# Project Communications: To Blog or Not to Blog
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We have all been told that communication with all stakeholders, particularly the core project team, is one of the central responsibilities of the Project Manager. We support this idea and have mentioned it in several of our previous articles. You may have seen a well-known communications formula of 'N(N-1)/2' used as proof that the addition of new members to any program or project team increases the number of communication channels exponentially. For example, if your team increases from 15 to 17, the number of possible communication channels goes up by 31; try the calculations and you'll see what we mean.

Applying this theory, a small team may have ten to fifty communication channels, while a large team may have thousands. A Project Manager should understand that the time required to manage communications grows with the number of channels, and begin to look for ways to effectively and efficiently communicate with their project stakeholders – keeping in mind that different stakeholders require different information at different times in the project. (Our article on Project Success Planning covers this topic.) With the ease and availability of blogs in today's corporate setting, you may be asking yourself, "Is blogging a good communication option for my project?"

Because each project phase requires the appropriate emphasis at a given time, the number of channels the program or project manager must manage varies throughout the lifecycle of a project. For example, in the early stage of a project – let's call it Preliminary (or Discovery, the term we use in our article "Nine Essential Steps for Project Success") – you may have a relatively low number of channels because you are only working with a few key stakeholders. In contrast, in the Execution or Deployment phase, your team will be fully engaged with many people. Further, communication by the project manager is a key area of focus as the project lifecycle draws to a close. Figure 1.1 below illustrates an example/typical scenario. (Note: the lifecycle phases are examples; your organisation probably has different ones).

Communication Channels in Project Lifecycle
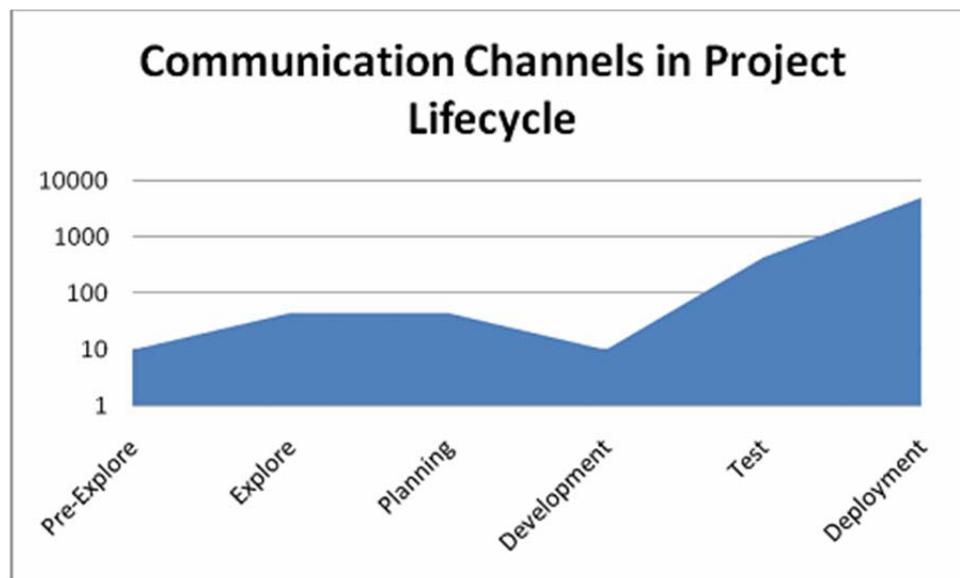
Clearly, managing communications with a large number of users can be challenging. As program / project managers, we are typically overly reliant on email to both send and receive written messages to stakeholders. This may entail managing a distribution list, and you can never be sure if you are over-communicating or under-communicating. In terms of communication, a good rule of thumb is that it's better to over-communicate than to do too little. We strive to be 'masters of our craft' and, therefore, we want to find a method by which we ensure that necessary and sufficient information is communicated, and that we are not saturating our team, customers, and other stakeholders with '**ToMITO**' (Too Much Information Too Often).

One suggestion to aid project communications to certain stakeholders is to use a Blog or an online forum, perhaps by utilizing the features of your company's intranet site or a secure site that offers this functionality. Blogs are a great way to send a general message or update to your audience. Wikipedia defines a blog as: \

> A **blog** (a blend of the term *web log*) is a type of website or part of a website. Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. *Blog* can also be used as a verb, meaning *to maintain or add content to a blog*. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via widgets on the blogs and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites.
>
> Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability of readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (art blog), photographs (photoblog), videos (video blogging), music (MP3 blog), and audio (podcasting). Microblogging is another type of blogging, featuring very short posts. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog
>
> As of 16 February 2011, there were over 156 Million public blogs in existence.

Stakeholders can choose or decline to subscribe to your blog updates. Forums are also an effective means to provide feedback and generate discussion among your project team and users. The benefit to you is that you can easily share one-to-many or solicit many-to-many messages among your base and rid yourself of your distribution lists. Use the following matrix to decide how to best use these mediums:

On a Blog/Forum	Not on Blogs or Forums
Tip and Tricks	Detailed Training
Committed Priorities and Schedules	Priorities and Schedules in Development
Progress Updates	User Acceptance Meetings
Indicators	Confidential Data
Downtime Announcements	

Are there downsides to blogging? For sure. Blogging will not be the communication mode of choice for all stakeholders, and it is certainly not the only channel to use. As with any well-planned project, you should conduct a full stakeholder analysis and build your specific communication plan based on the needs of your project team and their stakeholder "circle of influence" (using models such as the RACI one to determine who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed). We also all know that projects stakeholders come and go, so remaining current is vital.

As stakeholder needs vary, a Blog will not be "The method" for everyone, and you may have to duplicate information in different formats. This is a "fact of life" for projects, and not necessarily a bad thing. For example, if you have an IT project in the Testing phase, or a construction project and are carrying out the "punch-list" or "snagging remediation works," a Bug/Issue/Defect report on a Blog may not be appropriate – it may be too detailed. But a high-level summary may be appropriate for summary reporting to certain stakeholders. You will need to agree on the appropriate use of a blog and determine what should be tracked in formal documentation and other mediums of communication.

In conclusion, 'Blogging' can be a great "string to the bow" of the Project Manager for communicating information about your project to appropriate parties. Blogging should not be used to communicate all levels of information and its use should be planned, based on stakeholder communication needs as identified and agreed upon in your project communications plan. Effective blogging is a skill. Much guidance material is freely available on the Internet. If you are unfamiliar with blogging, we recommend you review a few of these readily available resources by searching for "tips for blogging". Lastly, always follow standard legal, business confidentiality and corporate guidelines and ensure you respond daily to your blog comments.

Article Author Bios

About The Article Authors, Their Roles Their Plans, And Their Goals	Gareth Byatt, Gary Hamilton, and Jeff Hodgkinson are experienced PMO, program, and project managers who developed a mutual friendship by realising they shared a common passion to help others and share knowledge about PMO, portfolio, program and project management (collectively termed PM below). In February 2010 they decided to collaborate on a five (5) year goal to write 100 PM subject articles (pro bono) for publication in any/all PM subject websites, newsletters, and professional magazines / journals.
	They have been translated into Arabic, Czechoslovakian, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian and published on websites in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, India, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, Turkey, UK, and the USA.
	Their mission is to help expand good program and project management practices by promoting the PM profession, to be a positive influence to the PM Community, be known as eminent influencers of PM practices, and in earnest hope readers can gain benefit from the advice of their 60+ years of combined experience and expertise and include the expertise of co-authors who write with them on certain articles and subjects. Gary and Jeff have all five (5) of the PMI 'Family of Credentials'. Along with writing articles, each also champions a role in the overall writing program collaboration process: → Gareth manages all requests for additional guest author collaborations → Gary manages the article development tracking and readership metrics → Jeff manages the article distribution and new readership demographics **Each can be contacted for advice, coaching, collaboration, and speaking individually as noted in their bios or as a team at: Contactus@pmoracles.com**
	Gareth Byatt has 15+ years of experience in project, program and PMO management in IT and construction for Lend Lease Corporation. Gareth has worked in several countries and lives in Sydney, Australia. Gareth has 14+ years of project, program, and portfolio management experience in IT and construction. He can be contacted through LinkedIn. Gareth holds numerous degrees, certifications, and credentials in program and project management as follows: an MBA from one of the world's leading education establishments, a 1st-class undergraduate management degree, and the PMP®, PgMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-SP® & PRINCE2 professional certifications. Gareth is also the APAC Region Director for the PMI's PMO Community of Practice and chairs several peer networking groups.

Gareth is currently a Director of the PMI Sydney Chapter, he is the APAC Region Director for the PMI's PMO Community of Practice and he chairs several peer networking groups.

He has presented on PMOs, portfolio and program and project management at international conferences in the UK, Australia, & Asia including PMI APAC in 2010.

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Gary Hamilton has 16+ years of project and program management experience in IT, finance, and human resources and volunteers as the VP of Professional Development for the PMI East Tennessee chapter. Gary is a 2009 & 2010 Presidents' Volunteer Award recipient for his charitable work with local fire services and professional groups. He has won several internal awards for results achieved from projects and programs he managed as well as being named one of the Business Journal's Top 40 Professionals in 2007.

Gary was the first person globally to obtain the five credentials PgMP®, PMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-SP® , CAPM® . In addition to these, Gary holds numerous other degrees and certifications in IT, management, and project management and they include: an advanced MBA degree in finance, Project+, PRINCE2, ITIL-F, MCTS (Sharepoint), MCITP (Project), and Six Sigma GB professional certifications.

Email Gary: Gary@PMOracles.com or contact him through LinkedIn.

Jeff Hodgkinson is a 32 year veteran of Intel Corporation, where he continues on a progressive career as a program/project manager. Jeff is an IT@Intel Expert and blogs on Intel's Community for IT Professionals for Program/Project Management subjects and interests. He is also the Intel IT PMO PMI Credential Mentor supporting colleagues in pursuit of a new credential. Jeff received the 2010 PMI (Project Management Institute) Distinguished Contribution Award for his support of the Project Management profession from the Project Management Institute. Jeff was also the 2nd place finalist for the 2009 Kerzner International Project Manager of the Year Award TM.

He lives in Mesa, Arizona, USA and is a member of Phoenix PMI Chapter. Because of his contributions to helping people achieve their goals, he is the third (3rd) most recommended person on LinkedIn with 555+ recommendations, and is ranked 54th most networked LinkedIn person. He gladly accepts all connection invite requests from PM practitioners at: www.linkedin.com/in/jeffhodgkinson. Jeff holds numerous certifications and credentials in program and project management, which are as follows: CAPM®, CCS, CDT, CPC™, CIPM™, CPPM–Level 10, CDRP, CSM™, CSQE, GPM™, IPMA-B®, ITIL-F, MPM™, PME™, PMOC, PMP®, PgMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-SP®, PMW, and SSGB.

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