Meetings

- Usually led or called by the project manager.
- The primary purposes are to inform, to identify problems, and to identify action items.
- Should be held on a regularly scheduled basis.
Status Review Meetings
Subjects for Discussion

- Accomplishments since last meeting
- Cost, schedule, and work scope:
  - Status
  - Trends
  - Forecasts
  - Variances
Status Review Meetings
Subjects for Discussion (Cont.)

- Corrective actions
- Opportunities for improvement
- Action item assignment
Problem-Solving Meetings: The Process

- Develop a problem statement.
- Identify potential causes of the problem.
- Gather data and verify the most likely causes.
- Identify possible solutions.
- Evaluate the alternative solutions.
- Determine the best solution.
- Revise the project plan.
- Implement the solution.
- Determine if the problem has been solved.
Technical Design Review Meetings

- A preliminary design review meeting
- A final design review meeting
Effective Meetings
Before the Meeting

■ Determine:
  ◆ Whether a meeting is really necessary.
  ◆ The purpose of the meeting.
  ◆ Who needs to participate in the meeting.

■ Distribute an agenda.

■ Prepare visual aids or handouts.

■ Make room & visual aid arrangements.
Effective Meetings
During the Meeting

- Start the meeting on time.
- Designate a note-taker.
- Review the purpose and the agenda.
- Facilitate—don’t dominate.
- Summarize the results at the end.
- Do not overrun the scheduled meeting time.
- Evaluate the meeting process.
Effective Meetings
After the Meeting

- Publish the meeting results within 24 hours after the meeting.
- The summary document should be concise.
- It should confirm decisions that were made and list the action items.
Preparing for a Presentation

- Determine the purpose of the presentation
- Know the audience.
- Make an outline.
- Use simple language.
- Prepare notes or a final outline to use during the presentation.
Preparing for a Presentation (Cont.)

- Practice, practice, practice.
- Prepare visual aids and test them.
- Make copies of handout materials.
- Request the audiovisual equipment well in advance.
- Go into the meeting room when it’s empty and get a feel for the surroundings.
Delivering a Presentation

- Expect a bit of nervousness.
- Know the first two or three sentences of your presentation.
- Talk to the audience, not at it.
- Speak clearly and confidently.
- Use appropriate animation.
- Do not stand in front of your visual aids.
Delivering a Presentation (Cont.)

- Build interest in your presentation.
- Keep to the key points in your outline.
- Know your closing lines.
- Allow time for interaction with the audience.
- When responding to questions, be sincere, candid, and confident.
Types of Project Reports

- Progress reports
- Final report
Progress Reports

- May include:
  - Accomplishments since prior report.
  - Current status of project performance.
  - Progress toward resolution of problems.
  - Planned corrective actions.
  - Problems or potential problems.
  - Milestones expected to be reached during next reporting period.
Final Report

- May include:
  - Customer’s original need.
  - Original project objective.
  - Degree to which the original project objective was met.
  - Brief description of the project.
  - Future considerations.
  - A list of all deliverables provided to the customer.
Preparing Useful Reports

- Make your reports concise.
- Write as you would speak.
- Put the most important points first.
- Use graphics where possible.
- Pay as much attention to the format of the report as to the content.
Project Documentation and Controlling Changes

- Many other documents may be created.
- Revisions can result from changes initiated by the customer or by the project team.
- Some changes are trivial; others are major.
- Various project documents will be revised to incorporate changes.
- Note when the revision was made and by whom on all documents.
- It is important to distribute updated documents in a timely manner.