

Communicating for Effect

*PMI Melbourne Chapter
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1

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Agenda

Introduction

- **Communications Theory**
- **Symptoms of Communications Failure**
- **Project Success**
- **Effective Project Communications**
- **Dealing with uncertainty**
- **Conclusion**



2


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This section

Comms Theory

- **Overview of Project Communications**
 - *Sender / Receiver / Feedback*
 - *Message / Medium / Noise*
- **Communications Filters**
 - *Packaging*
 - *Pattern Recognition*
- **Culture**

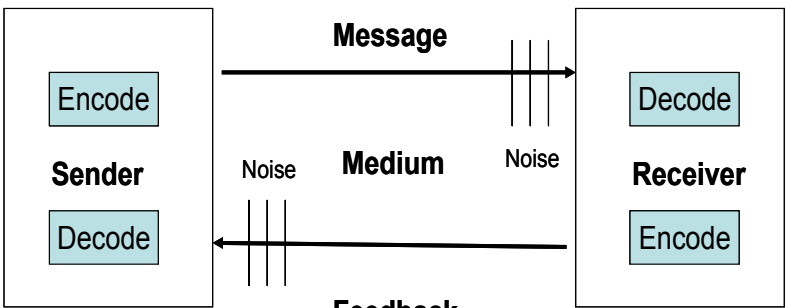


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Communications Overview

Comms Theory

- **Sender / Receiver / Feedback**
Message / Medium / Noise



Source PMBOK Guide 3rd Edition

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Communications Filters

- **Packaging**



Where is the car?



Where is the dirt on the car?


Comms Theory

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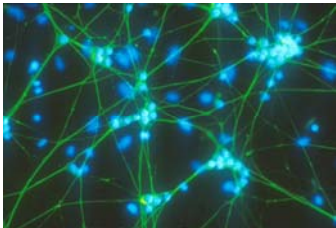
Communications Filters

- **Pattern Recognition**



Every new stimulation of the brain causes synapse paths to form

To save energy the brain tries to deal with new stimulation through trying to match with previous patterns – this is the first and automatic response



Comms Theory

6

Source: Rock, D., (2006) *Quiet Leadership*
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Comms Theory

Culture

- **Culture is: 'how we do things around here' and cultural norms are the 'unwritten rules of behaviour'**
- **A person's culture (national, professional, organisational) influences how messages will be sent and received (communication style)**
- **Understanding communication style prevents misunderstandings and helps build empathy**




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Comms Failures

This Section

- **Symptoms of Communication Failures:**
- **Inadequate Allowances**
- **Scope Inadequately Defined**
- **Inadequate Contingencies**




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Inadequate Allowances

Comms Failures

- **Time too short**
- **Insufficient budget**
- **Consequence: Causes project to over run**
- **Potential communication failures:**
 - *Project estimates not believed (lack of credibility)*
 - *Project estimates not requested (lack of visibility or understanding)*




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Scope Inadequately Defined

Comms Failures

- **Consequence: Causes project to fail to meet stakeholder expectations**
- **Potential communication failures:**
 - *Project management processes not communicated to decision makers (lack of understanding)*
 - *Inadequate time allowed for planning and scope definition (lack of credibility)*
- **Not necessarily a problem if:**
 - *Adequate contingencies are allowed and*
 - *The project works to define its scope*



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Inadequate Contingencies

- **Failure to create adequate contingencies**
- **Consequence: Causes project to over run**
- **Potential communication failures:**
 - *False belief in accuracy of PM processes (failure to communicate limitations)*
 - *Lack of information on variability in environment (failure to receive appropriate messages from the 'environment')*
 - *Lack of confidence in PMs to manage uncertainty and risk (failure of relationships)*



11

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Successful projects

- **Meet or exceed key stakeholders expectations**
- **Deliver the expected benefits:**
 - *Value (time / cost /scope)*
 - *Acceptable risk profile*
 - *Maintain effective relationships*
- **Note: Stakeholder Expectations can be managed by effective communications**



12

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Effective Comms

This Section

- **The Elements of Effective Communication:**
- **Right message**
- **Right messenger**
- **Right medium**
- **Stickiness**
- **Communicate for Effect**




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Effective Comms

Right message

- **Relevance of message**
- **Accuracy of information**
- **Timeliness of information**
- **Clarity of information**
- **Viewed from the stakeholder's perspective**





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Effective Comms

Right messenger & medium

- Access to receiver
- Credibility
- 'Dead tree media'
- Electronic 'portholes'
- 'Hot Air'
- Formal or informal



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Effective Comms

Stickiness = SUCCESS*

- Messages need to be 'sticky' to be successful
- SUCCESS
- S - Simplicity
- U - Unexpectedness
- C - Concreteness
- C - Credibility
- E - Emotional
- S - StorieS



* Made to Stick – Chip Heath and Dan Heath

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Effective Comms



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Communicate for Effect

Effective Comms

- **Focus on stakeholders that matter**
- **Communicate in a way that works (what is in it for them?)**
- **Communicate for a reason**
- **Monitor the effectiveness of the communication**
- **The *Stakeholder Circle*® is one tool designed to support these processes***

* www.stakeholder-management.com


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Networks

This Section

- **Networks, Culture and Messages**
- **The project environment**
- **Influence Mapping**
- **Creating Change**




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Networks

Networks, Culture and Messages

- **The project is surrounded by a network of communications**
 - *To and from the project (mapped by Stakeholder Circle)*
 - *Between stakeholders (frequently unknown and unseen)*
- **The network creates, defines and maintains the surrounding culture**
- **The communication network cannot be controlled by the project**
- **But it can be used and influenced**




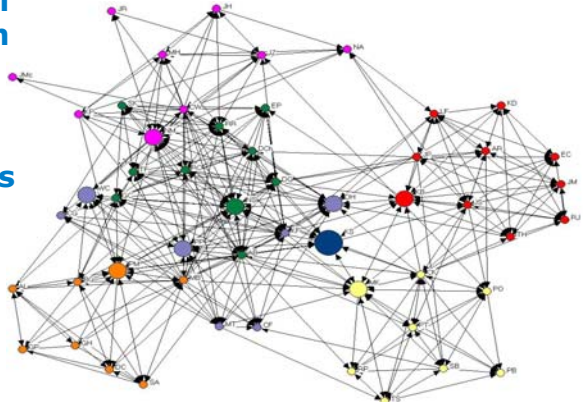
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Influence Mapping

Networks

- Direction of Influence
- Strength of Connection
- Degree of support
- Willingness to help




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Creating Change

Networks

- Repetition builds belief
- Credibility is vital (messenger and message)
- Changing and creating cultural norms
 - Takes time and requires consistent effort
 - 'One bad apple spoils the barrel'
- Work as a team, PMO and **all** of the projects
- Recognise degrees of accuracy and uncertainty – don't promise the impossible




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Uncertainty

This Section

- **Estimating Errors (time and cost)**
- **Dealing with Uncertainty**
- **Control systems don't control anything**




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Uncertainty

Estimating Errors

- **All project forecasts are wrong!**
 - *Tasks will be accomplished quicker or slower than planned*
 - *Tasks will cost more or less than planned, etc*
- **Entering data into SAP does not change the price paid for goods and services**
- **Entering data into MS Project does not control the future**
- **But the data does create expectations**




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Dealing With Uncertainty

Uncertainty

- Schedules, cost plans, WBS, etc have four primary purposes:
- To help the project team reach agreement on a planned course of action
- To help coordinate the work as it proceeds
- To identify when actual progress deviates from the plan
- To provide a basis for re-planning and re-organising work as needed



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Control Systems Don't

Uncertainty

- **Project 'control systems' don't control anything!** (and neither do managers)
- People control their actions; the environment dictates many 'uncontrollable' variables
- Good managers lead, motivate and provide direction assisted by their project plans
- The project plans also provide a tool for estimating the likely levels of uncertainty
- And then measuring the actual degree of variance as it occurs




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Control Systems Don't

Uncertainty

- **False attribution of certainty destroys the credibility of the plans when 'reality' arrives**
- **Whereas managing uncertainty effectively builds credibility**
- **But this requires the trust of senior managers (ie requires credibility)**
- **And depends on the cultural 'norms' of the network surrounding the project to allow effective risk management to occur**
 - *Particularly developing realistic contingencies and reserves*




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Conclusions

Conclusion

- **Successful projects are deemed to be successful by their key stakeholders**
- **Success = meeting or exceeding expectations**
- **Stakeholder expectations can be adjusted/ managed by effective communications**
- **Effective communications require**
 - *Planning*
 - *Implementing for effect*
 - *Monitoring*
 - *The **Stakeholder Circle**® is designed to assist with these processes**

*see: www.stakeholder-management.com



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Conclusions

- **Credible communications must:**
 - *Recognise cultural 'norms'*
 - *Recognise what is 'real' (and not promise the impossible)*
 - *Be supported by the 'project management team' within the organisation (PMO, other projects, etc)*
- **The ability to communicate effectively is a key prerequisite for achieving project success**



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Questions Please



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