How to Create a Project Communication Plan



Plan communication around decisions

A communication plan helps the right people receive and understand what they need.

Define the purpose

Identify the information and interactions required to coordinate work, make decisions and support the change. Include how people can respond, not just what the team sends.

Depot-rollout case

A company is introducing a dispatch tool at several depots. Executives need commitments and choices; local supervisors need readiness details; users need practical guidance.

Use the workshop

Build audience, purpose, content, channel, timing and ownership into a small plan, then inspect whether it works.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Name a decision that currently waits because the right information arrives late.

Identify the audiences

Different people can need different views of the same event.

Map the needs

Review stakeholder roles, authority, impact, location, language, access and working patterns. Group people where their communication needs are genuinely similar.

Depot case

The sponsor needs an integrated forecast. Depot supervisors need cutover responsibilities. Dispatch users need a short practice scenario. Supplier teams need clear interface and decision records.

Confirm the assumptions

Ask representatives how they use the information and what is missing. A distribution list alone does not explain the communication need.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Choose one audience and validate what they need to do next.

State the objective of each interaction

A clear purpose helps decide what belongs in the message.

Use an action

Examples include approve an option, coordinate a handoff, understand a changed rule, confirm readiness or provide feedback. Write the intended result explicitly.

Depot case

A readiness review asks each supervisor to confirm staffing and support conditions. A general progress update would not necessarily produce that evidence.

Test the value

If nobody can explain what should change after the interaction, reconsider its content, timing or necessity.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Rewrite a recurring update around a specific intended result.

Choose the information

Include enough evidence for the purpose without overwhelming the reader.

Prioritise content

Select the current position, changed facts, consequences, options, required action and deadline. Keep definitions, status date and confidence understandable.

Depot case

The sponsor's note shows forecast rollout dates, the main capacity risk and a decision on extra training. Technical logs remain linked as supporting evidence.

Keep the thread

Explain what changed since the previous report and why it matters. Avoid forcing the audience to reconstruct the decision from disconnected attachments.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Remove one detail that does not help the audience act.

Select suitable channels

Channel choice affects speed, understanding and access.

Match the situation

Use appropriate meetings, written records, demonstrations, dashboards, brief calls or rehearsals. Consider urgency, complexity, accessibility and the need for a durable decision trail.

Depot case

A written cutover checklist supports repeatable preparation. A live rehearsal helps users practise an exception. A significant approval needs the organisation's recorded decision route.

Confirm the result

A message delivered by a tool is not proof that the recipient understood it. Use acknowledgement or discussion when the decision requires it.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Choose a channel for a complex decision and explain why it fits.

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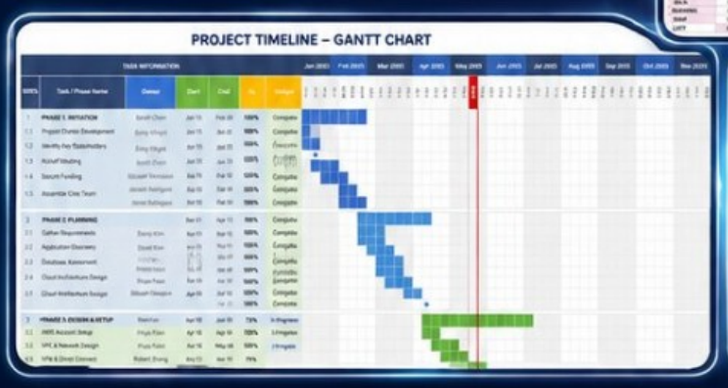
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Set cadence and event triggers

The timing should match when people can still act.

Use both patterns

Schedule regular information where useful, and define event-triggered updates for significant changes, risks or decisions. Consider the audience's operating calendar.

Depot case

A weekly sponsor review monitors the integrated forecast. A predicted cutover failure is raised when discovered rather than held for the next routine meeting.

Avoid noise

Too-frequent low-value updates can hide important information. Adjust the rhythm using feedback and actual decision needs.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Name an event that requires communication outside the normal cadence.

Assign preparation and decision owners

A useful plan states who creates, checks, receives and acts on the information.

Define the responsibilities

Name the content owner, reviewer where required, facilitator, decision authority and record keeper. Confirm their capacity and expected response.

Depot case

The rollout coordinator compiles readiness evidence. Depot supervisors validate local facts. The service owner confirms operating acceptance under the agreed authority.

Keep escalation clear

If required input or a decision is late, use a defined route and deadline. A reminder without a decision owner may leave the same blockage.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Map one message from source data to recipient action.

A worked communication plan

Use a few rows that connect audiences with clear outcomes.

Sponsor review

Audience: sponsor. Purpose: decide material trade-offs. Content: forecast, risks and options. Channel: short decision review with linked records. Owner: PM. Trigger: agreed cadence or urgent exception.

Depot readiness

Audience: supervisors and service owner. Purpose: confirm readiness. Content: local checks and unresolved gaps. Channel: checklist and review. Owner: rollout lead. Trigger: before each cutover.

User learning

Audience: dispatch users. Purpose: practise key scenarios. Content: routine work and exceptions. Channel: accessible rehearsal and guidance. Owner: training lead. Trigger: before local launch.

Audience	Purpose	Owner
Sponsor	Material decision	PM
Supervisors	Local readiness	Rollout lead
Dispatch users	Scenario practice	Training lead

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Create a row with a purpose, owner and evidence of the intended result.

Design an escalation message

Urgency should be connected with an impact and a decision deadline.

Include the essentials

State the issue or forecast exception, objective affected, current evidence, options, recommendation, authority needed and latest useful decision time.

Depot case

Training capacity cannot support two cutovers next week. The PM presents a staggered option and an extra-support option with cost and readiness consequences.

Use the agreed route

Confirm receipt and track the decision. Sensitive or high-impact matters may require a different channel from routine status updates.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Write a short escalation that asks for a specific authorised choice.

Run meetings with an outcome

A meeting should produce decisions, learning or coordination worth its cost.

Prepare the work

Define purpose, required participants, inputs and expected outputs. Send useful evidence early enough and separate information that can be read from questions needing discussion.

Depot case

The readiness meeting checks unresolved conditions and decides the next cutover action. It does not spend most of the time reading every completed checklist item aloud.

Record the result

Capture decisions, actions, owners, dates and unresolved questions. Confirm the record reflects what was actually agreed.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Choose one meeting and define its expected outputs before writing the agenda.

Maintain a reliable record

People need to know which information is current and authoritative.

Use document controls

Define the location, version, owner, status date and access arrangements for important plans, decisions and reports. Apply the relevant organisational rules.

Depot case

A supervisor finds two different cutover instructions. The coordinator identifies the current approved version, resolves the conflict and communicates the correct reference.

Keep links useful

Use stable references and make supporting evidence accessible to the intended audience. Avoid a dashboard that points to obsolete documents.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Check one critical instruction for owner, version and approval status.

Plan for feedback and understanding

Communication includes receiving and interpreting the response.

Choose a feedback route

Provide a way to ask questions, report confusion and confirm that the intended action is possible. Decide how the owner will review and respond.

Depot case

Users can explain a dispatch exception during rehearsal. Their questions reveal a missing operating rule, which the team resolves before wider launch.

Measure the effect

Use decision completion, demonstrated understanding or resolved gaps as evidence where appropriate. Counting sent messages alone does not establish effectiveness.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Identify how you will know one audience understood the change.

Support distributed teams

Location and time differences change how people can collaborate.

Design the handoffs

Use clear written context, ownership, time references, response expectations and accessible records. Reserve synchronous time for interactions that benefit from it.

Depot case

One depot works a night shift. The rollout team provides a suitable local rehearsal and records the decisions so the night team can use the same current guidance.

Inspect fairness

Check whether a standard meeting time repeatedly excludes a relevant group. Adjust the communication approach rather than assuming silence means agreement.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Find one audience affected by the current timing convention.

Handle sensitive information appropriately

A communication plan should respect the information's legitimate audience and purpose.

Use the actual rules

Consider confidentiality, commercial information, security and personal data under organisational policy and applicable requirements. Limit access and distribution appropriately.

Depot case

A general progress report needs a readiness summary, not detailed personal records from training attendance or unrelated supplier commercial terms.

Keep the decision possible

Provide authorised readers with the evidence they need through the correct route. Over-sharing and withholding necessary information can both create problems.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Check whether one report contains information its audience does not need.

Test the plan before a major event

A rehearsal can expose communication gaps while changes are still possible.

Walk the scenario

Simulate a cutover issue, trace the information route and check who can decide, who needs to know and where the record is kept.

Depot case

A test environment fails before launch. The team checks the contact route, decision authority, user notice and fallback instruction, then fixes missing details.

Adapt the plan

Update owners, channels, timing and guidance based on what the rehearsal shows. Confirm that affected people know the revised arrangement.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Run a short scenario through your escalation and notification routes.



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Your communication-plan desk check

Keep the plan connected with the work it is meant to support.

Check each row

Audience, purpose, information, channel, timing or trigger, owner, response and evidence should be clear enough for the team to use.

Check the whole system

Do important messages reach the right people in time, and can those people respond and act? Are current versions and decisions easy to find?

Use the depot case

The plan supports informed trade-offs, local readiness and user learning. Review it when roles, risks, delivery patterns or audience needs change.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Review one row after use and improve the part that failed its purpose.