

## MODULE 6

# Stakeholder Communication Strategies

Week 6 · 4 lessons · ~3 hrs

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**Lessons in this module:**

- **Lesson 6.1** — Why communication is the PM's most critical skill
- **Lesson 6.2** — Building a Communications Management Plan
- **Lesson 6.3** — Managing difficult stakeholders
- **Lesson 6.4** — Conflict resolution in project teams

## LESSON 6.1

## Why communication is the PM's most critical skill

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Research consistently shows that project managers spend up to 90% of their time communicating . Poor communication is cited as the #1 cause of project failure in global surveys.

The communication model: Sender → Encode → Channel → Decode → Receiver → Feedback

Noise is anything that interferes with the message — jargon, cultural differences, emotional state, or technical issues with the channel.

As the number of people on a project increases, communication channels increase dramatically. Formula:  $N(N-1)/2$  . A team of 10 has 45 communication channels. This is why communication planning is essential.

## LESSON 6.2

## Building a Communications Management Plan

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The Communications Management Plan defines who needs what information, when they need it, in what format, and through which channel.

Key elements of the plan:

- Stakeholder communication requirements
- Frequency (daily, weekly, monthly, milestone-based)
- Format (status report, dashboard, email, meeting)
- Responsible party (who creates and sends each communication)
- Escalation procedures

**EXAMPLE**

Steering Committee receives a one-page executive status report every Friday by 3 PM. Project team receives a detailed Gantt update every Monday at 9 AM standup.

## LESSON 6.3

## Managing difficult stakeholders

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Not every stakeholder will be supportive. The PM must actively manage resistance, conflict, and disengagement.

Stakeholder engagement levels (PMI model):

- Unaware — does not know about the project or its impact
- Resistant — knows the project but opposes the change
- Neutral — neither supportive nor resistant
- Supportive — knows the project and supports it
- Leading — actively promotes the project's success

The PM's goal is to move stakeholders from Unaware/Resistant toward Supportive/Leading through engagement, transparency, and early involvement.

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## LESSON 6.4

## Conflict resolution in project teams

Conflict is natural and, when handled well, can lead to better decisions. The PM must address conflict constructively.

5 conflict resolution techniques (from most to least preferred by PMI):

1. Collaborate / Problem Solve — work together to find a solution that satisfies all parties (win-win)
2. Compromise / Reconcile — both parties give something up to reach a middle ground
3. Accommodate / Smooth — emphasize agreement, downplay differences (temporary fix)
4. Force / Direct — one party's view wins (creates resentment)
5. Withdraw / Avoid — postpone the issue (only appropriate for trivial or cooling-off situations)

**KNOWLEDGE CHECK**

According to PMI, which conflict resolution technique is most preferred?

- A) Forcing
- B) Withdrawing
- C) Compromising
- D) Collaborating / Problem Solving

✓ **Answer: D — Collaboration creates a win-win outcome and is PMI's preferred approach to conflict resolution.**