Communications Management

SWEN 256 – Software Process & Project Management

There are many types of communication.

Sender

Receiver

|	
Internal	External
Formal	Informal
Vertical	Horizontal
Official	Unofficial
Written	Oral
Verbal	Nonverbal
Open/Plain	Paralingual

Channel / Noise

Technology?	Meeting?
From Who?	Context?

Communication is affected by method, channels, and blockers.

❧ Interactive vs. Push vs. Pull Communication

❧ Communication Channels

# Communication Channels	$\dfrac{N\,(N-1)}{2}$	N = the number of people
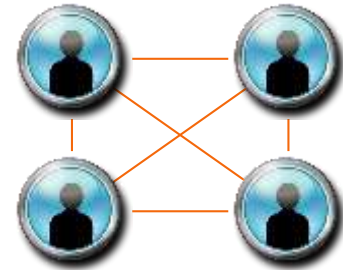
❧ Communication Blockers

- Obvious (Language, Culture, Noisy surroundings, Distance between parties)
- Less Obvious (Improper encoding of messages, Negativity, Hostility)

Status meetings — a necessary evil??

Ideally …

- You would never need them
- Status would already be known
- Communications would be instantaneous, up-to-date and accurate
- But life seldom matches the ideal

Daily scrum is a status meeting!
Sprint demos are status meetings!

Effective meetings

Some Good Ideas:

- Clear purpose and agenda announced beforehand

- Good advanced notice / Time limit for the meeting
- Regular but not too frequent
- Assign deliverables/action items from the meeting w/ clear time limits and distribution channels
- Document and publish meeting minutes

Communication should be planned, not spontaneous.

❧ Consider: culture, expectations, technology, methods, established policies and procedures

❧ Plan to Communicate: Who, when, what channel, and with what frequency

❧ Plan to Communicate: What

Type	Examples
Project Documents	Charter, PM Plan
Schedule/Resources	WBS, Resource needs, Meeting Schedule, Work Assignments (upcoming and current)
Status	General Status, Impacts to/from other projects, Performance Reports
Risks	New Risks, Uncertainties, Realized Risks (problems)
Change Control	Scope changes, CCB communications

Communication is at the heart of ethics.

As a PM or Team Member, communication is at the heart of ethical and honest behavior and responsibility.

- Try to understand the truth
    - Be careful – your perception of the truth may be false
    - Seek the whole truth
- Be truthful in all communications
    - Communicate honestly, even if the project is in trouble
- Create an environment where others tell the truth
    - Telling the truth consistently lets project team members know that only the truth is acceptable

Professionals are responsible in their communication.

Discuss

- Only accept assignments you are qualified to complete
  - Lack of qualification presents a major risk to the project
- Protect proprietary information, Report unethical behavior and violations
- Maintain an attitude of mutual cooperation
  - Consider other projects and operational work when asking for resources
  - Protect reputations of your team members as it relates to project work
  - Ask what communication method is favored by your stakeholders/team
- Be direct in dealing with conflict
  - Openly discuss conflict with the other party, not behind their back
- Continuously look for conflicts of interest and disclose them
  - Treat the search and resolution of conflicts of interest like risks

A communications plan increases the chance of a successful project.

What needs to be Communicated	Why	Between Whom	Best Communication Method	Responsibility for Sending	When / How Often

Stakeholder Communication

ೞ   ೞ

"Expectation Management"
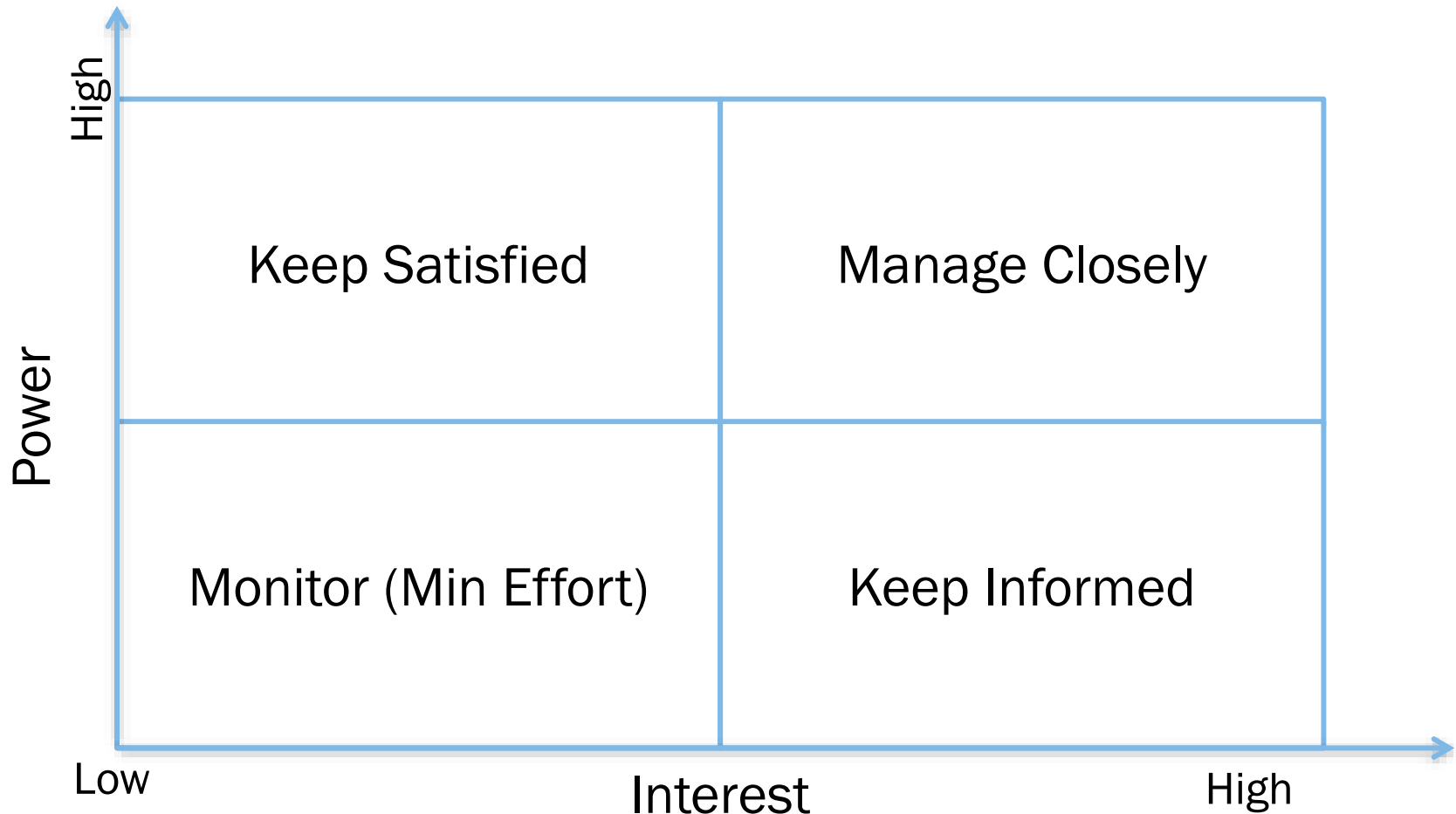
Stakeholders must first be identified.

1. Analyze Stakeholders continuously
2. Create and Maintain a Stakeholder Register
3. Create and execute a Stakeholder Management Strategy

Stakeholder Register – Project Title: Project Number:

ID	Name	Title	Department(s) /Supervisor	Contact Info	Impact					
					Major Req'ts	Main Ex-pectations	Influence (1-5)	Role(s) in Project	Responsibilities in Project	Classification
1										
2										

Each Stakeholder has a Power / Interest balance.

A Power/Interest grid with Interest on the horizontal axis (Low to High) and Power on the vertical axis (Low to High):

- Top-left (High Power, Low Interest): **Keep Satisfied**
- Top-right (High Power, High Interest): **Manage Closely**
- Bottom-left (Low Power, Low Interest): **Monitor (Min Effort)**
- Bottom-right (Low Power, High Interest): **Keep Informed**

The key is to manage Stakeholder Expectations.

- Items that may need regular communication
  - Schedule, Budget, Forecasts
  - Risk Register, Issue Log, Change Log
  - Items outside of the control of the project that affect the project
- Involves the application of Communication Methods, Interpersonal Skills, and Management Skills to manage expectations of people important to the project.

Many types of reports exist, each with a specific use.

- **Status Report** – Where is the project is against the performance measurement baseline?

- **Progress Report** – What has been accomplished?

- **Trend Report** – Is performance improving or deteriorating?

- **Forecasting Report** – What are the predictions for the future?

- **Variance Report** – How do the actual results compare to the baselines?

- **Earned Value Report** – Where is the project in pure Earned Value/Cost Management terms?

- **Lessons Learned** – What information could be useful for future projects?

Metrics and Reports are powerful tools if used correctly.

 Collecting information, analyzing it, packaging it, and sending it to Stakeholders.

- o Level of Detail
- o Appropriate communication channel
- o Don't let reports prevent you from managing the project
- o Are measurements against a consistent baseline
- o Truthful with accurate metrics
- o All three sides of the project triangle plus quality
- o Can and should be enhanced with forecasts
- o Get feedback
- o Use multiple types of reports

Communication needs to be managed.

- Communication concepts must be applied to both stakeholder and team communication

- Communication is not effective unless it is ethical and honest

- Stakeholder *Expectation Management* starts with understanding each stakeholder, then concentrates on deciding what communication is best for them

- Make reports and metrics useful by viewing them from the Stakeholder's perspective