

## **Communication: An Essential Skill for Project Managers**

Lisa Harvey Roach, MM, PMP, DTM  
President, Wisdom Consulting

Do you communicate well? Are you actively listening to your team members when you speak to them? Do you communicate differently in-person verses on Zoom? My guess is that we all could probably improve our communication skills and awareness.

In this article I will go back to the basics to propel us forward to have more dynamic, engaging, and productive conversations.

### **Why is Effective Communication Essential?**

- 1) Project success depends on effective communication.
- 2) Project Managers must be able to relate clear goals and plans to set and achieve project expectations.
- 3) Effective communication builds trust which leads to honest feedback from and with team members, stakeholders, and sponsors.

### **What Does Effective Communication Look Like?**

- 1) It is clear and concise.
- 2) You are able to get your point across to others.
- 3) Your message is tailored to the audience.
- 4) You know what to say, how to say it, and when to say it.
- 5) Your intent is clear whether in person or during a virtual meeting.

### **What are the Basic Keys to Building Rapport?**

- 1) Be present. Focus on what the person is saying. Use eye contact and do not multi-task.
- 2) Be mindful of your words, tone of voice, and body language. Remember words have meaning and people have feelings. People often comprehend and interpret conversations differently. For this reason, be sure that your words, tone of voice, and body language are matching.
- 3) Practice good listening skills. Take notes to avoid interrupting. Paraphrase the conversation to be sure you understand what was said.
- 4) During virtual meetings turn your video on to engage with others.

## What are Helpful Communication Tools?

There are numerous tools you can use to communicate effectively. Be creative! A few suggestions follow:

- 1) A Communication Plan. A communication plan will help you determine and monitor when, how often, and what format you will use to communicate with the various team members, sponsors, and stakeholders, throughout the life of the project. It should also include an escalation process and consideration for communicating virtually.
- 2) A RACI Chart. The acronym stands for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed. This chart will help you and others establish who is doing what on the project.

Responsible – Who is completing the task.

Accountable – Who is making decisions and taking actions on the task(s).

Consulted – Who will be communicated with regarding decisions and tasks.

Informed – Who will be updated on decisions and actions during the project.

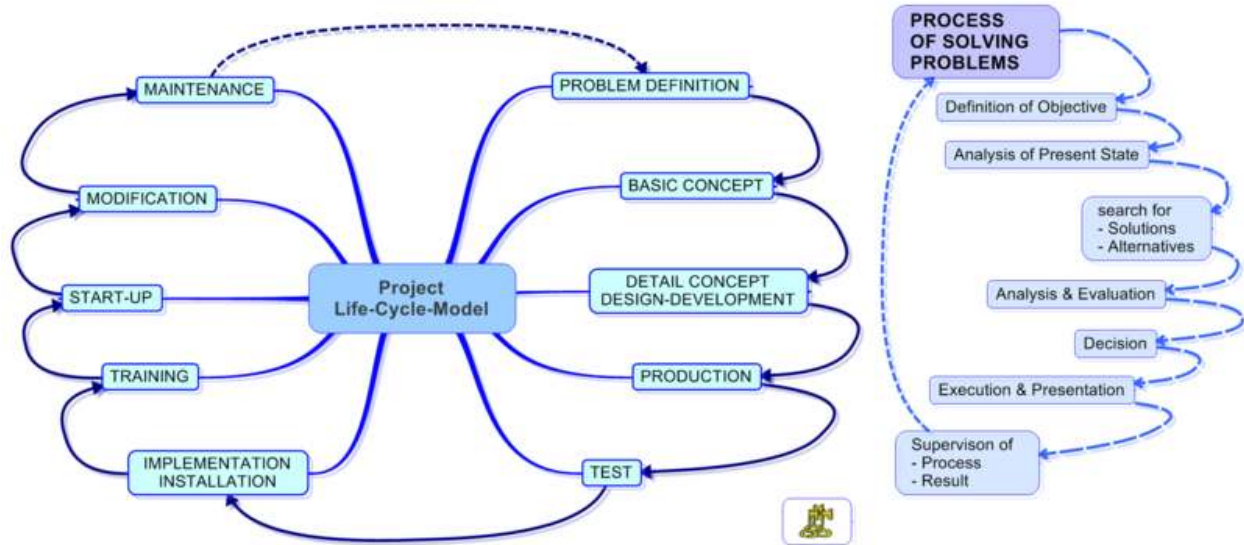
Sample RACI chart:

FUNCTION	PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT MANAGER	LEAD DEVELOPER	BUSINESS ANALYST
Initiate Project	C	A R		
Establish Project Plan	I	A R	C	C
Collate User Requirements	I	A	I	R
Define Technical Requirements	I	A	I	R
Develop Software	I	A	R	C
Test Software	I	A	C	R
Deploy Software	C	A	C	R

- 3) A Mind Map – During the September Breakfast Meeting, I shared how Mind/Idea Mapping could be used to communicate large amounts of data in a visual format. During my presentation, I gave a homework assignment to create a mind map for:
  - a. A guide for working with remote teams.
  - b. Causes and solutions for a lack of alignment on project goals when multiple departments/teams are involved.

If anyone completed the assignment, I would welcome a picture of your map(s).

Sample Mind Map:



The key to effective communication is to bridge the gap to make a connection. As Nat Turner said, "Good communication is the bridge between confusion and clarity." What type of communication bridge are you building? It is essential to be intentional!



Lisa Harvey Roach is a speaker, trainer, consultant, and engineer who is committed to helping others soar to their highest potential. Through her consulting and training, she shares proven strategies that help her clients win at work and in life.

For more information, contact Lisa through:

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lisaharveyroach/> or Email: [Lisa@LisaHarveyRoach.com](mailto:Lisa@LisaHarveyRoach.com)