VIESTINTÄ KANSAINVÄLISESSÄ PROJEKTIYMPÄRISTÖSSÄ: KANAVAT JA SIDOSRYHMÄT

International Business Communication

Master's thesis

Laura Kemppilä

2009

Department of Languages and Communication
HELSINGIN KAUPPAKORKEAKOULU
HELSINKI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

HELSINKI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
International Business Communication Master's Thesis
Laura Kemppilä

ABSTRACT
6 May 2009

COMMUNICATION IN A MULTINATIONAL PROJECT ENVIRONMENT: MEDIA AND STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Objectives of the study: This study focuses on communication in a multinational project environment, specifically from the perspectives of the media used and the stakeholders involved. The research question is: *What are the salient features of communication in a multinational business project from the perspectives of media and stakeholders?* The sub-questions are: *What media do various stakeholder groups prefer for effective communications? How should stakeholders be taken into consideration when planning the project communications?* One additional objective set by the sponsor company was to use the findings for development purposes in the case organisation.

Methodology and theoretical framework: The data for this study was retrieved from the case company through an electronic survey, structured interviews and a focus group discussion. From the literature review two models established the framework for the study: Firstly, the media richness model by Daft & Lengel as cited by Miller (2006) stating that effective managers will match the richness of the medium to the ambiguity of the task. The second model, Sveriges Informations förening's (1996), "value chain of communications" combines the stakeholder related theories. Slightly modified by the researcher the model reflects an ideal process of communication where a full circle –a genuine two-way communication symbiosis – would be created with the stakeholders.

Findings and conclusions: The salient features of communication in the case project were identified (see pp. 91-94). The found evidence did not prove particular preference between different stakeholder groups. Instead, in general, e-mail was found to be the preferred medium of communication among the multinational project's stakeholders. 86% of the program employees were satisfied with the case project communications.

Keywords: Project communications, international business communication, project management, project stakeholders and project media.

HELSINGIN KAUPPAKORKEAKOULU
Kansainvälinen Yritysviestintä, Pro Gradu -tutkielma
Laura Kemppilä

TIIVISTELMÄ
6. toukokuuta 2009

VIESTINTÄ KANSAINVÄLISESSÄ PROJEKTIYMPÄRISTÖSSÄ: KANAVAT JA SIDOSRYHMÄT

Tutkielman tavoitteet: Tämä tutkielma tutkii viestintää kansainvälisen yrityksen projektiympäristössä ja sen pääpaino asettuu käytettyjen viestintäkanavien ja tunnistettujen sidosryhmien analysointiin. Tutkimus hakee vastauksia seuraaviin kysymyksiin: *Mitkä asiat ovat tärkeitä viestintäkanavien ja projektin sidosryhmien osalta kansainvälisen liikeprojektin viestinnässä? Mitä viestintäkanavaa eri sidosryhmät suosivat projektiviestinnässä? Miten sidosryhmät tulisi huomioida projektin viestintää suunniteltaessa?* Yksi tutkimusyrityksen tutkimukselle asettama lisätavoite on pyrkimys käyttää kerättyä tietoa hyväksi aihealueen kehitystyössä yrityksen siinä organisaatiossa, jossa tutkittava projekti sijaitsee.

Tutkimusmenetelmät ja teoreettinen viitekehys: Aineisto kerättiin tutkimusyrityksestä sähköisen kyselyn, ohjatun haastattelun ja ryhmähaastattelun muodossa. Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa valittiin kaksi viitekehystä tutkimukselle: Daft & Lengelin "Media richness" viestintäkanavien sopivuus–malli (Miller, 2006), jonka mukaan vaikuttavat johtajat valitsevat viestintäkanavan viestin monimutkaisuusasteen mukaisesti. Toinen malli, joka poimittiin Ruotsin tiedotusyhdistyksen julkaisusta (1996) on "value chain of communications" viestinnän arvoketju, ja se vetää tutkimuksen teoreettisen osion sidosryhmien osalta yhteen. Pienen muokkauksen myötä malli kuvastaa viestinnän ideaalia prosessia, missä täysi ympyrä – aito kahdensuuntainen viestintäsymbioosi – luodaan sidosryhmien kanssa.

Tulokset ja päätelmät: Tutkimus onnistui tunnistamaan viestinnän tärkeät osatekijät tutkitun projektin osalta (katso sivut 91–94). Kerätty materiaali ei kuitenkaan riittänyt luomaan pohjaa päätelmille eri sidosryhmien välisestä viestintäkanavien käytön eroavuuksista. Sen sijaa yleisellä tasolla sähköposti osoittautui suosituimmaksi viestintäkanavaksi. 86% projektin työntekijöistä kertoi olevansa tyytyväisiä projektissa toteutettuun viestintään.

Hakusanat: Projektiviestintä, Kansainvälinen yritysviestintä, Projektihallinta, Projektin sidosryhmät ja Projektin viestintäkanavat.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research overview

This study focuses on communication in a multinational project environment, specifically from the perspectives of the media used and the stakeholders involved. It will provide food for thought for all who need to communicate in their work arena.

The idea for this research topic evolved step by step. Firstly, the researcher has conducted previous research of project management and entrepreneurship. Secondly, the researcher is a master's student of International Business Communication and works as a Communications Specialist in a project organisation of an international company. With this background it was decided that the research design would combine communications and project environment. The study aims at relevant findings for a future development plan targeted for the case organisation's project stakeholders.

Today companies develop their internal processes more and more in a project mode. In these projects different actors use their knowledge to build something new or better, compared to the prevailing situation. Projects collect these actors together either physically or virtually, and expect to receive, in a given timeframe and budget, a requested solution. In order for all this to take place the actors need to communicate and make the project a living web organisation instead of something stable and quiet. In a project, knowledge is built through communicating information which enables the project to reach its goal, i.e. provide a new or developed solution.

Saravirta's (2001, p. 253) study on project goal setting, success evaluation and decision making, confirmed that one of the success domains of a project is stakeholder relationships. Success domains structure the success measures so that the project goals become measurable and controllable. The five additional success domains identified were related strategy, project implementation, product, learning situation, and company functions.

1.1.1 Research questions

One of the present study's objectives is to study one of the above mentioned success domains, i.e. the stakeholders who possess or need to possess all the necessary knowledge of a project. The study will search data on how to plan the communications in such a way that all stakeholders are able to seek and share information relevant for successful operations. In addition, the study looks for preferences in the area of communication tools, i.e. the communications media the stakeholders like to use in their information transmittance. The study will also raise ideas of the most important features in the area of project communications. Hence, the research question and sub-questions of this study are:

1. *What are the salient features of communication in a multinational business project from the perspectives of media and stakeholders?*

1a. *What media do various stakeholder groups prefer for effective communications?*

1b. *How should stakeholders be taken into consideration when planning the project communications?*

Figure 1 illustrates a project through which the stakeholders need to be driven with well featured communications and correctly chosen media. As Kliem (2008) argues "The reality is that projects don't just happen. To succeed, projects require a concentrated effort on the part of two or more people to communicate effectively".

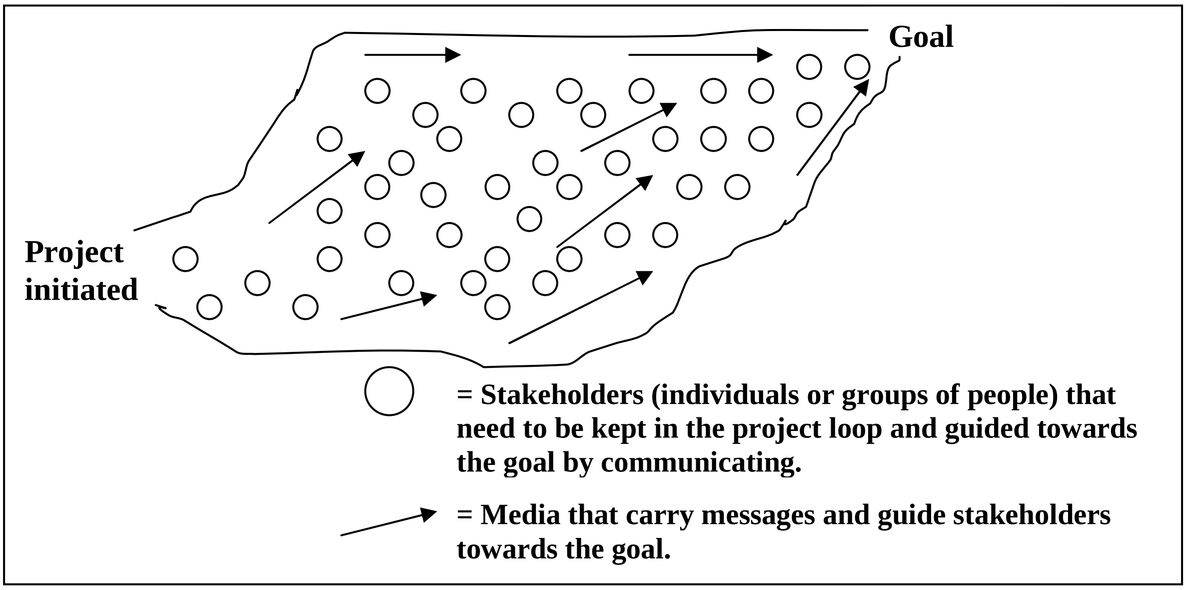


Figure 1. Communication environment.

1.1.2 Structure of the thesis

In C*hapter one* introduction to the territory of the study will be presented through: 1) key term definitions (chapter 1.2), 2) research niche establishment (chapter 1.3) and finally, 3) presenting the company and the large multinational project that will be analysed in this study (chapter 1.4).

Chapter two will discuss key studies and interest points from related literature and will develop the theoretical background used in this study. The literature will be utilised as a reflection point for offering more insight and knowledge in generating practical benefits from this study.

The different research methods and core data collected with them from the case company will be presented in C*hapter 3*. Three methods were used: 1) a survey that was delivered to the case project's identified stakeholders and 2) interviews conducted with the key representatives from each stakeholder group. In addition, 3) a focus group discussion was organised for key project members from the case company.

The findings will be analysed and evolving discussion composed in C*hapter 4*. The main finding was that the most preferred medium, no matter what stakeholder group from the case program in question, seems to be e-mail. A total of 82% of the survey respondents answered that the medium they use most is e-mail. Furthermore, in the survey 63% of the respondents answered that they want to receive project related communications through e-mail, while 39% said that e-mail also provides the most valid information. After e-mail, meetings were rated to be the second most efficient mean to ensure the validity of the information being communicated. In addition, in the focus group discussion three out of the four Project Managers argued that project communications could be improved and better guided in the case organisation although 84% of the survey respondents were content with the case program's communications.

The discussion in *Chapter 4* will, for example, highlight the fact that according to the focus group discussion and literature (Schwalbe, 2006), approximately 70% or even 90% of a Project Manager's working time is used in communicating. Therefore we need to know more about business project communications in order to develop, train and guide the Project Managers and other stakeholders of the case organisation. The study will point out how important it is to ensure that project stakeholders have the understanding of basic communication methods and media available and that they are able to implement that knowledge. Kliem (2008, p. 1) claims that Project Managers may have the greatest challenge because of their position. They are a kind of a communications centre that regulates the communications process; all communication flows through them and, often, from them. If not planned well the situation might be that 70-90% of their time is used in inefficient communications or the focus is on the wrong things, e.g. going too much into technical project details instead of maintaining the distance from the core solution building process of the project.

The last chapter, C*hapter 5*, will be devoted to concluding the report. Research summary, practical implications, limitations and further study suggestions will be presented in that chapter. The report suggests, for example, that further study on project communication actions should be undertaken by reflecting on the various actions on the project life cycle.

1.2 Key terms and their definitions

In this subchapter the context of the Thesis Report is presented through the identified key terms and their definitions.

1.2.1 The term 'project' in this Thesis Report

The word *project* refers to a process of building up a new or developed solution. A given schedule and milestones are used to measure the progress of the *project* supervised by a steering group. Each *project* has a project organisation led by a Project Manager. The Project Manager manages and reports the progress of the project directly, together or via a *Program Manager* to the steering group (Figure 1 on page 7).

More precisely, as Schwalbe (2006, pp. 4-5) states, a *project* has a unique purpose. A *project* is temporary. A *project* is developed using progressive elaboration or in an iterative fashion, which means that *projects* are often defined broadly when they begin, and as time passes, the specific details of the *project* become clearer. A *project* requires resources, often from various areas like people, hardware, software or other assets. A *project* should have a primary customer or sponsor.

1.2.2 The term 'program' in this Thesis Report

A project can be a part of a bigger and more complex solution building process. Several projects can be combined under a *program*. Thus, a *program* is a kind of an umbrella organisation that supervises and coordinates the work in the projects (Figure 2).

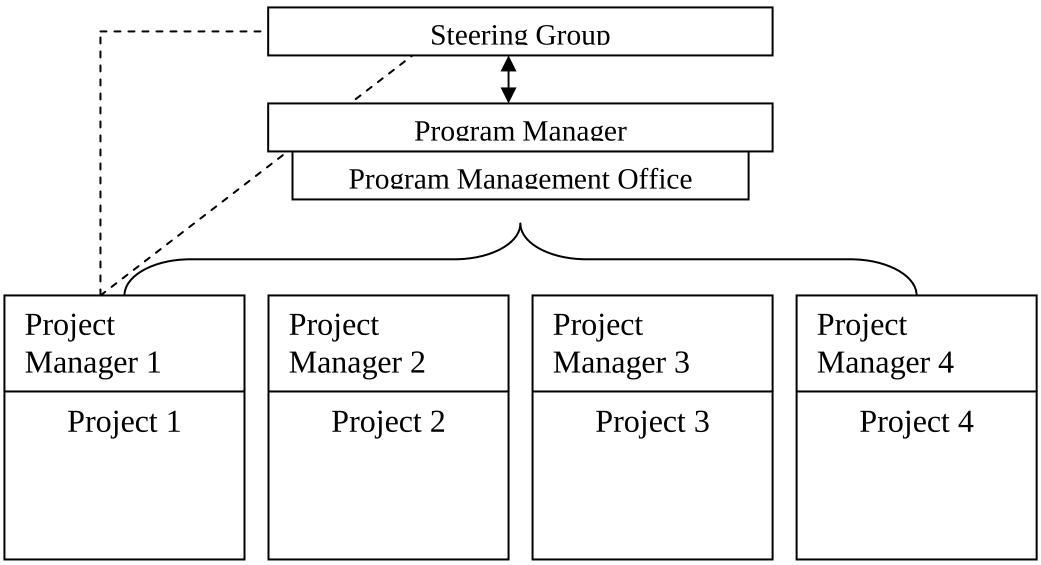


Figure 2. Organisation chart illustrating a program – project dependence.

The same steering group may supervise the progress of the *program* and similarly the projects that fall under that *program*. Each *program* has a program management office led by a Program Manager. The Program Manager reports to the steering group.

1.2.3 The terms ‘project business’ and ‘business project’ in this Thesis Report

According to Sandhu (2005) the term p*roject business* denotes the overall activities of a project company that creates and delivers projects to its customers. Davies and Hobday (as cited in Sandhu, 2005, p. 6) use the term *project business* to refer to organisations – which may be entire firms or units within firms – that run projects to achieve major business objectives. In his study, Sandhu (2005, p. 6) defines *project business* broadly to cover all business functions in which the actors and other stakeholders are involved in the process.

Sandhu (2005) lists the major characteristics of *project business* to be: i) uniqueness, ii) complexity, and iii) discontinuity. A project is unique in the sense that every project differs from another in size, type, customers, suppliers, volume, price, and so on. It is complex in terms of the technical, financial, political, and social factors involved. Finally, it is discontinuous in terms of a high degree of discontinuity in economic relations between suppliers and customers. (Sandhu, 2005, p. 1)

In the present study the term *business project* will be used to describe the case project's nature where Sandhu's definitions of project business will be applied.

1.2.4 The term 'project management' in this Thesis Report

In Sandhu's (2005, p. 7) study the term *project management* refers to the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to plan activities and processes in order to meet (or exceed) a stakeholder's needs and expectations with respect to that project. According to the British Standard in Project Management BS6079 (as cited in Sandhu, 2005), *project management* is the planning, monitoring, and controlling of all aspects of a project, and the motivations of all those involved in it, to achieve the project objectives on time and to the specified cost, quality, and performance level.

1.2.5 The term 'medium' in this Thesis Report

Huhtinen and Ojala (2001, p. 6) have studied communication aspects and the use of communication tools in Finnish ICT Industry. They define the communication tools to be the *media* for information transfer from a sender to one or more receivers.

In the present study the word *medium* refers to communication channels, i.e. tools that transfer messages. In this report data was collected with an electronic survey and in that survey the following *media* were listed:

- Mobile phone for calls
- Mobile phone for text messages

- Desk phone
- E-mail
- Intranet
- Internet
- Video presentation
- Common repository / net archive
- Written media (report, form, daily planner)
- Ad hoc discussion
- Instant messaging
- Ad hoc meeting (face to face)
- Ad hoc meeting (with net & conf call connection)
- Ad hoc meeting (with video connection)
- Scheduled meeting (face to face)
- Scheduled meeting (with net & conf call connection)
- Scheduled meeting (with video connection)
- Scheduled event for one-way information delivery (face to face)
- Scheduled event for one-way information delivery (net, video, conf call)

1.2.6 The term ‘stakeholder’ in this Thesis Report

In this report a project takes place in a company environment. There are two different companies involved – the supplying company and the customer company. In both companies there are persons who need to know and/or are interested in knowing how the project in question is progressing. In addition, the project needs certain sponsor and support groups that provide resources which enable the project to deliver the solution ordered from it. One more stakeholder representative is the project team itself and the people who are appointed to the project or are partly employed by the project. (Figure 3)

Management

- Program Manager
- Assistant
- Communications Specialist
- Steering Group

Project Team

- Internal and External project members

Customer

- Business owner
- End users

Service Providers

- In house Specialists
- External Consultants

Need to know –persons

- Company representatives
- Other project contacts
- Sponsors

Figure 3. Identified stakeholder groups of the case program.

All these persons who have an interest or who are needed in building the solution are called stakeholders. Whether they are so called internal or external stakeholders depends on who pays the salary for them. An external employee can be, for example, a consultant from a third company. Employees of the supplier and customer companies are called internal resources or internal stakeholders.

1.2.7 The term ‘communications’ in this Thesis Report

According to Smith et al (1999, p.5) c*ommunications* can be divided into two different parts. Unintentional communication takes place when a person communicates to another person without any intention, e.g. the way they dress themselves, or their gestures. Unintentional messages just are there for anyone to read. Intentional communication (in the scope of this study) refers to a situation where a communication decision has been made and intentional messages are targeted at certain identified people.

Smith et al (1999, p. 21) state that *communication* is an interpersonal activity. It is dependent on the social context in which it takes place, and the person sending the information will do so in a variety of ways, all at the same time. The sender will need to identify in advance the person to whom they wish to send the message, and will therefore need to know how the receiver (the audience) will interpret it. The sender will also need to see evidence that the message has been not only received but also understood. The message will need to be recognised through the distractions (noise) in the channel, and the feedback will need to be interpreted correctly. This process is illustrated in Figure 4 by Kliem (2008, p. 6) as the *communications* process where the noise affect has been added by the researcher.

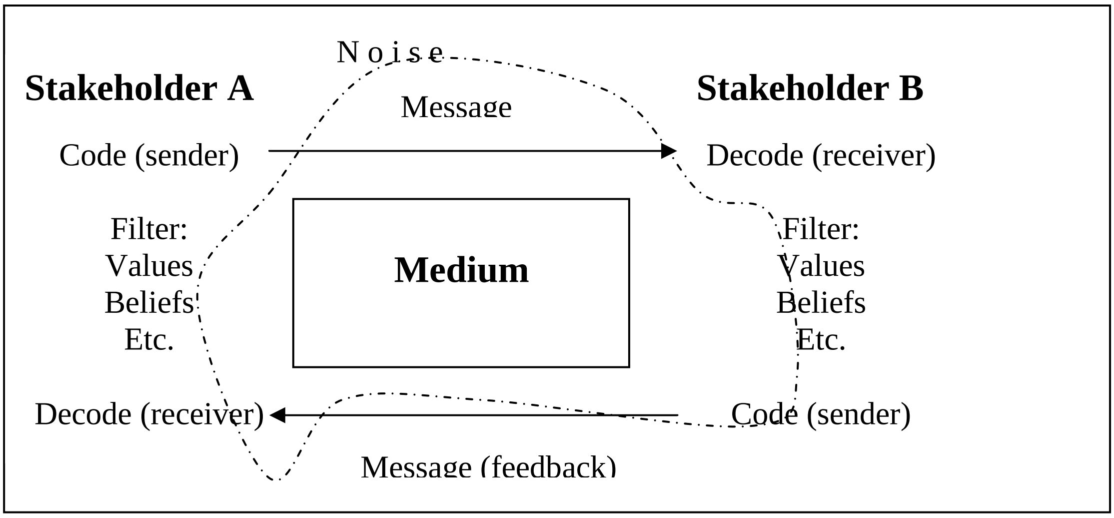


Figure 4. The communications process (adapted from Kliem, 2008, p. 6).

Communications is a process between two or more people, one to send something and the other to receive it. These roles can change during the course of *communications*. The sender can become the recipient, and the recipient can become the sender. When *communication* occurs in this manner, a free flow of data and, more importantly, of information can happen which can also be called as two-way *communications*. When the roles do not shift – that is, when the sender and receiver do not exchange roles - the *communications* is one-way process where data is distributed rather than information.

For this Thesis Report two parts of the above communications process are investigated more thoroughly in a project environment, i.e. stakeholders and medium.

Pritchard argues (2004, p. 4) that the choice of medium is crucial in any communication action, because the medium can determine how the information is filtered, decoded, and received. For example some media are intentionally one-way media (speeches, loudspeakers), while others are more intimate (one-on-one, face-to-face communications). Consider, e.g. a case where a person is fired through different media. The content is the same but the choice of medium makes all the difference.

The goal of *communication in the project environment* needs to be to establish a required common understanding. The level of depth of that understanding will vary from project stakeholder to stakeholder. Pritchard (2004, pp. 2-3) and Kliem (2008, p. 9) have looked into the complex environment of communications and illustrate it with the following equation. In the equation n represents the number of participants in the communications process:

$$\boxed{[n^* (n-1)] /2}$$

If there are three members, there are three lines of communication that must be maintained if everyone is to have the same level of information. If there are 30 team members, 435 channels must be maintained. This becomes a consideration in the types of tools to be applied in the communication. (Pritchard, 2004, pp. 2-3)

1.2.8 The term 'project communications' in this Thesis Report

Project communications is basically all the intentional and unintentional communication that takes place between the stakeholders of a project. The focus in this study has been, however, on intentional communication rather than on unintentional communication. A strategic approach that describes the intentional *project communications* can be documented in a communications plan.

1.2.9 The term 'communication plan' in this Thesis Report

In the case project a communication plan was one of the mandatory deliverables for reaching the first milestone, i.e. the first step that illustrates the progress of the project in a comparable way.

According to Pritchard (2004, pp. 73-75) the purpose of a communications plan is to provide a cohesive approach to information sharing for the stakeholders. The tools they should use, and the degree to which they should be sharing, documenting, and storing that information. Thus the communications plan is to be shared openly with all project stakeholders to help them understand how they should communicate and with whom. The different project participants will use the communications plan in different ways. For example the Project Manager uses the communications plan to ensure that the various stakeholders are aware of their communications responsibilities. The team members use the communications plan as a combined contact list and guide. The senior management and customers may seek information from the communication plan about when to expect certain reports or for looking at their primary points of contact.

In the case company and project studied for this Thesis Report a clear project methodology was used which included a template for planning the project communication actions by each stakeholder group. The plan was a matrix of information, built in an excel sheet with the following data: stakeholder name and group, preferred communications medium, brief description of the tone and goal of the communications, best time (time zones!), primary responsible person, primary reviewer, and frequency of communications. The communications plan is one of the most public project documents and is controlled by the Communications Specialist of the project.

1.3 Reasoning for the research niche

In the previous subchapter the most relevant terminology used in this study was introduced, and simultaneously the context of the Thesis Report was described through the terms. Next, the reasons for selecting this field of study will be presented, i.e. the centrality and cost effect that communications have on project performance.

As stated by Szukala (2001, pp. 76-77) the importance of effective communication within organisations cannot be overstated since many critical success factors depend upon it: efficient operation and utilisation of resources, the creativity and motivation of work teams, and the very behaviour of individuals and groups. All these factors are extensively influenced by the internal flow of information.

In Figure 5 the importance of communication and its centrality in management is illustrated. This is particularly obvious in the project environment where all the five corner stones of business presented in the figure are present.

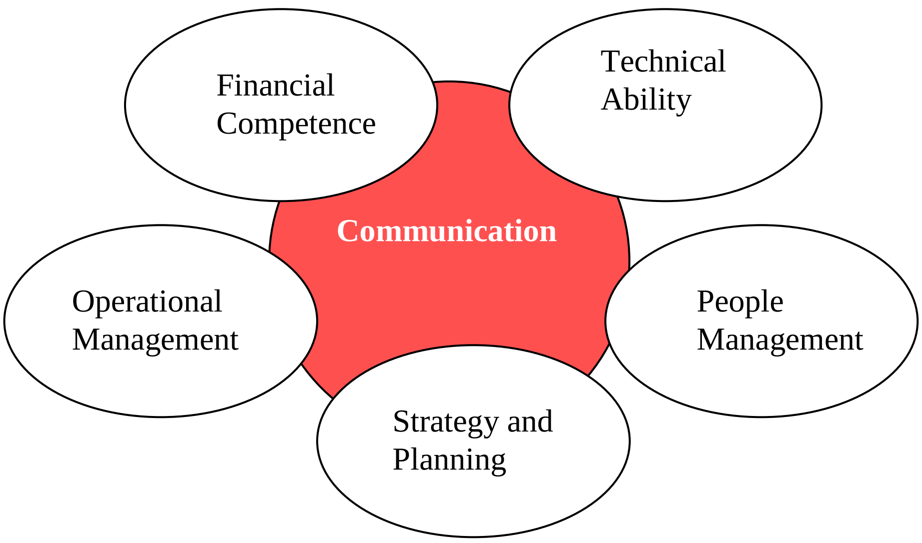


Figure 5. Importance of communication and the centrality in management (Szukala, 2001, p. 20).

Firstly, as stated by Szukala (2001, pp. 76-77), *technical competence* cannot be achieved or maintained without receiving and processing information, nor without learning from others. Secondly, *financial competence* depends to a great extent upon the ability to interpret and communicate financial data. Thirdly, *people management* will of course be heavily dependent on the manager's interpersonal skills, but also his or her ability to understand, interpret and communicate goals and to help individuals and teams review their performance. Fourthly, *operational or day-to-day management* is equally an area which relies upon timely, clear and accurate communication. Finally, *the strategic* aspect of the manager's role requires ability to recognise and interpret signals from the business environment, and to communicate these in ways which will direct the organisation and its people along optimum routes to the desired goal.

Furthermore Kliem (2008, p. 3) found that poor communications can have a costly impact on projects as they progress through project life cycles (Figure 6).

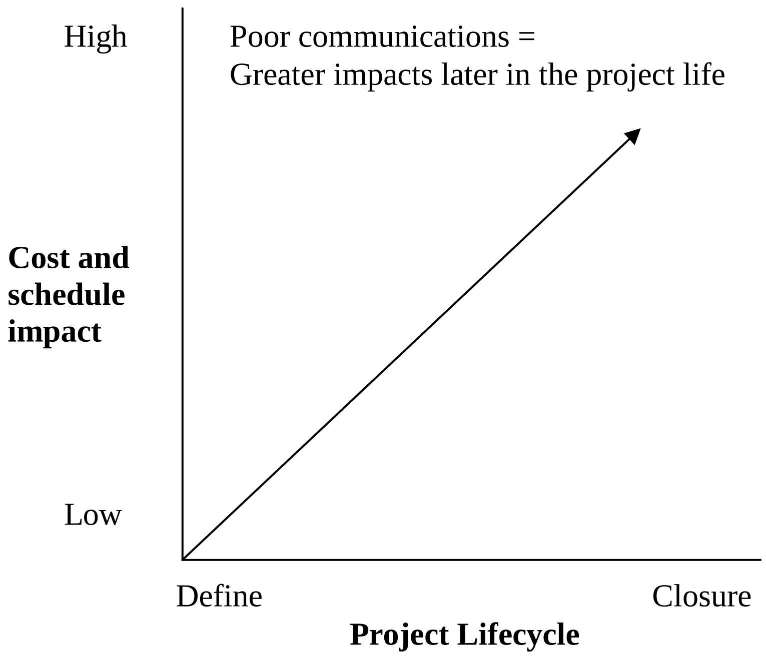


Figure 6. Poor communications equals higher costs (Kliem, 2008, p. 3).

Kliem (2008, p. 3) argues that when communications fail in the beginning, i.e. at the phase where assumptions and goals are being defined, the situation becomes more difficult and costly to correct later when projects gain momentum, and people do not want to cause any delay by trying to find ways to improve communications. Efforts aiming to correct poor communications can result in slowing momentum and causing rework. In the worst scenario, the damage may not be revealed until at the production phase, leading to serious maintenance problems.

1.4 Project case presentation

Subchapter 1.3 above presented the two main reasons for selecting this study area. This subchapter will describe the actual project that is being investigated in this study. It is to be noted that the case company requires confidentiality with the details of this project and thus the description stays on a general level.

The project case studied is structured as a program with eight sub-projects operating under it. Each sub-project has its own geographical area that they concentrate on building an improved financial process solution for. However, in this report the program is managed as one entity with one goal, i.e. building a solution for the client covering all the countries the client has operations in.

The program takes place in two multinational companies; company X represents the supplier and the sponsor of the case project studied in this Thesis Report and company Y represents the client company who has ordered the new financial process solution from company X. This study, however, is conducted entirely on the soil of the company X. The program is still ongoing and company X, the sponsor, did not want the research to be expanded to company Y yet at this point. Therefore, one must note that two significant stakeholder groups are out of the scope from the study area: the client and the end users of the new solution that is being built in the program.

Therefore, in this report the terms ‘case company’ or ‘case program’ or ‘case organisation’ always refer to company X. Company X is a market leader in its own speciality area. Therefore the set objectives and expectations for the company are very high, the atmosphere and culture in the company is very goal oriented and systematic as regards to all processes.

To illustrate this culture in company X, let us think about a world champion of, for example, cross country skiing. An enormous amount of carefully planned training and focus is required from the athlete to get on the top of the league. To stay in the lead requires even more effort when one must position oneself very carefully in order to win quarter after quarter. To reflect this back to the case program that is being investigated, the same excellence driven culture can be witnessed there. A solution must be the best of its kind and it needs to be delivered fast. This set-up causes pressure and challenges for the communications as well. The work must be done and the communications must drive the program towards the goal in a given time frame (in this case two years) and with the given resources (in this case ~150 project members in ~8 time zones; the presented figures are estimations as the program evolves continuously).

In the case program six main stakeholder groups can be identified (Figure 7).

- [ ] Steering Group Member
- [ ] Program management
- [ ] Program member (internal)
- [ ] Program member (external)
- [ ] Provide internal support/services for the program
- [ ] Follow the program/bystander

Figure 7. Stakeholder groups of the program case.

Firstly, there is the steering group that guides the program from a top management perspective. Secondly, the program team divided into three different groups as they represent the core of the studied stakeholders; program management and the external and internal program members. External refers to consultants hired from a third company and internals to the employees of company X. In addition, there are sponsors and service providers from company X who give support and specialist information for the program. Finally, a group of followers/bystanders was identified who follow the program and use the data they gain for their own purposes, e.g. planning and aligning their organisation’s actions accordingly.

1.4.1 Program stakeholders

This section provides a more detailed description of each stakeholder group of the case program, i.e. what is their role in the program and preferences in information they seek.

Steering Group Member

The role of the steering group is to monitor from the top management perspective that the solution built in the program by the request of the customer is ready in due time. They are the number one group who the program needs to keep up to date. Therefore, it is important to never let the steering group be surprised of any situation; they need to know everything that is going on. More precisely, the kind of data this group is interested to know is 1) the resources – are there enough so that the operations run smoothly 2) schedule – are we on schedule, if not why deviations and 3) status – what is the overall progress and situation currently in the program. The medium they want to get this information from is the Project or Program Manager and preferably in a face-to-face situation, but as the program in question is taking place in a multinational environment, virtual meeting tools need to be used in practice.

Program Management

Program management consist of all high level key roles inside the program team, e.g. those eight Project Managers, Communications Specialist and Program Assistant that report to the Program Manager. The Program Manager is then responsible for the execution of the entire program and the sub-projects operating under it. Program management is by far the most goal oriented group of the stakeholders. They don't necessarily need to know all the details that are ongoing in the program and the projects but instead they need to know that progress is made in the way it was planned. According to the data collected from the informants 19% of the members of this group were interested in receiving overall feedback and communications about the performance and progress.

<u>Program Member (Internal)</u>

Program members are those employees who create and maintain the different steps required to build the solution requested from the program. Therefore it is quite natural that this group is very objective oriented. To reach a goal one must first tackle several objectives that lead to the ultimate solution. Program members take care that the daily tasks are done in good quality manner. If they need help they either contact their team lead nominated inside the program/project or they contact the internal support and service providers for getting a solution to each specific task. It is not a surprise that 32% of the respondents from this group focus most on the schedule. The tasks they need to accomplish have a direct impact on the schedule and as mentioned earlier, the schedule is tight and important success factor in the case program.

<u>Program Member (External)</u>

What separates this group from the internal program member group is the fact that these employees are more flexible in their time use and their objective is to implement the solution globally. Therefore these are the people that in practice sit close to the customers in the different time zones where the program takes place. The implementation group unlike the internal program member group is most concerned about the progress of the project. 30% of them indicate that the information they prefer to receive from the program or the project they work for is progress related. Understandable, as they are responsible for the implementation they need to know where the program and its sub-projects are going at each day and align their actions in the countries accordingly.

Internal support and/or service providers

The fifth group is the group with support and service providers that can also be characterised as the specialists and sponsors. They possess certain specific knowledge that they share with the program from their base organisation. Base organisation means that they are not really a part of the program team, but rather employees of Company X and dedicate their time to general company tasks independent from the program. 33% of the respondents of this group indicate that they prefer schedule specific information from the program. 25% respond that they prefer progress related information.

Follow the program / bystander

This stakeholder group follows the program and uses the data they gain for their own purposes, e.g. planning and aligning their organisation's actions based upon the progress of the program. Information most of the respondents of this group (33%) seek from the program is schedule, progress and project management related information.

Figure 8 lists the stakeholder groups, shows their involvement in the study and indicates the types of information they seek.

Stakeholder Group	**Survey**	**Interview**	**Information they seek**
a) Steering Group member	0	1 person	
b) Program management	25%	1 person	19% Progress, Performance & Overall feedback
c) Program member (internal)	21%	1 person	32% Schedule
d) Program member (external)	36%	1 person	30% Progress
e) Provide internal support/services for the program	14%	1 person	33% Schedule 25% Progress
f) Follow the program/bystander	4%	1 person	33% Schedule, Progress & Program Mgmt related
	100	6	

Figure 8. Stakeholders of the case program and the information they seek.

From Figure 8 second column it can be seen that external program members' participation in the survey was slightly higher, 36% of the respondents, than those of the other stakeholder group representatives. In the interviews one representative from each stakeholder group provided data for the study (column three).

1.4.2 Project communication practices and media used

In the previous section the stakeholders of the case program were presented. This section will have a brief look on the actual communications in the case program and how it has been organised there. Firstly, there is an assigned Communications Specialist in the program providing support and consultancy for the Program Manager. A Program Assistant takes care of the practical maintenance tasks of communications, e.g. updates the program's intrapages, manages the correspondence in the program's e-mail address and coordinates the most general and high level meetings taking place e.g. with the steering group and the program management. The overall responsibility of the communications is the responsibility of the Program Manager. He gets the permission to publish information from the steering group and the Communications Specialist then helps him to form and deliver the information to the identified stakeholders with the selected medium. A communications plan that has been documented in the very early stages of the program provides the team a set of actions and guidelines that enable fast reaction. During the program the plan is modified if any received or collected feedback indicates that there is a need for a change.

Each sub-project and their project leader are then responsible for the more precise communications inside their projects. For this task the communication plan provides high level support for the Project Managers and in addition consultancy help from the program's Communication Specialist can be asked at all times.

The communications plan also lists the tools, i.e. the media selected to be the most used in the program and its sub-projects. The media and their usage rates according to the survey respondents are listed in Figure 9.

Media	Usage rate
1) Mobile phone for calls	13%
2) Mobile phone for text messages	2%
3) Desk phone	1%
4) E-mail	20%
5) Intranet	6%
6) Internet	1.50%
7) Video presentation	1%
8) Common repository / net archive	11%
9) Written media	1%
10) Ad hoc discussion	4%
11) Instant messaging	11%
12) Ad hoc meeting (face to face)	3%
13) Ad hoc meeting (Net & Conf call)	1%
14) Ad hoc meeting (video connection)	0
15) Scheduled meeting (face to face)	6%
16) Scheduled meeting (Net & Conf call)	16%
17) Scheduled meeting (video connection)	0
18) Scheduled face to face info delivery	1.50%
19) Scheduled virtual info delivery	2%
20) Other	0

Figure 9. Most used media in the program according to the survey respondents.

Next a short introduction of each medium's (19) status in the program is given. The presented data is based on the researcher's observations. Some of the media descriptions state the technology generation they are categorised into, and this piece of information is discussed more in subchapter 4.4.

<u>Mobile phone for calls</u>

All stakeholders have a mobile phone offered by their employer. Most of the stakeholders keep the mobile phone always with them. For 13% of the survey respondents this was the most used medium in the program.

<u>Mobile phone for text messages</u>

This medium is especially handy when the receiver or sender is e.g. in a meeting and unable to take or make a call but needs to check an issue that requires instant action. For 2% of the survey respondents this was the most used medium.

Desk phone

Very few of the stakeholders in the Company X anymore have a desk phone. This medium was selected as most used medium only by 1% of the respondents.

E-mail

E-mail is probably the most common and most used online medium in current business life. In the case program e-mail was especially liked for its speed and flexibility to transfer messages no matter what the physical distance of the sender and receiver is. E-mails can be saved and documented for later purposes. E-mail represents the so called first generation of collaboration technology (Robb as cited in Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007, p. 53) and it can be used either from a computer or from a mobile phone. For 20% of the survey respondents this was the most used medium.

Intranet

The Intranet is a very commonly used tool in the case company and includes company confidential –categorized information. The case program has a homepage in the intranet which is the main source of general level information offered for all stakeholder groups. 6% selected this medium as the one they use most.

Internet

In the case program, the internet was also offered as one medium option. However, the communication plan does not include any activities in this medium as the program is confidential in nature. However, the extensive amount of information that is available in the internet was considered to be used by the stakeholders of this program. This medium was selected as the most used medium only by 1.5% of the survey respondents.

Video presentation

This medium refers to a video that was shot of the case program. It is a 30-minute-introduction to the program where key persons from the program management and steering group present the corner stones of the program. This medium was selected as most used medium only by 1% of the respondents.

Common repository / net archive

Common repository or net archive refers to a virtual archive provided for all the program stakeholders. This medium is the only medium with limited access because of the nature of the material archived in it. All the details of the program are documented and saved in this repository. Access is managed by each document holder or team that owns each specific piece of information in the program. Steering Group and Program Management members have, however, access to all documentation saved in this virtual archive. For 11% of the survey respondents this was the most used medium.

Written media

Like the desk phone, also written media has diminished its significance among the program media. For example, very few reports written with Microsoft Word are used any more. Instead the amount of different Power Point slide presentations is increasing. One can, however, argue whether slides can be categorised as written media or whether they are support material for oral presentations. Robb (as cited in Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007, p. 53) states that Power Point presentations represent so called second generation technology. This medium was selected as the most used medium only by 1% of the respondents.

Ad hoc discussion

Ad hoc discussion refers to one-on-one face-to-face discussion that takes place without any pre-warning nor planned agenda. As the case program studied is a multinational program taking place in eight different time zones one could assume that there is no possibility for ad hoc discussions. But actually the geographically dispersed program members form 8 teams or satellites across the eight time zones. In these satellites the personnel of each geographical area are gathered in the same facility. In the 'headquarters' of the program, there are almost 50 members located in a same building and floor. For 4% of the survey respondents ad hoc discussions was the most used medium.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging or virtual real time chat is a very interactive communications tool as it provides an online channel for asking questions or having a ‘chat’ with a colleague. The nature of this tool promises the sender an instant reaction from the receiver. A stakeholder can select him/herself whether to keep the gate to this channel open, i.e. whether to activate or not the tool when online. According to Robb (as cited in Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007, p. 53) instant messaging is an example of a tool using second generation technology. 11% selected this medium as the one they use most.

Ad hoc meeting (face-to-face)

This medium refers to a face-to-face discussion with more than two participants involved. Otherwise it is similar to the ad hoc discussion presented earlier on this section. This medium was selected as most used medium by 3% of the respondents.

Ad hoc meeting (net meeting and conference call)

Ad hoc meeting with virtual net meeting connection and conference call refers to an unscheduled meeting that takes place between different locations. Via net meeting connection one can share a laptop screen with the other party(ies) and via conference call the voice is transferred. The conference call starts to be replaced with internet transferred calls but when this study was conducted in early autumn 2008 the combination of net meeting and conference call was the one being used. A net meeting represents second generation technology whereas a conference call is categorised to use first generation technology (Robb as cited in Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007, p. 53). For 1% of the survey respondents this was the most used medium.

Ad hoc meeting (video connection)

Similar to the previous one but in addition to sharing material virtually through net and voice through a phone line, a video connection is established between the communicative parties. Thus the parties are able to see each other in real time (a few second delay may exist). This medium is a great replacement for travelling and meeting face-to-face, but the equipment is not very commonly used and is not located at the close proximity of the case program's facilities. Video tools and online meeting tools represent tools using second generation technologies (Robb as cited in Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007, p. 53). None of the respondents preferred the use of this medium.

Scheduled meeting (face-to-face)

A scheduled meeting refers to a meeting where pre-reservation has been done. In scheduled meetings an agenda is distributed in the invitation and the invitees are expected to prepare themselves for the meeting accordingly, e.g. collect information they can share in the meeting or prepare a presentation material. A conference room is booked for the participants for them to be able to be present face-to-face. 6% selected this medium as the one they use most.

Scheduled meeting (net meeting and conference call)

Scheduled meeting with a virtual net meeting connection and conference call is usually booked if there is a chance that someone is not able to make it to the reserved meeting room. This combination of media ensures that all participants are able to hear and see what is being said and presented in the meeting no matter what their location. For 16% of the survey respondents this was the most used medium.

Scheduled meeting (video connection)

A video connection in a scheduled meeting overcomes the obstacle of a participant not being able to see the other participants. Otherwise the elements are the same as in the previous set of media. None of the respondents preferred the use of this medium.

Scheduled face-to-face information delivery

In a scheduled face-to-face information delivery the message is sent one-way, i.e. there is a limited chance for two-way communications. Usually this kind of a session is organised for a wider audience in a regular cycle in order to share, for example, the status of a program. Usually there is a short time given in the end of the agenda for the audience to ask questions or present their concerns. 1.5% of the respondents selected this medium as the one they use most.

Scheduled virtual information delivery

In virtual information delivery the message is also sent mainly to one direction but the tools used allow people from different locations to participate as well. In the case program most of the information delivery sessions were a combination of virtual and face-to-face media. A calendar invitation is sent to the identified stakeholders by e-mail with meeting room information, virtual net meeting and conference call details. In a larger virtual information delivery session one needs to know that the conference line can offer a two-way communication channel for only a maximum of 27 participants. After those 27 lines the channel is functional only one-way, i.e. the receiver can hear the sender but the receiver is unable to respond or give feedback via the line. Therefore, if the session is meant to offer a two-way communication possibility one must offer an alternative way to send questions to the meeting facilitator. Usually this is done by offering a mobile phone number for text messages, a chat channel or an e-mail address where feedback can be sent during or after the session. For 2% of the survey respondents this was the most used medium.

These were the 19 media identified in the case program's communication plan. Twelve of them present online tools that offer essential benefits for members working in a virtual project environment. The following section will discuss some specific characteristics of the elements prevailing in virtual team communications.

1.4.3 Working in a virtual team

As the case program takes place in a multinational environment it is evident that most of the work is done in a virtual manner. Thus, this section discusses what possible influence virtuality may cause to the stakeholders of a project and whether virtuality might affect media preferences. For example, Henttonen (2003) has studied global virtual teamwork building and communicating trust through technology in a global high-tech company with virtual teams. In her study virtual teamwork is characterised to mean working together - but apart (Grenier et al., as cited in Henttonen, 2003). In virtual teamwork the organisational and geographical boundaries do not stop the virtual team members working on complex tasks in order to gain the objectives set for them. Instead the technology enables virtual work by “cheating” the teams and organisations to think that the work takes place in the same space and with the same set of organisational norms (George, as cited in Henttonen 2003).

The influence Henttonen’s study suggests of virtual working to have on a team has something to do with trust building. She states that “The positive social cues in the case team were indicated by communication behaviours e.g. timely responses, in-depth feedback, open communication. Social status was further communicated by taking initiative, by delivering agreed results and by co-operating together. (Henttonen, 2003, p. 131)

Do virtual teams have certain preferences regarding the media used? According to Henttonen (2003, p. 132) and the case team members that she studied more tolerance to technical problems was identified than to people- or task-related problems, but she did not come up with any certain channels or tools that should be used in virtual communications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter 2 introduces the relevant literature for the present study. The literature presented here will give this study the background one needs to build new knowledge on the topic studied. As a starting point Choo's Knowledge Cycle theory will be presented. Choo (1998) has studied knowing organisations and how organisations use information and one of the most known theories created by Choo is the Knowing Cycle (Figure 10). Choo (1998, p. 18) argues: "The knowing organisation is one that links up the three strategic information processes of sense making, knowledge creating and decision making into a continuous cycle of learning and adaptation, a cycle that we may call the "knowing cycle"".

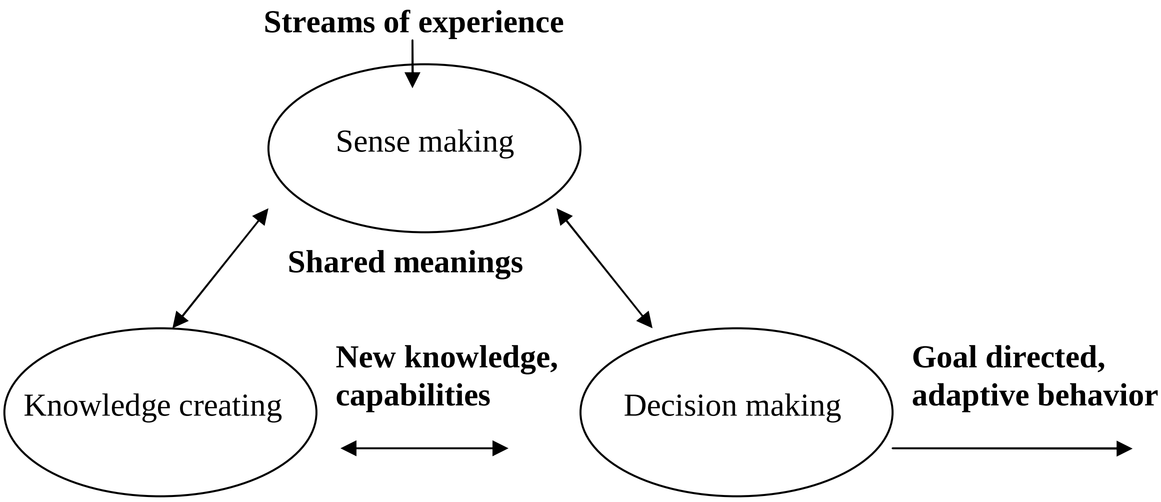


Figure 10. The knowing cycle (Choo, 1998, p. 18).

Choo (1998, p. 18) describes the cycle from the top of the diagram where streams of experience in the organisation's environment are collected and combined into understandable information. As a result of understanding, i.e. sense making, members act in the environment and develop shared interpretations of what is happening to them and their organisation. What emerges is a set of shared meanings or mental models that the organisation uses to plan and make decisions. Shared understanding is helpful when defining the organisation's vision about what new knowledge and capabilities the organisation needs to develop. Choo (1998, p. 19) describes that knowledge creation is achieved by converting between tacit knowledge that is held by individuals and the explicit knowledge that the organisation can exploit. The output of knowledge creation is thus fresh knowledge that leads to innovations, new products, and new organisational capabilities.

Inspired by Choo's Knowing Cycle, this study will next reach for new knowledge creation by discussing and trying to make sense of the literature findings related to stakeholders, media and project communications. Subchapters 2.1 – 2.3 will be present these findings more precisely.

2.1 Selected literature related to stakeholders

All in all, project related literature seems to be targeted to Project Managers. This is understandable because, as argued by Schwalbe (2006, p. 207), even 90 percent of a Project Manager's job is communicating. The job includes formal and informal communications, nonverbal communications, and the use of appropriate communications media. Furthermore, the Project Managers need to understand individual and group communication needs, and the impact of team size on project communications. Communications affect, however, other stakeholders as well.

According to Freeman (1984, as cited in Fill, 1995, p. 139) and Boddy and Buchanan (1992, p. 55), a stakeholder is any group or individual who has an interest in the project, or can affect or is affected by the achievement on the outcome. These stakeholders may be internal or external to the organisation or they may be active promoters or supporters of the change, keen to have it succeed.

Stakeholder groups in project communications consist of different kinds of people. Furthermore, each human is different and each human has a different impact on project communications. In the size of the case program, (~150 international members) there certainly are differences in individual communicational behaviour practices and communicational needs that should be taken into account.

Arredondo (2007) reminds us of the role effects of each person in the corporation, especially in a leadership position, e.g. a Program Manager; one is willingly or unwillingly a behavioural model. Employees look up to this person and follow his/her example (Arredondo, 2007, p. xi). Furthermore Arredondo recommends corporate employees to work with communication styles and thought patterns: "By understanding the profiles of people with whom you interact and adapt to you'll communicate more effectively and with fewer difficulties" (Arredondo, 2007, p. 12).

Chiocchio (2007) has studied project team performance with 134 first-year under-graduate psychology students. In the study collective asynchronous electronic messages on task and coordination sent among members of 34 teams were analysed using a time-series analysis. The results suggested that compared to low-performing teams, high-performing teams exchanged more messages, modified their messages around milestones, and were more prone to self-organise prior to project completion. Chiocchio's study illustrates the fact that not only humans as personas are different, but also the way they act in a project situation varies.

When making a stakeholder analysis Fill (1995, pp. 141–143) and Boddy and Buchanan (1992, p. 55) recommend the following approach:

1. Identify and list all stakeholders and position them on a map
2. Assess their interests and likely reactions (Note, individuals can belong to several groups, study the interrelationships)
3. Ideas for action. Make assumptions about the effects a proposed strategy might have on them. What to do about these interests? How to ensure their commitment could be gained?

According to Fill (1995) in order to build cooperation it is essential that there is consensus about the overall objectives and sound communications. To assist the development of a cooperative network of relationships, the generation of integrated communications by all members, particularly community leaders, is fundamental. In order to ensure consistency and integrated communications, one of the first steps is to appoint a communications coordinator. This person should be responsible for the development and implementation of a communications strategy that controls all the message outputs of the organisation and assists the organisation through the complex networks to which all organisations belong. (Fill, 1995, p. 158)

So, one important aspect that needs to be managed and taken into account when creating the strategy for project communications is the different stakeholders' different profiles. Another major issue when planning the communications in a multinational project is the fact that the stakeholders most probably will not sit close to each other, which is also the case in the case program investigated in this thesis. Also Mantel (2001, p. 30) has paid attention to the fact that more and more often project teams are geographically organised. Many projects are international, and team members may be on different continents and/or countries. Such projects are referred to as virtual projects – possibly because so much of the communication is conducted by e-mail, through Web sites, by telephone or video conferencing, and other high technology methods.

According to Mantel (2001, p. 30) long-distance communication is commonplace and the costs related are no longer a limiting factor. Problems, however, exist. For example, in the case of written and voice-only communication (and even in video conferencing when the camera is not correctly aimed), the communicators cannot see one another. In such cases feedback – the facial expression and body language that inform if the messages are received and with what level of acceptance are missed.

The third major aspect when dealing with program stakeholders has to do with change management. Stakeholders have an interest in the substance and results of the change and in how the change is managed. They can make a difference to the situation, and therefore their support needs to be gained and kept. Hence, the third topic raised here is about the change that one needs to deal with in stakeholder communications.

Boddy and Buchanan (1992, p. 63) describe how the stakeholders can be located in four directions: Up, across, the team around, and the staff below; all these directions must be taken into account. For example when managing up one must influence the attitudes and actions of stakeholder group members such as senior managers. Senior managers should be helped to articulate their vision of what the project could do.

Obeng (1996, p. 47) also writes about the importance of taking into account the different needs of the different stakeholder groups. E.g. the need to meet certain financial targets of a project is driven by the vision of someone, some stakeholder. Obeng divides these different stakeholder needs into two criteria groups; hard and soft criteria. The above situation presented a need that based on a hard criterion. For change management reasons, however, the soft criterion is more interesting.

Obeng (1996, p. 57) lists seven soft criteria that feature people's needs in a project:

1) Empathy – Stakeholders need to feel that their viewpoint is seen
2) Reliability – Stakeholders need to feel that a promise is kept
3) Fault-freeness – Small errors, even typing mistakes can upset some stakeholders
4) Honesty – Stakeholders can feel comfortable about the process and don't feel that they have to keep watching their backs
5) Fun – A laugh whilst working adds the sense of achievement and commitment
6) Aesthetics – Many stakeholders like to be pleased by the appearance of things in projects, e.g. clear colour progress charts gets better reception
7) Political sensitivity – Information should not aim to surprise stakeholders

The above listed criteria seem evident but as Obeng (1996, p. 47) points out, very often one change leads to another and the conditions in a project are bound to change from day to day. Thus stakeholders' expectations and needs must be managed throughout the project, on a day-to-day basis. Figure 11 by Boddy and Buchanan (1992, p. 63) illustrates the varying interest and support level of the stakeholders A,B and C during a program and its life cycle from positive to negative or vice versa.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Positive	A, C	A, B, C	B, C
Negative	B		A

Figure 11. How stakeholders' attitudes can change during a project (Boddy & Buchanan, 1992, p. 63).

In subchapter 2.1 we have examined stakeholder related literature. Issues such as the differences of the stakeholders, the virtual world in which the stakeholders are located, and finally the change impact they face in a project environment were discussed. In the next subchapter more literature findings will be raised but from the media perspective.

2.2 Selected literature related to media

Miller (2006) encourages us to consider the changes that have taken place in workplace communication over the past hundred years. His words lead us well to the theme of this subchapter.

> "To create a simple document we have moved from handwriting to typing to word processing. To produce multiple copies of that document we have moved from copying the document by hand to carbon paper to high-speed copying machines. To store those documents, we have moved from boxes to file cabinets to floppy disks to hard drivers, servers, CDs and memory sticks. To send those documents over long distances we have moved from stage coaches to air mail to express mail to facsimile to PDF files. To exchange messages over long distances we have moved from messengers to telegraphs to telephone to voice mail and electronic mail. To get together as a group we have moved from formal meeting rooms to conference calls to video

> conferencing to computer conferencing and online chat rooms. To make a decision we have moved from meetings run by parliamentary procedure to the use of computerized group decision support systems. To prepare presentations we have moved from charts to overheads to Power Point." (Miller, 2006, p. 285)

This subchapter will firstly discuss the different categorisations that literature presents on the different and evolving communications media and build an understanding of the nature of the different tools through some practical tool notations. In the second part of this subchapter a review of the different matching principles literature presents for media and its use will be introduced.

A study conducted by Huhtinen and Ojala (2001) focused on internal and external communication in and between Finnish ICT companies. The study paid special attention to the role of the Web, i.e. the internet and the intranet, when discussing the use of communication media. Huhtinen and Ojala (2001) decided to divide the media into interactive and non-interactive communication tools. This classification is based on the definition in which interactive tools are included in the media that do not leave any traces of the communication and, thus, render communication untraceable. Non-interactive tools, on the other hand, consist of media that leave traces related to communication, and communication via these media is, therefore, traceable. Communication takes place using visible and readable documents that can be stored in a specific place for further use. (Huhtinen & Ojala, 2001, pp. 16-17)

Pritchard (2004) divided different communication media into five categories: computer-based technology, audio technologies, video technologies, traditional written communications media and traditional verbal communications media. These categories and tools representing the categories will be introduced next. In the previous chapter some of the tools were already mentioned in practical context but in this part of the study a reflection point from the literature is provided for the reader.

<u>1) Computer-based technology</u>

Under this categorisation Pritchard includes e-mail, web sites and instant messaging.

According to Pritchard (2004, p. 10) the high usage rate of e-mail and its widespread acceptance places it among (if not the) dominator media for project communications. E-mail is a powerful medium, but it is not without problems. Instant messaging and real-time chat rooms are useful tools in virtual project environments, but problems may be overload of contacts while multitasking, and security issues. (Pritchard, 2004, p. 11)

Dow & Taylor (2008, p. 658) list some e-mail advantages for project communications:

- Storage of formal approvals and sign-offs from customers, team members, or upper management.
- Project information storage, for example, a budget spreadsheet.
- Communicating lessons learned information from the team members, customers, or upper management.
- Announcing a major milestone to the project community and environs.

Furthermore Szukala (2001, p. 58) offers more advantages of e-mail use. With e-mail information can be exchanged without the group members having to interact at the same time. Eliminating the need to communicate in real time overcomes the drawbacks that occur with the telephone, i.e. e-mail does not give a busy signal, nor does e-mail require any mediators if the receiver is "out" when a message is sent.

What comes to instant messaging Dow and Taylor (2008, p. 659) argue that creating an instant message is easy – one should just log into the tool, find a friend or co-worker, and start typing. However, creating the correct instant message is more difficult. Project Managers and team members must choose their words wisely before ever hitting the 'send' button. As this tool is considered informal in its nature, it is important to ensure that anything sent regarding the project is as informal as possible, i.e. formal decision making should be avoided via this medium.

Dow and Taylor (2008, p. 660) argue that if instant messaging conversations last longer than a couple of minutes, then either party should call the other - in case it is possible - as this tool can be a real time waster. It is important to pay attention to the tone of an instant message, for example if a customer is asking informal questions, provide informal answers. Positive examples of instant messages in project environment are according to Dow and Taylor (2008, p. 660) conversation initiation, encouragement, and asking a quick question. Situations where instant messaging should be avoided are according to Dow and Taylor (2008, p. 660) spying on team members online presence, official project communications, and chatting with multiple persons simultaneously.

2) Audio technologies

Audio technologies are tools such as teleconferencing and telephone calls.

Teleconferencing technology allows hundreds even thousands of participants to join the same telephone conference. Such large scale teleconferences are frequently internet supported with an on-line presentation, and led by a handful of individuals on the virtual teleconference “stage”. Participants can raise questions through the internet interface, but the discussion can still be facilitated by those in charge.

The teleconference should be treated as a meeting, with a clearly outlined agenda, and with all conversation directed at the agenda. Clear rules of behaviour should be established regarding when it is appropriate to speak, interrupt, or join the conversation. Also basic protocols what comes to using the “mute” button or identifying oneself at the beginning of each speaking “turn” should be established. As some participants may be more silent and tend to just listen it is good to check once in a while that they are still online and whether they have something to comment or ask.

Telephone calls (desk phone or cellular phone) are meant for a quick transfer of information. Calls may also be used for clarification of issues that were not transmitted effectively in written or graphic form. On the other hand, prolonged discussions on telephone invite the opportunity for disagreements and misunderstandings about what was actually discussed or agreed.

According to Pritchard (2004, pp. 13-14), the risk with audio technologies are misinterpretations; choice of words or voice tone. As such, parties in the call should ask for clarification any time there are any misgivings about what is being said. In such a situation, the topic at hand should be put on hold and the clarity of context should be checked. Also the lack of face-to-face contact, i.e. the lack of body language leaves voice alone to carry the message. For some senders, voice quality can be an issue, for example a monotone voice tone may be construed as being bored.

3) Video technologies

Video technologies generally require a higher level of rehearsal and testing than other communications tools, because the technology is relatively unfamiliar to most users.

According to Pritchard (2004, p. 14), videoconferencing can be used when (because of graphics, presentation content, or physical disability) a teleconference would be insufficient to meet the need. The key in videoconferences is to identify gestures, cues, or handoffs that will facilitate more ordinary conversation.

Mobile phone’s video image is relatively small and according to Pritchard (2004, p. 15) does not afford any significant quality in resolution, but still they can be helpful in broader applications. Still, the same issues as exist with videoconferencing (proper use, focus, and manners) need to be kept in mind in this much smaller-scale application.

4) Traditional written communications media

This category combines tools such as reports, planners, forms and templates.

Reports are designed to inform on what has happened, and may range from a simple paragraph on project activity to a multivolume analysis of how the project evolved and an interpretation of that information. Forms encourage consistent reporting and ensure consistent inclusion of specific data elements. (Pritchard, 2004, p. 16)

5) Traditional verbal communications media

Traditional verbal communications media like ad hoc conversations, meetings and presentations are verbally oriented, but are frequently supported by paper tools (as project status meetings are supported by project status report). (Pritchard, 2004, p. 17)

Ad hoc conversations are the most common verbal communications medium. Ad hoc conversations facilitate the social and business interactions that make projects possible. They are often the foundation on which much of the project is built. Such conversations are used whenever and wherever two project stakeholders meet, and they are used to clarify project information as well as individual interpretations of that information. Because these conversations are not planned, however, they should not be relied on as a key supplement to other project planning or clarification tools. Again, because these conversations are not planned, their content cannot be held in evident. For the Project Manager and project team, however, some limitations should be established on the content of such conversations. Whenever the conversation deals anything requiring formal approval, the conversation should be redirected to a more formal setting (such as a meeting). Ad hoc conversations in general can make or break a project, depending on their tone, team member attitudes toward the project, and the types of information that are exchanged. (Pritchard, 2004, p. 18)

Pritchard (2004, p. 18) describes meetings as data-gathering, data-sharing, and data-organisation sessions. They are intended to generate not only shared understanding, but also a general sense of direction. Meetings are held any time there is a need to achieve consensus on information and its interpretation.

Presentations are opportunities to share information with a broad audience. They are often used to sell a perspective or to communicate intent or actions “up” the organisation to the management. They can be used to provide information to peer levels within the organisation or to provide training and/or direction to team members, end users, or virtually any audience. Presentations should provide information in a memorable and clear way, e.g. by clearly stating the intention, agenda and a schedule. (Pritchard, 2004, p. 19)

Next, Larson & Kulchitsky (as cited in Huhtinen & Ojala, 2001, p. 16) divided communication tools into personal, mechanical and electronic tools. Szukala (2001, p. 57) has looked at potential uses of web applications and mentions computer reports, minutes of meetings, home page, distribution of surveys and automatic storage and preliminary analysis of responses. In addition, web applications can provide an access to on-line product or service information modules, to an on-line induction programme or to a training solution with a multimedia presentation.

Szukala (2001, p. 58) also lists different forms of electronic communications, such as bulletin boards that provide a forum for discussions involving several people or chat rooms (electronic meeting places where groups sharing similar interests can communicate in real time). In addition, standard e-mail, where a user can communicate with a single receiver or with a group by exchanging messages across a computer network is a good example of an electronic tool.

A more modern insight to the subject of electronic tools is offered by Robb (as cited in Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007, p. 53) who categorises the technologies used in virtual communications into three generations of collaboration technology. According to that categorisation e-mail and conference call represent first generation technologies while online discussion boards, Power Point presentation, video tools and online meeting tools are second generation technologies. Third generation technology refers to web-enabled shared workspaces via the intranet or internet.

According to Szukala (2001, p. 58), electronic communications have a mix of advantages and disadvantages. Some advantages are:

- information can be democratised leading to fostered team working

- speed of information exchange can increase efficiencies and save costs
- empowerment and delegation can be widely exercised

Some of the disadvantages which require attention mentioned by Szukala are:

- information overload
- increased stress
- uncertain security of information and systems

To conclude the review of the different categorisation methods for communications media it can be stated that by linking the above presented media to the proper situations, the communication can take a significant step toward effectiveness.

Secondly, this subchapter will review media related literature about media selection and usage, i.e. how to link media and the communication situations in such a way that organisational tasks are successfully accomplished.

Selecting the right media is very important. Pritchard introduces the following questions to help in the selection process (Pritchard, 2004, p. 6):

- Does this medium serve its particular purpose?
- Can it be applied in its environment?
- Is the content of the medium readily available in its environment?
- Is there knowledge to work with this type of approach?
- Are there other considerations that make this choice particularly effective in the organisational culture?

Schwalbe (2006) introduces a table (Table 1) that can be used to facilitate a selection process between different media.

Table 1. Using the appropriate communications medium (Galati, as cited in Schwalbe, 2006, p. 208).

KEY: 1 = Excellent 2 = Adequate 3 = Inappropriate

How well medium is suited to:	Written media	Phone call	E-mail	Meeting	Web site
Assessing commitment	3	2	3	1	3
Building consensus	3	2	3	1	3
Mediating a conflict	3	2	3	1	3
Resolving a misunderstanding	3	1	3	2	3
Addressing negative behaviour	3	2	2	1	3
Expressing support/appreciation	1	2	1	2	3
Encouraging creative thinking	2	3	1	3	3
Making an ironic statement	3	2	3	1	3
Conveying a reference document	1	3	3	3	2
Reinforcing ones authority	1	2	3	1	1
Providing a permanent record	1	3	1	3	3
Maintaining confidentiality	2	1	3	1	3
Conveying simple information	3	1	1	2	3
Asking an informational question	3	1	1	3	3
Making a simple request	3	1	1	3	3
Giving complex instructions	3	3	2	1	2
Addressing many people * Depends on system functionality	2	3 or 1*	2	3	1

With the help of the table the suitability of the medium can be analysed case by case and the appropriateness of the match is evaluated with a scale from 1-3 where 1 indicates excellent match and 3 the inappropriateness of the match.

Another way to analyse the suitability is presented by the media richness model (Figure 12) by Daft & Lengel (1984, as cited in Miller 2006, p. 291). The model offers a guideline for the process of matching communication technologies and their use. The hypothesis of the model is that effective managers will match the richness of the medium to the ambiguity of the task.

	Unambiguous Task	Ambiguous Task
Rich Media	Communication failure. Data glut. Rich media used for routine tasks. Excess cues cause confusion and surplus meaning.	Effective communication. Communication success because rich media match ambiguous tasks.
Lean Media	Effective communication. Communication success because media low in richness match routine messages	Communication failure. Data starvation. Lean media used for ambiguous messages. Too few cues to capture message complexity.

Figure 12. Effective Media Selection Predictions (Daft & Lengel, as cited in Miller, 2006, p. 291).

In the figure where ambiguity refers to the existence of conflicting and multiple interpretations of an issue, Daft and Lengel (1984, 1986) use four criteria to differentiate the information-carrying capacity of media: (1) the availability of instant feedback, (2) the use of multiple cues, (3) the use of natural language, and (4) the personal focus of the medium. The communication channels that have all or many of these characteristics (e.g. face-to-face communication) are called rich media, whereas channels that have none or few of these characteristics (e.g. a mailbox flyer) are called lean media. Between these two endpoints would fall such media as telephone, electronic mail, voice mail, written letters and memos. (Daft & Lengel, as cited in Miller, 2006, pp. 290-291)

In subchapter 2.2 media related literature was reviewed. Firstly, the many ways one can categorise the different types of media were presented and some practical notations were made on selected media. Secondly, the review analysed different guidelines offered by the literature on how to link media and the communication situations in such a way that organisational tasks are successfully accomplished.

2.3 Selected literature related to project communications

In subchapter 2.3 project communications in general will be discussed and the literature considered relevant for this Thesis Report will be presented.

First of all, the concept of communication management includes all aspects of managing the communication of a project or a program. As a whole, according to Dow and Taylor (2008) communication management consists of the following areas (Dow & Taylor, 2008, p. 10):

- *Communication planning* – plans the project information and communication of the team members and other stakeholders.
- *Project information distribution* – defines the distribution of the needed information and makes it available to the team members and other stakeholders in a timely manner.
- *Performance reporting* – identifies and reports all progress status, measurements, forecasting, and analysis on the project.
- *Managing communication* of internal and external stakeholders – managing all communication to satisfy the requirements of the project stakeholders while addressing all communication issues occurring during project execution.

Dow and Taylor (2008, pp. 10-11) state that communication management is the most important concept area of a project as it covers every aspect of a project. For example, from the initial approval of the project to the final closeout, a Project Manager will consistently be communicating various aspects of the project to the team members, upper management, and their customers

Figure 13 presents a view of the process of communications. The components in the process are sender, receiver, message, feedback, and the medium used for the message transfer. Filters refer to the sender and receiver values and beliefs, such as social background, cultural behaviour or language. Stakeholders A and B have been added to Kliem's (2008) model by the present researcher as the term is more appropriate for the report's purposes than Kliem's sender and receiver. Finally, to complete the figure the present researcher has added the noise factor as a separate component. It could be stated that it is already included in the filter component but to emphasize the importance, it is there as its own component. According to Kliem (2008, pp. 14-15) distance, timing, selective attention and language are the main causes for miscommunications.

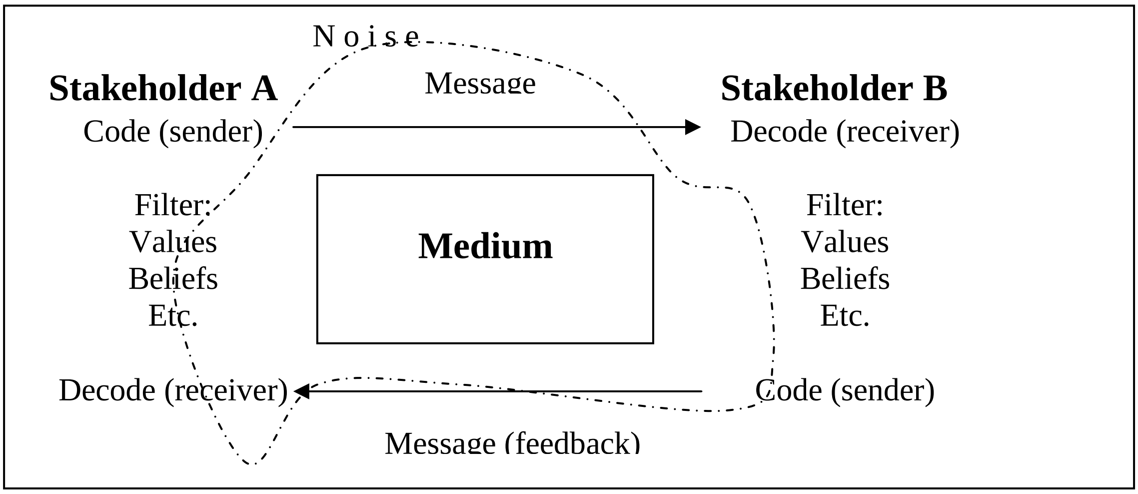


Figure 13. The communications process (Adapted from Kliem, 2008, p. 6).

Figure 13 presents a simplified picture of the process of communications but next it will be complemented by two issues raised from previous literature.

Firstly, Fills (1995, p. 33) introduces a multi-step flow of communications (Figure 14). The model illustrates the fact that in a normal communication situation there are almost always more than two stakeholders involved.

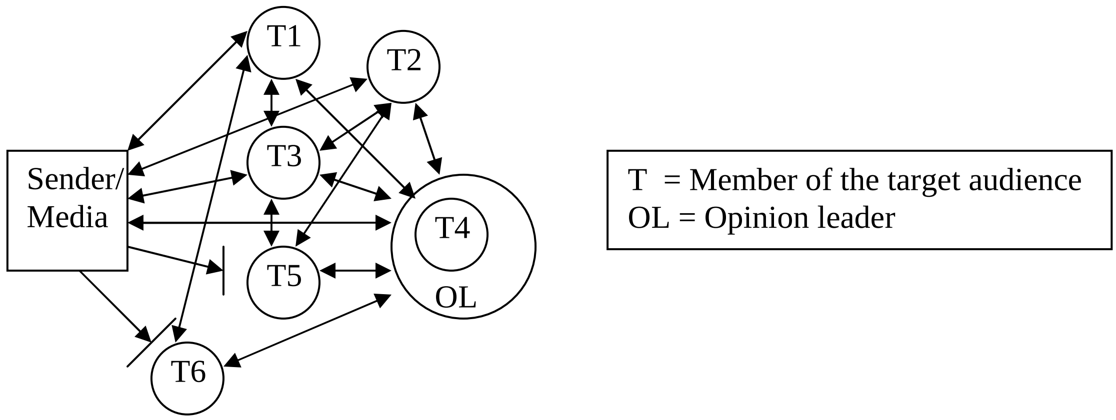


Figure 14. Multi-step flow of communications (Fill, 1995, p. 33).

The model could be interpreted as follows: A sender sends a message through a selected medium to a wide audience. The audience reacts in many ways; for example, T5 and T6, members of the target audience have blocked the message for some reason. Either they are not reading, hearing or seeing the message sent to them or maybe there is a noise factor blocking the message. Instead, members T5 and T6 turn to member T4, who is an opinion leader in the group, and get the information from there. In this case there is already a risk of inconsistency. The opinion leader may have coloured the message in a personal way or may have misinterpreted it. Other members of the audience seem to have received the message and give feedback. Some of the members have started to interpret the message with their colleagues and discuss the matter. So, immediately after the message is sent many reactions take place - reactions that the receiver controls.

Pritchard came up with more sender/receiver oriented problems (Pritchard, 2004, p. 5):

- Sender fails to send the message although the belief was that it is sent
- Receiver fails to receive the message because e.g. due to a system breakdown
- The message is received in a format that is not understood, e.g. the attachment was in an unfamiliar format
- The message is received, but misinterpreted because of e.g. complex terminology
- The message is sent but the receiver is unavailable, e.g. on holiday

Kliem used the term ‘wall’ to describe these kinds of receiving problems. “Many walls can stand in the way of enabling good receptivity toward a message. These walls include body language, phrasing, tool choice, content, cultural differences, timings, and beliefs” (Kliem, 2008, p. 9).

Distance is most often the problem in global projects as the greater the distance between the sender and receiver, the greater the likelihood that the receiver might not receive the entire message or might misinterpret it. Timing especially in situations when the message is negative in tone can cause miscommunications. In general, the time is never right for giving negative feedback but what is important is the context when negative feedback is provided. The scenario “Tell me what I want to hear and not what I need to hear” is a typical example of a possible boundary in communications and mirrors the selective attention of the receiver(s). The fourth cause for miscommunications listed by Kliem is language. The meaning of words, can greatly impact communications among two or more people. The literal interpretation of a word and the subjective nature of a word may vary and cause different reactions among the sender and the receiver(s).

Secondly, to complement Figure 13 a mathematical formula presented by Kliem (2008, p. 9) and Pritchard (2004, pp. 2-3) illustrates in a simple way the complexity behind communications when a number of people (n) are added to a project:

$$\boxed{[n* (n-1)] /2}$$

The formula shows the interaction in terms of communications exchanges among several people. The formula itself indicates the level of complexity involved in a project from the perspective of communications channels. According to Kliem (2008, p. 9), the calculation reveals the many possibilities in which communications can go awry. If a project is small, say, with 3-5 people, the number can be quite manageable. As the number of people increases, so do the different thinking styles, laying the basis for positive and negative conflict that can build either bridges or walls.

As was already found out in the previous subchapter, there is a variety of media available in today's business world. In project communications a key issue is to find and use the appropriate medium for each communicative action. Kliem (2008, pp. 11-13) lists 16 factors influencing this choice: technological maturity, time, importance, geography, custom, impact, content, receptivity, feedback, obstacles, trust and credibility, formality or informality, quantity, quality, communications infrastructure and thinking styles. For example, communications infrastructure in today's environment may mean such a linear structure where a person or a group of people need to review e.g. an e-mail before it is sent to the entire audience.

To continue elaborating with Kliem's 16 factors influencing the choice of the medium one must understand the urgency and impact of the message. Does the receiver need the message immediately or can it wait, how will s/he react on the message, i.e. do I need to be close to the receiver at the impact moment. In addition, one must know the technology available and most commonly used in the community. Also thinking styles among the receivers have an influence on the media selection process. Depending on the content of the message what are the reactions different persons may have on the situation. Do they prefer a visual presentation or straight-to-the-point type of style?

Some messages may prove controversial or generate fear, and the choice of the medium can either increase or decrease the level of receptivity. Usually, the less emotion surrounding a message, the less the medium matters. However, in case there are known obstacles in the communications process, e.g. limited time, money, or people's motivation should them be taken into consideration as well.

Finally, listening is also part of project communications. Kliem discusses effective and active listening, which is a component in the general communications process and provides a listening flowchart (Figure 15) with four steps to listen well; hear, clarify, interpret, and respond.

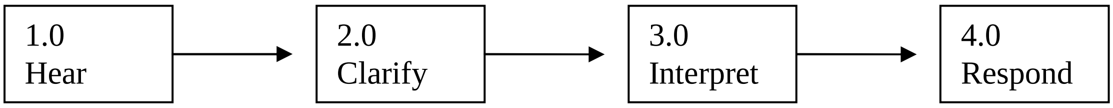


Figure 15. Four steps for effective and active listening – a listening flowchart (Kliem, 2008, p. 65).

To conclude this subchapter about literature related to project communications, it is good to reflect on the challenges that must be taken into account when planning the communications for a project. Kliem (2008, pp. 73-74) lists six main challenges; size, complexity, location, diversity, technology and norms. The number of stakeholders can create a complex web of interaction. Technical complexity of the content of the project may lead to miscommunications or to lack of communications whereas location related issues can lead to infrequent communications. Diversity brings challenges for a multinational project as, for example, some stakeholders might prefer communicating on a more personal level, whereas others have no problem communicating electronically. The power of technology is reflected in the rise of telecommuting and virtual working. Technology, however, does not guarantee effective communications. Some people, especially those with limited interpersonal skills, for example, will use technology as a means to escape communicating with others. Norms on the other hand, provide consistency because people know what is expected of them and how they should interact.

2.4 Establishing the theoretical background for the study

As the present study investigates project communications from two perspectives, the medium and the stakeholder, one theoretical framework was selected to support each perspective. First, the Effective Media Selection Predictions -model developed in the early 1980's by Daft and Lengel supports analysis from the media perspective. Second, the illustration of a value chain of communications from Sveriges Informations Förening's (1996) publication will be introduced as the combining illustration for all the theory discussion presented in the subchapter 2.1 about the stakeholder related literature. These two frameworks will be presented in this subchapter and used later to analyse the findings of this Thesis Report.

2.4.1 Framework for the media related findings

Firstly, selecting the right media is very important for the success of the project. But to choose the right medium one needs to know the circumstances and above all the content of the message that needs to be transferred to the audience, i.e. the stakeholders. While considering which medium suits for which message, Pritchard (2004, p. 6) advises us to think of the following issues in the selection process:

- Does this medium serve my particular purpose?
- Can it be applied in my environment?
- Is the content of the medium readily available in my environment?
- Am I adept at working with this type of approach?
- Are there other considerations that make this particularly effective in my organisational culture?

The target should obviously be that the medium selected is a perfect tool for reaching the audience. As stated by Miller (2006, p. 294) the richness of the medium needs to match the ambiguity of the task. Ambiguity refers to the existence of conflicting and multiple interpretations of an issue.

In Figure 12 (see p. 47), Daft and Lengel (1984, 1986 as cited in Miller, 2006, pp. 290-291) refer to rich media when all or many of the following characteristics match the information-carrying capacity of the media: (1) the availability of instant feedback, (2) the use of multiple cues, (3) the use of natural language, and (4) the personal focus of the medium.

2.4.2 Framework for the stakeholder related findings

Considering the stakeholder perspective of this study, a framework of a value chain of communications (Sveriges Informations Förening, 1996) was selected to illustrate the combination of the many issues affecting the stakeholder approach. Figure 16 was created on the basis of a model inspired by a publication of the Sveriges Informations Förening.

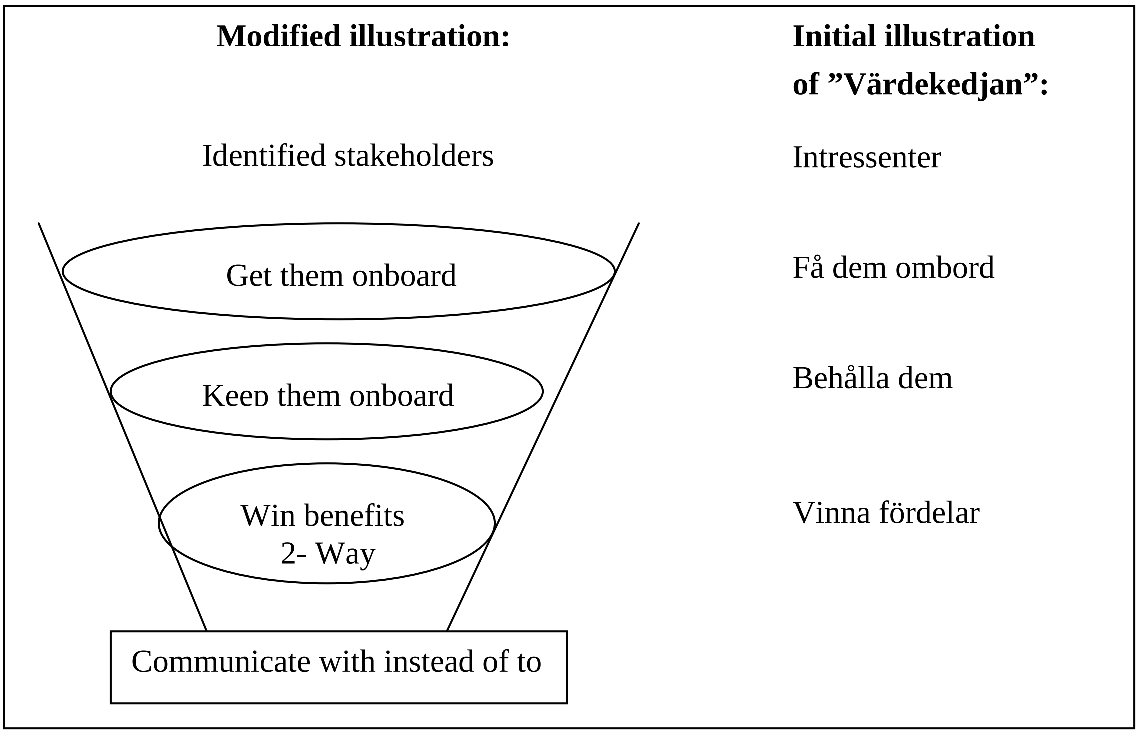


Figure 16. Value chain of communications (adapted from Sveriges Informations Förening, 1996, p. 13).

To start with, one needs to define the stakeholders. According to Freeman (1984) and Boddy & Buchanan (1992), stakeholders are any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation's purpose or has an interest in the project. These stakeholders may be internal to the organisation, such as employees, or external to the organisation in the form of suppliers, buyers, local authorities, shareholders.

A practical approach on making an analysis of a potential stakeholder was presented by Fill (1995, pp. 141–143) and Boddy and Buchanan (1992, p. 55) who recommended to a) list all stakeholders and position them on a map, b) study the interrelationships and their interests, c) make assumptions and establish actions that ensure their commitment

Once the stakeholders are identified and mapped the next step is to first get them onboard and keep them onboard in the project's communication 'funnel' or loop.

One aspect that needs to be managed in the communication 'funnel' is the different stakeholders' different profiles. When dealing with large audience, like in this case project, it is unavoidable to start to categorize the stakeholders into some kind of groups. According to Arredondo (2007, p. 14) the purpose of this kind of grouping is just to try and find out the interests of each group and use that information when planning and creating the program communications plan.

The second aspect when planning the communications in a multinational project is the fact that the stakeholders are located far apart as in the case program. Geographically organised projects are called virtual projects – according to Mantel (2001, p. 30) virtual, because most of the communication is conducted by e-mail, telephone or video conferencing or through Web sites and other high technology methods.

The third major aspect when dealing with getting and keeping the program stakeholders in the communication loop is to do with change management. Communications and change management go hand in hand in all projects or programs as the goal is to create something totally new or at least different from what people have used to deal with. Stakeholders have an interest in the substance and results of the change and in how the change is managed. They can make a difference to the situation, and therefore their support needs to be gained and kept.

Gaining the interest of the identified stakeholders depends on many issues. According to Kliem (2008, pp. 73-74) size, complexity, location, diversity, communication technology and norms for instance have an effect on the challenge level of the target ahead, i.e. getting the right people onboard. For example, the more people the greater the number of different interactions that can occur among the stakeholders or the more technically complex the project goal the greater the chances for miscommunications and lack of communications to occur.

To ensure the stakeholder's staying onboard one can use for example the tactics described by Obeng (1996, p. 57) also called as general soft criteria: empathy, reliability, fault-freeness, honesty, fun, aesthetics and political sensitivity.

One must also remember that the stakeholder interest and support level may vary during the program and its life cycle from positive to negative or vice versa. But as it is not in the scope of this Thesis Report to study the project communications on a time scale of the project life cycle, this part of the literature will not be further investigated.

The following citation from Obeng (1996, p. 70) aptly sums up the description of the theoretical framework for the present study:

> "To succeed with projects one needs to realise that the true nature of planning is to continuously gain and maintain perspective and that the true nature of co-ordination and control is to spread and use the perspective amongst stakeholders. Therefore, constantly seek out the objectives, and the constraints to achieving the objectives and how the different constraints interact. The rest of it is just about finding ways of communicating this to stakeholders so that they also posses a similar perspective."

3 METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

There were three main research methods used for collecting the research data. Firstly, *an electronic survey* was delivered to the case program's multinational program team with 28 replies from five out of the six stakeholder groups. Secondly, six *interviews* in the case organisation with interviewees representing six different stakeholder groups. Thirdly, *a focus group discussion* was set up in the case organisation with seven key members from the case organisation. The roles of the members in the focus group discussion were Service, Portfolio and Project Managers.

This three-method data collection approach ensured that the environment studied was approached from different angles, and the different methods used enabled triangulation. For example, in the survey and interviews the answers were given anonymously, whereas in the focus group discussion the identities of the participants were revealed.

It is to be noted that the quotations from the survey, interviews and focus group discussion are presented anonymously as requested by the case company. Also in this study the quotations have been revised so that the personality of a certain member and the case company is not revealed. This has basically meant occasionally removing the special abbreviations used by the participants of this study. In addition, the non-English answers have been translated into English.

Subchapters 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 will present the methods used and the data collected with the survey (3.1), the interviews (3.2) and the focus group discussion (3.3).

3.1 Survey

As the project studied is multinational and virtual, an electronic survey seemed most suited for collecting data from this rather large program team with approximately 150 members. A survey was the best way to reach the project members in different time zones.

The survey was sent by e-mail to all program members and two weeks was given for responding. A special attention was paid to the tone of the text in the e-mail (Appendix 1) as it was acknowledged that the receivers would be extremely busy and would easily skip an e-mail like this. A reminder e-mail was sent three days prior to the deadline. Ultimately the text managed to motivate altogether 28 receivers from 12 different language groups to open, read and reply to the survey that took approximately 10-15 minutes to fill in.

A total of 11 questions (Appendix 2) searched data about media use and the communications network in the case program. The rest of the questions (6) either gathered general background information, e.g. language, or were asked in order to receive information for a future communications development project to be done for the sponsor company.

The survey was put together in a very similar way to what Huhtinen and Ojala (2001) had done in their case study of communication aspects and the use of communication tools in the Finnish Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry (Huhtinen, Ojala 2001). Firstly, ideas of what to ask were collected together with the case program's Program Manager and company tutor, and then the questions were formulated and reviewed with Helsinki School of Economics representative. Once the questions were clear, the questionnaire was designed. In this case an Excel-form was used as this software was known to be used by all the program members and it could be easily sent over different fire walls present in the program environment. This way the technical functionality was ensured.

As the questionnaire and the cover e-mail were ready, five pre-tests were conducted and on the basis of the feedback received, slight modifications were done to the questions in order to minimize the risk of misinterpretations. The Program Manager was asked to advertise this survey in his weekly information sharing session. He encouraged the audience, i.e. the core members of the program organisation to take part and have a say.

The recipients had two weeks to give responses. Three days before the deadline a polite reminder was sent to all recipients, and finally 28 responses were received and they were numbered according to the order they were received. All the results were put together and a summary sheet was prepared. Concerning the key questions (questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16), a separate analysis was done.

Figure 17 shows the respondents by stakeholder group.

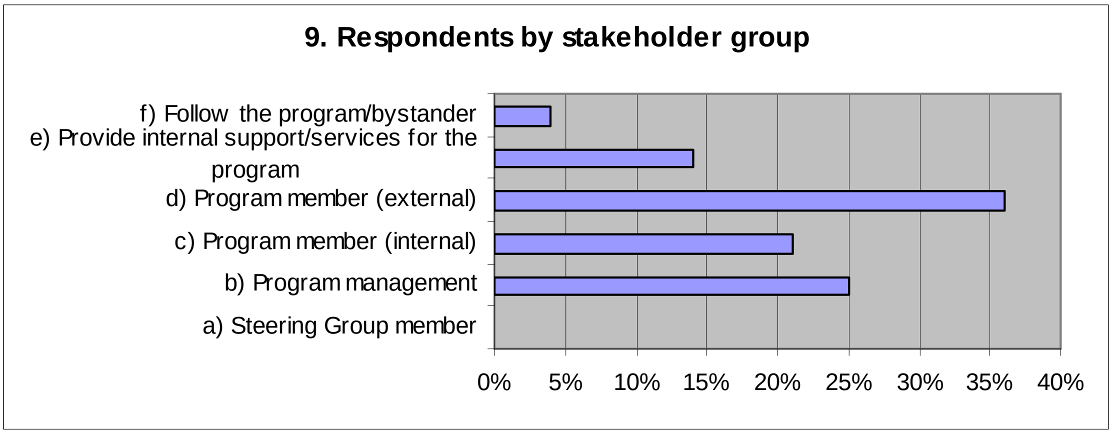


Figure 17. Survey respondents by stakeholder group. Multiple choice question.

From Figure 17 it can be seen that most of the respondents presented the groups External Program Members (36%) and Program Management (25%). External Program Members represent so-called third party consultants who are paid an hourly wage. What is notable is the fact that none of the Steering Group representatives participated in this part of the data collection.

Only four percent of the survey respondents were native English speakers. In Appendix 3 the respondents' native languages are illustrated more precisely.

From the stakeholders' responses in general it can also be seen that when asked about the communication situation, they reported that they feel most comfortable when sharing (45%) and receiving information (35%) (Appendix 4).

In average, the most used medium in the case program communications was found to be e-mail (20%). The second most used medium was scheduled meetings with virtual connectivity possibility (16%), and the third mobile phone for calls (13%). In Appendix 5 all 20 media and the rate of usage per medium are listed.

In general, when asked about the medium one uses most with an open-end-question, 82% of the respondents named e-mail. And by this medium the respondents would like to receive weekly communications from the Program Management, daily communications from their Program or Team Member and preferably no communications at all from people outside the program.

Again, e-mail was mentioned in 63% of the responses where an open-end-question asked to name the medium where one would like to receive program communications. Figure 18 illustrates the responses more precisely.

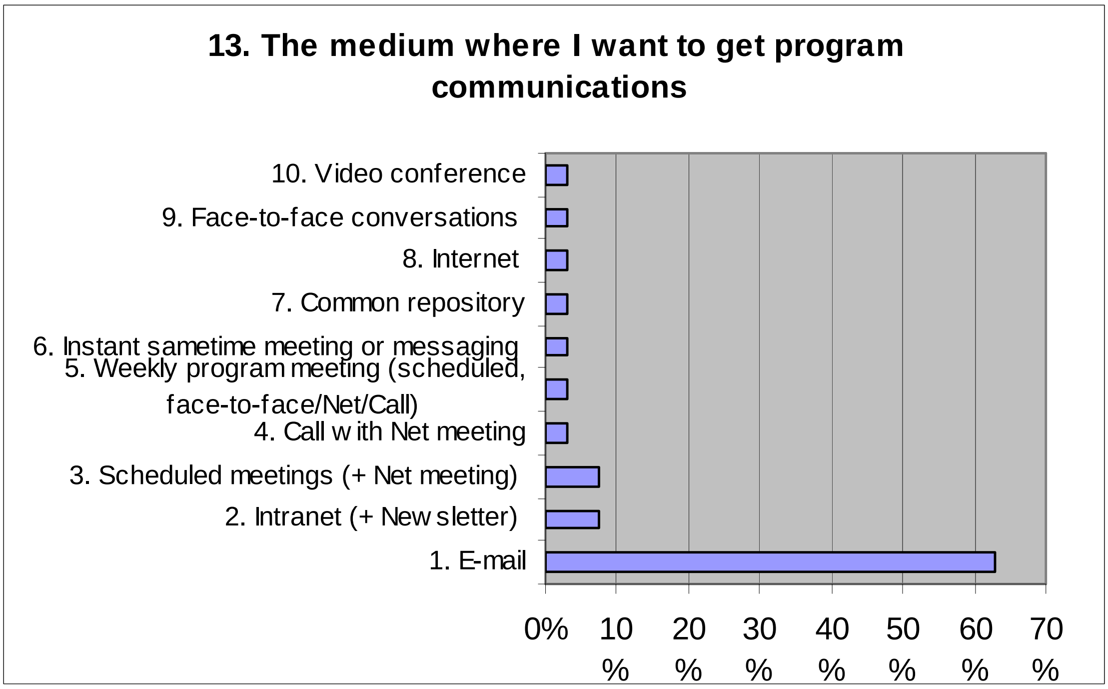


Figure 18. The preferred media for program communications. Open-end-question.

Instead when asked what medium has provided most valid information of the program, the e-mail was still number one but not so clearly. The response was 39% for e-mail and other media received higher scores than in the previous question; meetings 25%, instant messaging and face-to-face discussions both 11% (Appendix 6).

When investigated the top five media stakeholders would like to use by stakeholder group some variance may be seen in the results. In Table 2 the responses are shown by stakeholder group.

Table 2. The top 5 media one would most like to use during a workday. Multiple choice question.

	Program Management	Program Members (internal)	Program Members (external)	Internal support/ services providers	Program followers/ bystanders
	%	%	%	**%**	%
Mobile phone for calls	**20**	17	4	**20**	0
Mobile phone for text messages	6	0	0	0	0
Desk phone	0	0	2	0	0
E-mail	14	**20**	**16**	**20**	**20**
Intranet	6	13	4	5	0
Internet	0	3	4	0	**20**
Video presentation	0	0	2	0	0
Common repository / net archive/net archive	3	0	4	5	**20**
Written media	3	0	2	5	0
Ad hoc discussion	3	3	14	5	**20**
Instant messaging	6	10	12	5	0
Ad hoc meeting (face to face)	9	13	10	5	0
Ad hoc meeting (Net &Conf call)	0	3	4	0	0
Ad hoc meeting (video connection)	0	0	0	0	0
Scheduled meeting (face to face)	14	0	10	15	0
Scheduled meeting (Net & Conf call)	11	10	6	10	**20**
Scheduled meeting (video connection)	3	0	2	0	0
Scheduled face to face info delivery	3	7	4	0	0
Scheduled virtual information delivery	0	0	0	5	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0

The table indicates that Program Management have ranked mobile phone for calls as number one, followed by scheduled meetings (virtual or face-to-face), e-mail and ad hoc face-to-face meetings. Internal Program Members have selected e-mail as number one, followed by mobile phone for calls, intranet, ad hoc face-to-face meetings, instant messaging and scheduled virtual meeting. External Program Members also ranked e-mail as the medium one would most like to use during a work day and the following positions were given to ad hoc discussion, instant messaging and either scheduled or ad hoc meetings. Internal support or service providers selected both mobile phone for calls and e-mail as the media they most would like to use. Face-to-face and virtual scheduled net meetings collected votes too. There was only one respondent from the Program

Follower group responding to this question and therefore all five selected media received the same percentage. The selected media were: e-mail, internet, common repository / net archive, ad hoc discussion and virtual scheduled net meeting.

The results indicate that the most disliked media by the respondents were video presentations and mobile phone for text messages. Figure 19 illustrates the responses to the multiple choice question more precisely.

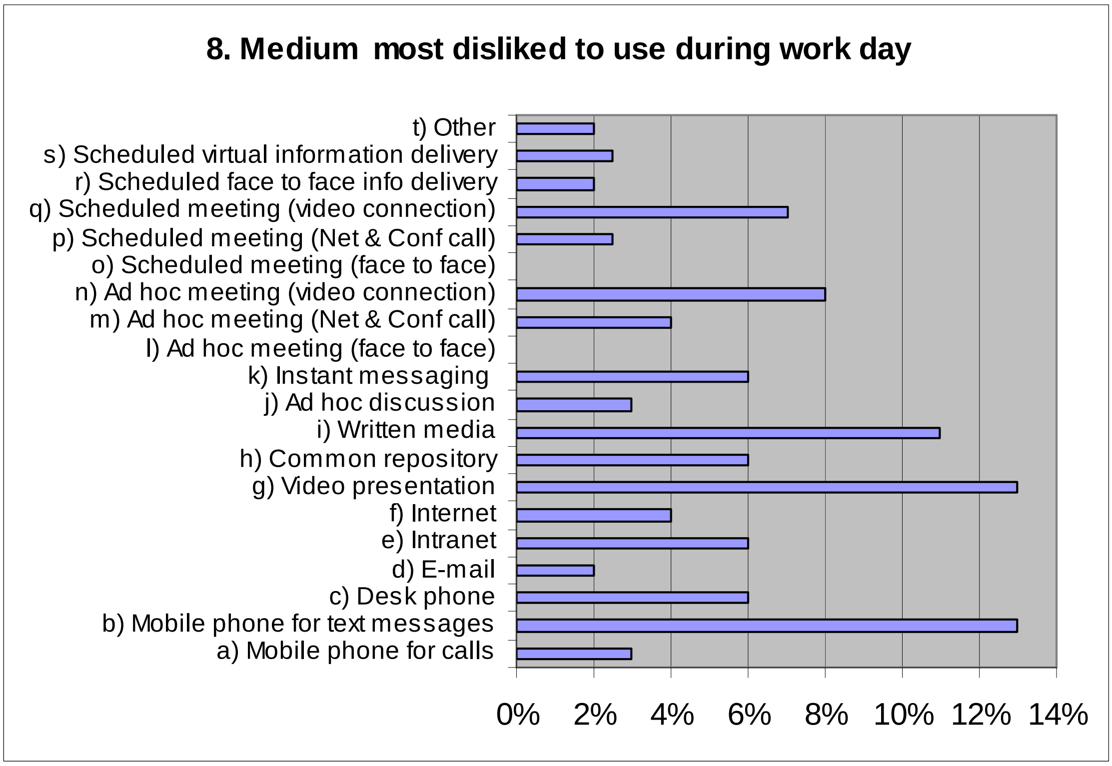


Figure 19. Medium most disliked to use during work day. Multiple choice question.

In conclusion, altogether 86% of the respondents felt that right messages have reached them during the case program.

3.2 Interviews

The interviews were conducted during November 2008 as this time period was considered most appropriate in the busy autumn season.

Altogether six persons were interviewed from Company X. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewee and used anonymously for this study.

The first objective of the interviews was to clarify the communicational roles the key persons in project environment see for themselves – if any. What is their attitude towards communications?

The second objective was to find out if they have any media preferences. Have they received timely and right content information through the project communications?

The third objective was to look for any findings that could be used as lessons learned and used for improving the project management communications in the future.

Preparations before the interview: A suggestion was drafted to the company tutor of who could and should be interviewed. This selection was done by examining the case program organisation. It was decided that a representative from each stakeholder group will be interviewed and such persons would be selected who possess enough knowledge on the situation and have a holistic view on the program. Therefore the interview invitation was sent to 18 persons, three representing each stakeholder group. The invitations needed to be planned and sent early enough to ensure the availability of the invitees – as their calendars were extremely full for the next month already. The invitation (Appendix 7) text presented the main idea of the study and the three main methods for collecting the data. The invitation also gave a description of the objectives of the study and the interviews in particular. An encouraging tone was assumed as once again it was challenging to get the receivers give their time for this study. At this point the invitations did not yet have a fixed time proposal, just an estimation of the duration (1 hour) and a question, if the receiver is willing or not to participate in the interview.

The structure of the interview was drawn from the key questions of the survey already conducted at this stage. When the structured interview plan (Appendix 8) was ready and approved and tested by the company tutor it was reviewed together with the Helsinki School of Economics representative. After a few modifications on the questions the structure was ready.

At this point the invitations were sent to the identified interviewees and five positive replies had been received. None of the steering group representatives had accepted the invitation but in the other five stakeholder groups one person was found to represent each group. Therefore, further convincing was needed towards a steering group representative as it was important to hear their voice in this study too. The invitations with specific time and location or conference call line details were sent to the participants. The six persons represented three different language groups.

During the interview the interviewer asked 22 fixed questions and in case a response required further clarification additional questions were asked. While the interview was ongoing, the interviewer guided the interviewee in case s/he was loosing the track. Otherwise the interview session was hold as discussive as possible.

The interviewer paid special attention to effective and active listening. Although, the interviews were recorder it was this way easier to guide the discussion onwards. It also inspired the interviewee to give good answers as s/he saw that the interviewer was genuinely interested in hearing what s/he had to say.

After the interview the researcher documented the interviews and translated them into English in case the language spoken and recorded was something else.

Six persons were interviewed for the study, i.e. one interviewee from each stakeholder group. Table 3 introduces the interviewees by the group they represented.

Table 3. Interviewees by stakeholder group.

Interviewee:	Group represented:
Interviewee 1	Program Member (Internal)
Interviewee 2	Provide Internal Support / Services
Interviewee 3	Program Management
Interviewee 4	Follow the Program/Bystander
Interviewee 5	Program Member (External)
Interviewee 6	Steering Group

Six questions from the total of 22 fixed questions asked from the interviewees have been raised to this subsection.

First question selected asked who is responsible for the communications in the case program. The views varied. Interviewees 1, 2, 6 answered that the responsibility is more or less divided for every person involved in the program, whereas Interviewees 3 and 4 thought that the ultimate responsibility was at the Steering Group's hands. Interviewee 5 then again saw the communication responsibility in the customer front line, i.e. in the communication actions between the program organisation and the customer who represents the new user of the improved financial solution.

Second, the interviewees were asked if thy have any favourite tools that they like to use in project communications and if yes, what are those and why them. The most common answer was e-mail which all interviewees mentioned but 5 out of 6 linked the medium interestingly to some other medium, e.g. a link from intranet or common repository / net archive is ideal to attach to an e-mail. E-mail was seen as a good medium also for its flexibility – one can choose when and whether to read the mails – and for its document purposes. One can save and archive the message for later purposes. Then again large Power Point attachments were not seen as a good way to use the e-mail as it is very often difficult to understand their content if not explained in more detail in the notes section for example. Other misuses of e-mail were also mentioned, e.g. assuming that it is like an instant messaging tool, very fast and interactive. Finally, some other media were mentioned as favourites of the interviewees: phone calls (interviewees 1, 3, 4, 5) as they are fast and convincing way to communicate, face-to-face chats (interviewees 1, 3, 6) for their rich media characteristics (referred to in Chapter 2), common repositories (interviewees 4, 6) as the same data is available there for all, virtual tools such as instant messaging and/or meeting (interviewees 1, 5) despite some technical problems experienced with them, and meetings (interviewee 2).

When asked about possible distractions in media use, Interviewee 1 admitted that sometimes it is very frustrating that same information is asked via different media, e.g. status information via phone, chat and face-to-face. Interviewee 4 mentioned access difficulties to some virtual repositories and interviewee 6 remembered a case where face-to-face meeting with virtual tools was badly hosted. Only virtual tools were used and the face-to-face ”opportunity” was thus wasted.

Fourth question selected asked for a medium which has delivered the most important messages in the program. Interviewees 1 and 2 immediately replied e-mail but others did not agree. Interviewee 3 named face-to-face discussions or phone calls with the superior as the most important media; scheduled information sharing sessions were also seen as important message transmitters by interviewees 2, 4 and 5. Interviewee 6 answered “directly from the Program Manager face-to-face or by phone”.

When asked about the medium which has delivered the most innovative messages in the program, it became quite evident that this was not something the interviewees expected from the program communications. Instead of being innovative with communications, a fact oriented approach was seen more suitable.

The interviewees were also asked about the medium for the most honest messages in the program. Interviewees 2 and 6 answered that all the messages have been honest or at least they haven’t experienced reading dishonest messages about the program. Messages sent directly by e-mail or face-to-face by the Program Manager have been considered as honest by interviewees 1, 3, 4, 5. Interviewee 3 said additionally that his/her line manager and service’s Project Manager have been open and honest in their communications, which has most often taken place face-to-face or via phone.

3.3 Focus group discussion

Goldman (as cited in Hartman, 2004, p. 403) defines focus groups as “group depth interviews”, and explains: “A group is a number of people who interact and who have a common interest; depth refers to profound information gathered, more so than individual interviews; interview refers to the presence of a moderator; and focus implies a limit to the issues discussed”.

Herndon (as cited in Hartman, 2004, p. 403) argues that “Focus groups rely heavily on member interaction to stimulate ideas rather than on the more familiar and linear question-and-answer format used in one-on-one interviews. Indeed, as Lederman and Morgan (as cited in Hartman, 2004, p. 403) suggested, the “synergistic effect generated by focus groups can be far more revealing that the sum of individual interviews.” Furthermore, the safety provided in a group often allows the participants to share information and insights that might never emerge in other settings (McCracken, as cited in Hartman, 2004, p. 403).

According to Hartman (2004) there exist five fundamental assumptions in regard to focus groups:

a) People are valuable sources of information
b) People are capable of discussing themselves and articulating their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours
c) The moderators can help people retrieve information
d) The dynamics of the group can help generate valid and reliable data
e) Group interviewing can be more effective than individual interviewing in particular research circumstances

With these assumptions in mind, focus groups are used to encourage discussion, determine attitudes and behaviours, and stimulate ideas among the participants (Hartman, 2004).

When the sponsor company accepted the subject of this Thesis Report, one of their wishes was that this report could be used as a basis for communications development work in the case organisation's projects and programs. Therefore one of the data collection methods needed to involve key representatives from the case organisation as well, in addition to the case program.

It was in these circumstances that one more data collection method was presented to the case company tutor. A focus group discussion would give the possibility for carefully selected key members of the case organisation to participate on the study too.

Pal & Buzzanell (2008) justified the use of focus groups in their study of "Changing Discourses of Identity, Identification, and Career in a Global Context (Indian Call Center Experience)" by stating that the organisational culture, meanings of work and globalization, and identity/-ies constructions are created and maintained through groups.

Participation from the case organisation was considered to open gates for the future development work and was thus accepted as one data collection method for this study. The focus group discussion was seen as a chance to explore the study subject with actors from the same field but knowledge from different projects and programs. Benchmarking cases, sharing best practices and discussing about the lessons learnt were seen as the biggest benefits of such a focus group discussion.

<u>Preparations before the focus group discussion:</u> To ensure the close connection to the matter, the structure (Appendix 9) of the discussion session was drawn from the survey and its questions. Nine questions were selected to form the core of the discussion and these questions were divided into three separate parts. A fourth part was also included in the discussion, one that aimed to gather some background information of the participating Project Managers.

The invitation (Appendix 10) to this session was sent two weeks prior to the event and the time was selected carefully to suit the invitees. The invitees were selected from the case organisation by their title. All Project, Service and Portfolio Managers were seen as key operators in different projects that took place in the case organisation at the time.

Seven persons accepted the invitation and arrived to the face-to-face session. The participants represented different native languages, therefore the discussion language was English.

During the focus group discussion: The participants were divided into two groups based on their title; one group with three members (Service & Portfolio Managers) and the other group with four Project Managers on it. The researcher acted as the moderator and sat so that she was able to have an eye contact with every participant.

After having an informal chat over beverages and small snack the participants sat down to the seats allocated for them. The session started with the moderator introducing herself and giving brief background information of the study and her role in it. Then she represented the four objectives of the session.

Objective one was to determine the communicational roles participants see for themselves in the project environment – if any, and explore the effects of communication on project performance.

Objective two was to find out participants' media preferences and views of the timeliness and contents of the project communications currently prevailing in the case organisation.

Objective three was to look for any ideas that could be used for improving the project communications in the future.

Objective four was to understand the Project Managers' current communicational tasks and feelings.

The discussion was structured on a Power Point presentation distributed to all. On this slide set every participant was asked to write their title and name (optional) and all their ideas as the discussion proceeded. This way the researcher ensured that enough data was recorder from the session in addition to the remarks she was able to write down during the discussion.

First the participants were asked to draw. A picture in the slide set had a large circle drawn on it. The participants were given 5 minutes and asked to divide the circle according to their actions during a general 8-hour work day, e.g. reading e-mail, attending meetings, etc. When everyone had finished drawing the moderator asked all the participants to introduce themselves; name, role in the organisation and present the pie they had drawn.

The next slide sheet consisted of three questions that aimed to find out how the participants see themselves as communicators. The participants were asked to first answer the questions in writing on their slides with a few bullet points, and then discuss the answers with the other subgroup members. Finally, the two subgroups were asked to raise one of the questions to overall discussion where both subgroups could join. This discussion wrapped up the first part of the session.

In the second part, again, three questions were revealed from the slide set. This part of the discussion was focused on the tools being used currently in the case organisation's project communication activities. Again, in order to ensure sufficient data collection from the session, everyone was asked to first write their answers on the paper and then discuss the answers at their table. After the given time, 10 minutes, had gone, the second part was closed by both groups selecting the most interesting topic of the three questions for general discussion.

The third discussion part concentrated on finding improvement suggestions from the participants. Again the slide set provided three questions to guide the discussion. After a short table discussion, each table shared their best or most interesting ideas for all.

The fourth part of the discussion was targeted only for the Project Managers present in the discussion session. The session continued ten more minutes with the Project Managers, i.e. four participants.

The fourth part of the slide set was opened and the remaining participants were asked to fill it in. The eight questions on that slide collected data specific for the Project Managers that were the group of employees planned to be the main target group for any future development activities. The questions asked information e.g. on the current workload of the Project Managers, and the communication practices currently prevailing in the organisation. This time no one was asked to present their answers but instead the moderator asked if there was something else the Project Managers were thinking about the subject in general, e.g. the future prospects in the field of project communications in general.

After the focus group discussion the researcher wrote down everything that she was able to conclude from the session and what she had not been able to write down during the session. Altogether 43 pages of data were collected, including the answer sheets of each participant.

Data from eight topics of the results from the focus group discussion will be presented in this Thesis Report as the rest was seen more valid for the case organisation's future development plan. Table 4 lists the participants in the focus group discussion.

Table 4. Focus group discussion participants.

Participant's title:	**Abbreviation used in the text:**
Project Manager	PM1
Project Manager	PM2
Project Manager	PM3
Project Manager	PM4
Service Manager	SM1
Service Manager	SM2
Portfolio Manager	PoM

The pie charts the participants drew on their daily working activities are presented in Figures 20a and 20b. PM2's pie is missing, since this participant arrived 10 minutes late.

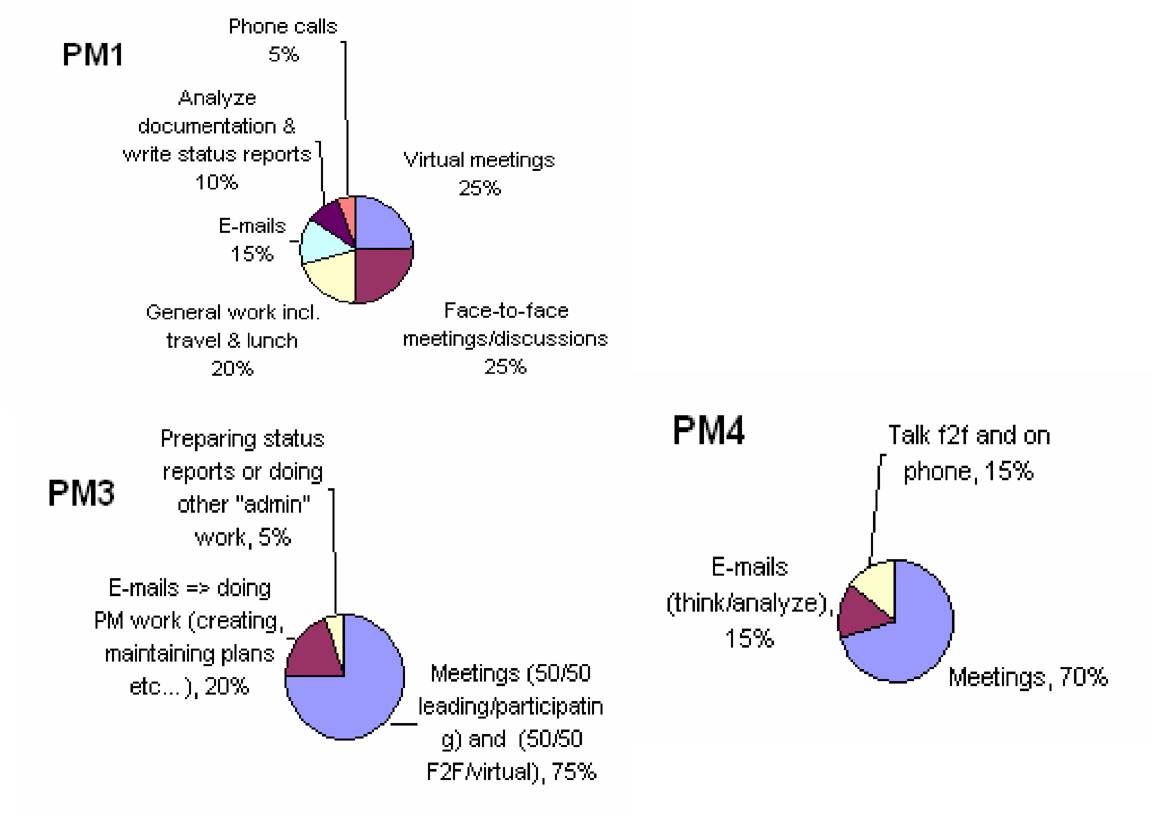


Figure 20a. Project Managers' daily activities.

From the Project Managers' pies it can be concluded that most of their time is spent in meetings, then managing their e-mails. Quite a high percentage is spent in interactive situations; PM1 55% of the day, PM3 75% of the day and PM4 85% of the day.

In the Service Managers' and Portfolio manager's pies (Figure 20b) the interactive percentages seem to be quite on the same level or a little lower; SM1 70% of the day, SM2 49% and PoM 35%

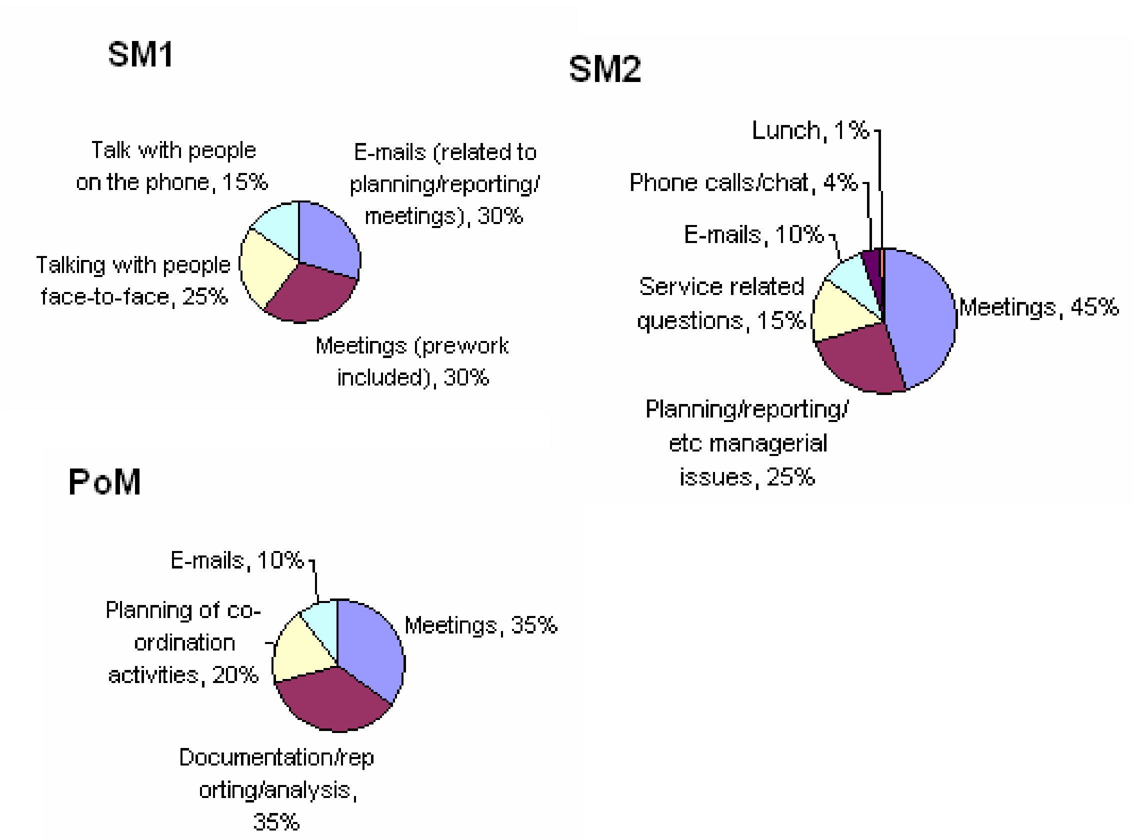


Figure 20b. Service Managers' and Portfolio Manager's daily activities.

Next, the group was asked who they consider to be responsible for project communications in general. The group was unanimous and everyone responded that everyone who takes part in the project is responsible for the communications. After a short discussion more precise identifications were given, such as Project Manager (PM) or persons nominated by the customer.

The third discussion topic concerned the favourite medium of the participants in project communications. All PMs favoured weekly meeting practices and two out of the four PMs preferred e-mail whereas neither Service Managers (SM) nor the Portfolio Manager (PoM) raised these media on their favourite list. Instead SMs and PoM mentioned the different repositories being used in the organisation, but only one PM mentioned this medium. In addition, prompt calls and face-to-face discussions were mentioned by the PMs. Project closure parties were also listed by one participant as they lift the spirit and give you a chance to openly communicate the lessons learnt with the other stakeholders.

The fourth discussion topic dealt with possible distraction caused by the choice of a communication medium. The discussion culminated very much around large e-mail attachments which irritated all the participants. In addition people reading e-mails during meetings was mentioned as a misuse of that communication medium. PMs also raised issues to do with different process approaches inside the case organisation in the field of project management and related communication activities. In addition, difficulties with access to some common repositories were mentioned to cause distraction. The fact that the case organisation deals with complex issues made the participants discuss the possibility to simplify communications and choose such medium, i.e. face-to-face discussion that overcomes the challenges with complex content messages.

The fifth topic discussed asked the participants to think about a project "Dream Team" from the communicational aspect and what it would be like. These were the things listed by the PMs: shared location, same language, clear roles & responsibilities, standard schedule / work times, open atmosphere (possibility to ask dummy questions), supportive communication to share knowledge (teaching), proactive, willing to win, willing to solve the situation, not all the time tied to project scope but also to issues that relate to the project, face-to-face meetings, change management and communications combined. Service Managers didn't take part in the discussion presumably because they considered this question to involve only project leaders but Portfolio Manager hoped for good communications especially in a situation where a new person is getting onboard a project.

Finally all the participants were asked to consider whether there is a need to develop project communications. SMs looked at PMs for the reply and PMs would like guidance on how to say things briefly yet in a descriptive style. Also a monthly communications event in bigger projects was listed by one PM. It was also mentioned that usually the communications in a project is clear if the project is well planned and when people act proactively in all situations requiring communication. All in all it should never be taken for granted that people know things in a project environment and that small projects manage without guidance with communications.

The end of the session concerned only the Project Managers. A possibility of more training about project communications was suggested. This issue did not raise any specific enthusiasm. One of the PMs said “At the moment there is none available, so any training on the matter is welcome at least once in six months”. Another PM stated that the issue does not solely concern communications but it should be ensured that projects are well established and planned, and this might need a new more agile project methodology than the one currently in use in the case company.

3.4 Trustworthiness of the study

Survey

Overall, the survey was conducted in the planned time frame and the target amount of responses, 30, was almost reached with the 28 responses received. All in all 238 identified stakeholders were invited to the survey but it was acknowledged already at that phase that most of the receivers would not have the time to participate in the study. As the survey was used as a basis for further data collection methods and the results received would not be used for testing or generalisation purposes the use of the method was considered justified.

The Excel platform for the survey was not the most flexible tool to use, neither for the respondents nor for the researcher as it required some amount of manual work. But as it was earlier stated the fire walls present in the program environment challenged the technical solution and thus Excel was used. In two questions it was noted that some finetuning of the used words should have been done as it was challenging to analyse those responses. For example, one of the medium in the survey was called mobile phone for text messages but it didn't clarify whether it was about receiving or sending text messages.

Interviews

The following factors (see Lehtimäki 1996) were used in this study in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the data:

- Choose parties interested in giving information
- Report the results anonymously
- Use of multiple interviews in different 'departments'
- Ensure the top manager's (company tutor) support for the research
- Limit each interview time to 1-3 hours
- Make the appointments as early and flexibly as possible
- Create an interactive interview situation
- Check that you have understood the responses correctly

Overall, it can be stated that the interview sessions went well. The hour reserved for the session was enough and some of the interviews needed only half an hour. The interviewer was the writer of this Thesis Report. Five of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and one by phone. The interview by the phone was a bit less discussive as it was more difficult to feel the interviewees mood and whether s/he was willing to say something more on the discussed topic or not.

Focus group discussion

In the past few years focus group methodology has emerged as an important research tool employed by many academic disciplines, including marketing, strategic planning, and communication (Luntz, 1994; R. Myers, 2002; Rook, 2003, as cited in Hartman, 2004, p. 402). For example, by the end of 1990s, more than 200 studies were published that apparently used focus groups.

As regards the focus group discussion in the present study, it must be noted that the one hour's time was not quite enough for the whole session. The first group members were able to finish as planned but the Project Managers had to stay 10 minutes overtime. The time pressure also slightly limited the discussion as the moderator had to follow the schedule and cut the discussion a few times. However, the moderator knew that all the invitees were extremely busy and thus it was considered that asking for (just) one hour from their day wouldn't raise the bar of participating too high. Tuesday afternoon time (4:30 – 5:30) was good as the work day was already finished and the participants were able to concentrate on the discussion. Secondly, the conference room reserved for the event was appropriate as everyone was able to see and hear each other well.

Most of the participants knew each other before hand and this had a positive effect on the atmosphere of the situation. In addition, the seven participants divided into two table groups seemed to work well time wise and information wise. As Schwalbe (2006, p. 56) indicates the limitation of using focus group methods lies in the fact that "not only it is difficult to recruit and schedule larger numbers of participants, but also because a saturation will be reached as similar information starts to emerge".

To summarize the trustworthiness of this data collection method it can be stated that Hartman's (2004, pp. 404-406) six steps for evaluating the use of a focus group method were used.

- Consider what you want to learn
- From whom you want to learn the information
- Determine the questions and the interviewing structure
- Choose a moderator to organise and conduct the focus group session. The moderator must be impartial, experienced, capable of staying on task, able to think on his or her feet, able to probe for additional information, and able to seek a deeper understanding of information
- Select and set up the location for the focus group session
- Manage the opening of the focus group session; i.e. introducing the goal and the process

4 KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As the present study investigates project communications from two perspectives, the medium's and the stakeholder's, one framework was selected to elaborate each perspective. The Effective Media Selection Predictions -model developed in the early 1980's by Daft and Lengel supports the analysis of media perspective related findings and the illustration of a value chain of communications from Sveriges Informations Förening's (1996) publication will be used as the combining tool for all the theory findings made and presented in Subchapter 2.1 about stakeholder related literature. These two frameworks together with the collected data will be used in order to find an answer to the research question and sub-questions of this study, i.e.

1. What are the salient features of communication in a multinational business project from the perspectives of media and stakeholders?

1a. What media do various stakeholder groups prefer for effective communications?

1b. How should stakeholders be taken into consideration when planning the project communications?

Chapter 4 has been structured so, that the questions will be answered in a reversed order, i.e. first 1b, then 1a, and finally question 1.

4.1 How should stakeholders be taken into consideration when planning project communications?

A simple answer to this question is: Identify the stakeholders, understand their needs and different viewpoints, get them onboard, keep them onboard and make sure the communications is two-way, i.e. the sender can become the receiver and vice versa, in order to keep motivation and true information sharing vivid. From the stakeholders' overall responses indicated that they understand the two-way nature of communications as well as the fact that communications is everyone's responsibility. After all, in the survey the respondents felt most comfortable as communicators as they were sharing

(45%) and receiving information (35%) and in the interviews half of the interviewees named all parties responsible for communications. The focus group responded in a homogenous way that everyone who takes part in the project is responsible for the communications.

A picture (Figure 16, see p. 55), found from Sveriges Informations Förening (1996) publishing, with slight modification illustrates the stakeholder approach well. At the initial phase of a project all potential stakeholders, i.e. the group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation's purpose or has interest in the project, should be listed and positioned on a map. Then their interests must be studied and actions established that ensure their commitment.

In the present study the stakeholders were already identified by the program management and they were mapped in a change management plan. From the change management plan the stakeholders were further analysed and grouped while placed on a communications plan. Table 5 lists the primary and secondary stakeholders included in this study. A primary stakeholder refers to a group or individual in the core of this study, whereas a secondary stakeholder refers to an individual on the outer layer who is only indirectly affected by this study.

Table 5. Primary and secondary group stakeholders of this study.

Interviewees (n=6):	**Group represented:**
Interviewee 1, Program Member (Internal)	Primary stakeholder
Interviewee 2, Provide Internal Support / Services	Primary stakeholder
Interviewee 3, Program Management	Primary stakeholder
Interviewee 4, Follow the program / Bystander	Secondary stakeholder
Interviewee 5, Program Member (External)	Primary stakeholder
Interviewee 6, Steering Group	Primary stakeholder
Survey respondents (n=28):	
External Program Member, 36%	Primary stakeholder
Program Management, 25%	Primary stakeholder

Internal Program Member 21%	Primary stakeholder
Provide Internal Support / Services 14%	Primary stakeholder
Follow the program / Bystander 4%	Secondary stakeholder
Steering Group Member 0%	Primary stakeholder
Focus group participants (n=7):	
Project Manager, PM1	Secondary stakeholder
Project Manager, PM2	Secondary stakeholder
Project Manager, PM3	Secondary stakeholder
Project Manager, PM4	Secondary stakeholder
Service Manager, SM1	Secondary stakeholder
Service Manager, SM2	Secondary stakeholder
Portfolio Manager, PoM	Secondary stakeholder

In Table 5 External Program Members represent so-called third party consultants who are paid an hourly wage. This might be one of the reasons for such a high participation rate in the survey. 25% of the survey respondents represented the Program Management, who clearly has a say and stake on the matter investigated. After all, the communication activities are most often managed by this group of stakeholders. What is notable is the fact that none of the Steering Group representatives participated in the survey. The most obvious reason for this is the lack of time. The survey was not prioritized in their very tight schedules and also the number of invitees was the lowest with this stakeholder group.

In the communications plan analysis the stakeholders were grouped according to their different stakes on the program and according to the circumstances they represent, e.g. the time zone they are located in or the language they speak. Only 2.4% of all the stakeholders involved in this study were native English speakers. This fact clearly has an impact on the selection of the medium as it needs to be ensured that the sent messages are really understood. Also, because of time differences, one can not assume that people far away from each other are able to communicate interactively and the tools recommended need to offer a flexible solution for this challenge.

Although one would like to make the communications plan in such a detailed level that it would cover everything from personal analysis to the overall group behaviour objectives, it is not a realistic goal for the plan because of the many behavioural patterns and changing circumstances. Therefore, in the communications process the filters individual people possess are easily missed and they can only be taken into account in more personal one on one communication situations. The awareness of this fact needs to be promoted as clearly as the documented communications plan.

The different communication needs of the different stakeholder group representatives were analysed on the basis of the interviews conducted with the different group representatives. For example, the internal program member, who can be said to be in the very core of the program, was very organised and action driven. S/he provided quick, short and straight to the point answers and indicated that this is the style s/he prefers to have the program communications available too. Another example is the interviewee who provided internal services for the program; s/he gave the impression that s/he was an outsider in the program activities. S/he was not able to answer the questions in detail and the conception s/he had on the program was very vague. For example, instead of using specific names from the program organisation, s/he used the term ‘program’ instead, e.g. the ‘program’ should provide clear guidance etc. As this stakeholder group is very important for the successful implementation of the program’s end result, more emphasis should be put on managing the communications towards this group. What the program management representative emphasised in the interview was cooperation across the sub- and co-projects; communications should help and build bridges between the different operative silos. The external program member then again emphasised the importance of communications in the customer frontline. That frontline should always be in the minds of program communications management.

In the survey, the respondents stated they would prefer to receive progress, schedule or project management related information. The results of this survey question are presented in detail in Figure 21.

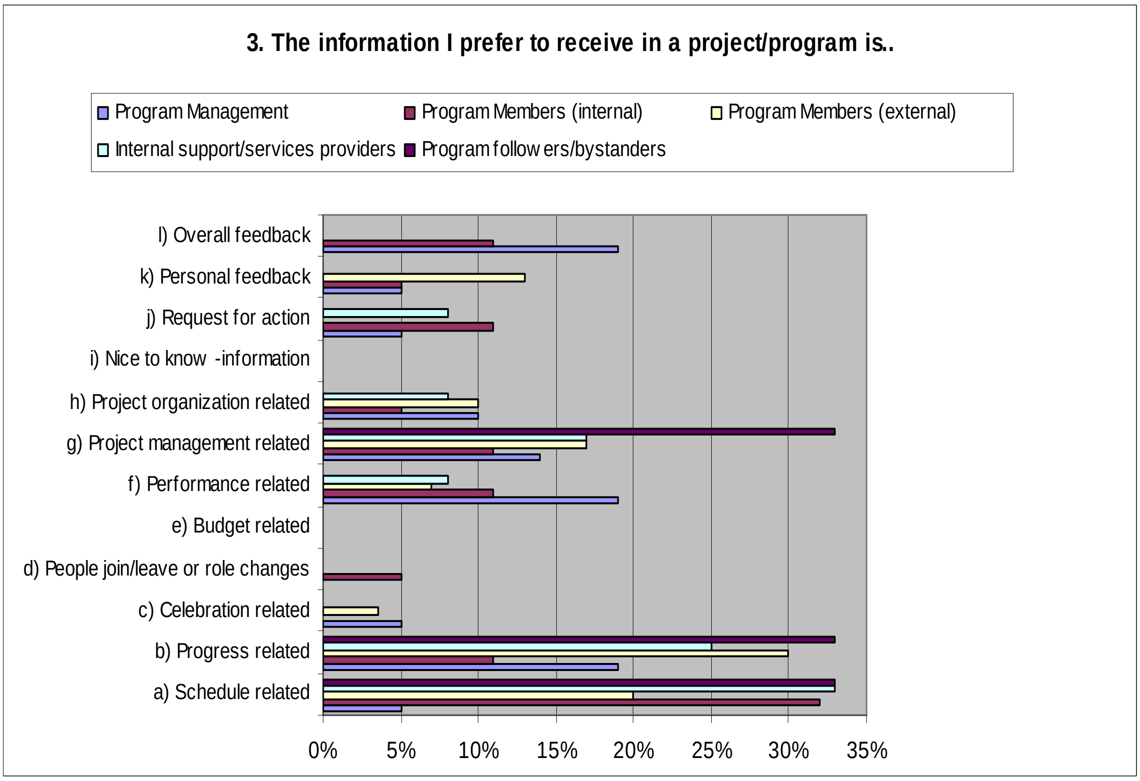


Figure 21. The information survey respondents prefer to receive in a project. Multiple choice question.

From the perspectives of the stakeholders, the following findings were made. First, the focus group participants said that they communicate a lot as it is part of all their work related activities; providing, gathering, coordinating information. One Project Manager stated that s/he always thinks carefully what s/he wants to communicate to the project team members. S/he focuses on relevant issues only and thus doesn't overload the project team with irrelevant or less important issues. S/he sees her-/himself as a quality checker or filter for the information related to the project in question. A Service Manager supported this idea by stating that s/he always forwards e-mail messages on need to know basis and hopes others would do the same to guarantee that relevant people get the information. If s/he doesn't know the relevant person before hand, s/he first checks it and then sends the information directly to this person.

By listening carefully to the statements and observing the interviewees, good insight on people's different expectations was collected. The execution of the communications plan should be based on knowledge of expectations in order to ensure that the stakeholders are "onboard" (see Figure 16, Value Chain of Communications).

Once the stakeholders have been analysed and engaged by a targeted communications plan and actions, the next step is to ensure that they will "stay onboard", i.e. they feel that the communication actions are worth following, monitoring and participating. This level of involvement is illustrated by step three in the value chain of communications.

First of all, one has to ensure the access to the 'communication arena'. At this stage it is good to remember what was stated by Kliem (2008, pp. 73-74): the more people (~150 in the case program) the greater the number of different interactions that can occur among the stakeholders, or the more technically complex (very complex in the case program) the project goal, the greater the chances for miscommunications and lack of communications to occur. As the case program's challenge level is very high, extra attention should be put on the fact that the stakeholders know the tools used for communicating, practices involved with them and the key contacts to communicate with in the program environment. Virtuality, like in this case program, brings more challenge to managing this 'communication arena' as the technology used may bring challenges varying country by country or the different practices people have in different communications situations. For example, the use of virtual tools such as e-mail and net meeting may not be comfortable for all, some might rather use teleconferencing and voice. Thus, communications must start from establishing and securing the practices, and providing the guidelines on how the communications is handled in this program. When this is done, the stakeholders are able to 'play in the communications arena' and the program needs to concentrate on keeping them on the arena with the help of an effective change management strategy.

Obeng (1996, p. 57) suggests that to ensure the stakeholder's "staying onboard" one can use for example the following change management tactics, also called general soft criteria: empathy, reliability, fault-freeness, honesty, fun, aesthetics and political sensitivity. Of these, reliability, fault-freeness, honesty, fun and political sensitivity related issues were identified in the data. The fun factor was raised by one focus group discussion participant. S/he said that it is important to give a chance to feel the success at the end of a project milestone and share lessons learnt in an open atmosphere. When asked about a medium that has delivered the most honest messages, the respondents quite unanimously said that all the messages have been honest or at least they haven't experienced reading dishonest or faulty messages. Political sensitivity came across when asked for a medium which has delivered the most innovative messages in the program. It became quite evident that a more fact oriented approach was expected from the program and there was little room for humour or innovativeness.

All in all, it can be stated that the case program's communications plan has been well planned and executed as 86% of the survey respondents felt that right messages have reached them during the case program. Despite such a high satisfaction level, some general improvement ideas will be presented in sub-chapter 4.3. Before that however, the findings related to media will be presented.

4.2 What media do various stakeholder groups prefer for effective communications?

For effective communications to take place, one must carefully consider the communication circumstances case by case. There is no "one solution fits for all" – type of answer to this question as the findings will show.

The respondents' opinion of the favourite medium varied to some extent. Table 6 summarises the responses.

Table 6. Favourite medium by stakeholder group.

	According to survey results GPA:	Would like to use or favourite medium:
1	Internal Program Members	E-mail
2	Provide Internal Support / Services	E-mail and mobile phone for calls
3	Program Management	Mobile phone for calls
4	Follow the program / Bystander*	E-mail, internet, common repository / net archive, ad hoc discussion and virtual scheduled meeting
5	External Program Members	E-mail
	According to the interviews (I = Interviewee):	
6	I1, Internal Program Member	Mobile phone for calls
7	I2, Provide Internal Support / Services	E-mail
8	I3, Program Management	E-mail linked to intranet
9	I4, Follow the program / Bystander*	Common repositories
10	I5, Program Member (External)	E-mail
11	I6, Steering Group	Face-to-face
	According to the focus group discussion:	
12	PM1*	Weekly meeting (virtual through live meeting)
13	PM2*	E-mail
14	PM3*	Face-to-face
15	PM4*	Weekly meeting (face-to-face)
16	SM2*	Common repository
17	PoM*	Face-to-face
	* Represents secondary stakeholder group in the case program.	

As the table indicates e-mail is the most preferred medium among the respondents, especially among the primary stakeholder group respondents. Also, in the survey 63% of the respondents mentioned e-mail in an open-end-question as the medium where they would like to receive program communications. When the respondents were asked what medium has provided the most valid information from the program e-mail was still number one, but not so clearly. The percentage was 39% for e-mail and other media received higher scores than in the previous question: meetings 25%, instant messaging and face-to-face discussions both 11% (Appendix 6). The reason might be that in a scheduled meeting you can hear the presenter, or sender of the message, and analyse the sender's voice and style of emphasising certain things, whereas in the e-mail it is more difficult to interpret the tone of the message – what part of it is vital and what part is less important. In a meeting situation it is also possible to give immediate feedback and direct the discussion in such a way that the valid issues are being discussed.

On the basis of the results from the survey an average stakeholder profile could be created: "In my job I most commonly use e-mail. What I would like to use more is scheduled face-to-face meetings. In the program I am content with the media used, although I have used more instant messaging and net repository/ies than normally. The media I don't like to use are mobile phone for text messages, video presentation, written media nor any meetings with video connection. The medium I prefer with frequent messaging from the program communications is e-mail. Intranet, e.g. the newsletter published there, and scheduled meetings preferably with a net meeting connection are good channels too. However, the media that has given me most valid information during the program is not only e-mail but also meetings - scheduled ones with a net meeting connection or just face-to-face discussions."

The focus group discussion revealed differences by stakeholder group and the medium they prefer more clearly. All Project Managers (PM) preferred weekly meeting practices and two out of the four PMs replied e-mail whereas neither Service Managers (SM) nor the Portfolio Manager (PoM) raised these media on their favourite list. Instead SMs and PoM mentioned the different repositories being used in the organisation and only one PM mentioned this kind of a medium. In addition, prompt calls and face-to-face discussions were mentioned by the PMs.

In conclusion, the focus group discussion highlighted the following issues: All participants felt positively about e-mails, excluding large attachments which were seen as misuse of e-mail's net capacity. A link to some database where the information was stored was suggested as a solution for this problem. Prompt and well planned meetings were mentioned as a positive medium whereas long status meetings with irrelevant participants and/or people reading e-mails received criticism. An interesting topic about the use of visuals was raised by one Project Manager, as s/he reminded us that "a picture tells us more than a thousand words". S/he hoped this would be noted in all Power Point presentations. The participants were not able to fully take into account the differences of the audience because of the limited time in a work day. Thus the same communication practices were used with all stakeholder representatives. Physical distance was seen as an obstacle especially when the participants were not familiar with each other. Video conferencing, however, was not used to overcome this obstacle.

Finally, in the interviews the most preferred medium was e-mail, which all interviewees mentioned (not necessarily as their first choice) but 5 out of 6 linked the medium interestingly to some other medium, e.g. to the Intranet or a common repository. E-mail was seen as a good medium for its flexibility – one can choose when and whether to read the messages – and for its documentation purposes. One can save and archive the message for later purposes. Then again large Power Point attachments were not seen as a good way to use the e-mail as the presentations are often difficult to understand without some additional explanation. Other misuses of e-mail were also mentioned, e.g. the assumption that it is like an instant messaging tool, very fast and interactive. Finally, phone calls were mentioned as the favourite medium by interviewees 1, 3, 4 and 5 as the calls are a fast and convincing way to communicate.

Justifications given by the informants on their choices are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Reasons given by the informants for preferred media.

Medium:	**Why preferred:**
E-mail	Popularity, everyone uses it Documentation Flexible, when and where... if at all Possibility to link with intranet or net archive
Mobile phone	Fast and enables further questions
Phone conference	Convince multiple persons simultaneously
Face-to-face	Interactive and convincing Risk of misunderstandings low
Common repository / net archive	The same data is available for all Links can be sent via e-mail
Net meeting	Very good tool e.g. for training situations
Chat	Fast and can be used in a middle of a meeting

It seems quite evident that e-mail is the most used medium – but whether it is the preferred medium by every stakeholder group remains unsolved because of the spectrum of circumstances prevailing in a large multinational program. E-mail, however, offers a neutral communications zone for all stakeholders no matter what the technology used or accent in spoken language might be.

E-mail is a safe option to communicate and it allows the recipient to choose when and where to read the message – if to read it at all. The choice the receiver has with this medium increases the importance of planning the subject of each e-mail message carefully. The subject needs to promote the message and say "Yes, you need to read me". In a study conducted by Lee-Kelley and Sankey (2007, p. 59) it was noted that huge volumes of e-mail can be almost unmanageable. Even if read the content may not be fully digested. In some cases the recipient or distribution list was not always appropriate. This study supports the findings done in this study, well planned and targeted prompt e-mail messages have the highest potential to reach their audience.

As was pointed out in Subchapter 2.2 Miller (2006, p. 294) argues that the richness of the medium needs to match the ambiguity of the task. Figure 22 has been adapted by the researcher from Daft and Lengel's model of Effective Media Selection Predictions to illustrate the findings regarding media.

	Unambiguous Task	**Ambiguous Task** Because of complex program context
Rich media - face to face - video conferencing - net meeting with discussion - phone conferencing with discussion		• Selected members involved • No time to correct failures caused by misunderstandings • Non native English speakers
Lean media - e-mail - intranet - phone conferencing with limited discussion		• Virtual environment • ~150 members involved • Restricted travelling

Figure 22. Effective Media Selection Predictions for the case program (adapted from Daft & Lengel, as cited in Miller, 2006, p. 291).

In the case program, as stated in the beginning of this study, the environment where the operations take place is very goal oriented. The schedules are tight, multiple countries and persons are involved and the context of the solution being built is very complex. Therefore, the messages transferred in the program are most often ambiguous by their nature. According to the above model, the program should therefore select rich media, e.g. face-to-face when ever it is possible. However, the different time zones and restricted travelling opportunities, due to economical and ecological reasons, limit this selection in practice. To overcome this situation, the program must think about virtual communication tools and manners that match as much as possible with the rich media characteristics identified by Daft and Lengel (1984, 1986 as cited in Miller, 2006, pp. 290-291). The characteristics were: (1) the availability of instant feedback, (2) the use of multiple cues, (3) the use of natural language, and (4) the personal focus of the medium.

In the next subchapter we will expand the findings made and presented in subchapters 4.1 and 4.2.

4.3 What are the salient features of communication in a multinational business project from the perspectives of media and stakeholders?

In the previous subchapters the findings related to stakeholder behaviour and media preferences were presented. It seemed quite evident that e-mail is the most used and liked medium by all stakeholder groups. A satisfying two-way communications situation with the stakeholders could be reached with a strategy illustrated with a value chain of communications where the target was to get the project communications in a level where the stakeholders are communicating with each other instead of one party communicating to another party.

From the perspective of the media the most important feature of communication is the need to guarantee that the selected medium, and similarly the message it is carrying, reaches its audience. The medium needs to overcome any possible obstacles set to it, for example obstacles in the communications process that have to do with so called noise factors or filters or the distance the medium needs to carry the message. Also, the stakeholders, both sender and receiver, need to know how the different media are to be used and under what circumstances. The selected medium needs to be reachable for all who are involved in the communication process.

From the perspective of the stakeholders the most important feature of communication is the need to receive the right messages in a timely manner and understand them. The stakeholders need to feel that they are part of a forum where they have a chance to communicate - not just receive information. Stakeholders must feel that they are members of a project, members of a forum, and members of a value chain of communications.

Thus, the person who is responsible for planning and managing the communications plan in a project must know the stakeholders at least to some extent if the project is large in size, and understand their needs and different viewpoints. After this careful planning a communications strategy and plan need to be made in order to get the identified stakeholders onboard, and keep them onboard. Finally, at the execution phase when the communications plan is taken into action, the roles, responsibilities, practices, processes, and guidelines need to be defined and introduced in such a way that all stakeholders understand them and are able to become part of the communication process, i.e. the forum where genuine two-way communication takes place and completes the full circle of communications.

The findings presented above seem simple in theory but in practice the process can be very challenging to manage. The present study has raised several obstacles one must overcome in order to be able to manage the most important features of communication in a multinational business project.

A well planned project with a well planned communications strategy can save the business substantial amount of money and time. As was pointed out in the Introduction (see p. 19), poor communications can have a costly impact on projects as they progress through project life cycles (see Figure 6, p. 19). In addition, in a multinational business project the planning needs to take into account the virtuality aspect. People are working in multiple countries, in different time zones, with different cultural and technical backgrounds. Also language issues need to be considered carefully at every communication step. A good example of bad planning and practices with virtual team working was raised by Lee-Kelley and Sankey, (2007, p. 59). People in the Western parts of the globe assumed that the Eastern colleagues were available at all times around the clock. As no one corrected this assumption, the project required a lot of effort and flexibility from the Eastern stakeholders. The case revealed a lack of community spirit and empathy between the West and the East; one stakeholder from West said that "timing was a problem for East, not for us".

Communications needs planning also because it is a kind of a web organisation that lives in every aspect and phase of the program, i.e. in financial, technical, operational, people management, planning and strategy aspects. For example, the diversity of the stakeholder groups has to be considered. Furthermore, Chiocchio's (2007) study showed that not only humans as personas are different, but also the way they act in a project situation. From the people management perspective this means that a certain level of change management is needed and communications can help driving these efforts in the program. Arredondo (2007) reminded us of the role effects of each person, e.g. a Program Manager who is willingly or unwillingly a behavioural model. Employees look up to this person and take cues from him/her. Also Optio magazine (Hyvä Veli & Hyvä Sisko, 2008) suggested that a solution for increasing knowledge in a group of people is to embed a knowledgeable person inside the community and this person would act as a learning pillar for others. This is something the researcher of this present study would like to elaborate, because according to her observations, it seems that in a program organisation every person is a messenger at some point of time and thus as a messenger s/he reflects with his/her attitude and style of communicating a certain atmosphere on the program community. Hence, it is not just certain role models in a program organisation that have a power to influence people's communication practices but the power is possessed by everyone involved in the business project. Good communicational behaviour escalates and the program becomes a forum where there is an open and good quality interaction going on.

Altogether 14 ideas were presented by the informants of the present study on how to ensure quality communication in a project. The list captures the core message of the informants discussed above.

1. Don't wait a problem to get to you and then communicate but instead communicate immediately when you feel a problem is arising.
2. Don't send mega e-mails, use links to data repositories.
3. Think also of the consequences of your actions in a longer term.
4. Be brief and use such language that everyone understands. Explain issues beforehand so that they will not raise more questions.
5. Offer common tools and processes for the whole organisation and ensure access to all.
6. Ensure the right channels of communicating, e.g. don't ask for the same information through multiple media, stick to the one that is the most proper one.
7. Manage the media you have selected well, get training if needed.
8. If you feel you are not able to act as a good communicator, get training and improve your skills.
9. In a complex program, make sure you are not making it even more complex with your communicational behaviour. Use visuals, be brief and clear.
10. Follow the guidelines given, e.g. if it is agreed that no laptops are to be used during a meeting, respect that decision.
11. Do not take for granted that people know things in a project environment, ensure that they have understood by asking feedback.
12. Remember that small projects need communication planning and guidance just the same way as the bigger projects do.

13. Do not communicate in silos; make sure you have included all necessary parties to the discussion.
14. Balance the information amount. Too much might get the audience overloaded and lose the sight from most important issues.

This subchapter is closed with a summary of a project dream team description from the Project Managers of the focus group discussion. The description was presented from the perspective of communication.

“A project dream team would sit in the same location, speak the same language and have clearly defined roles & responsibilities. The team would have standard work times, open atmosphere to ask dummy questions, supportive communication to share knowledge (teaching each other) and regular formal communication that clearly states the facts related to the progress. The team would work in a proactive way, it would be willing to win, willing to solve situations even out of their personal scope, yet relating to the project. Face-to-face meetings, change management actions together with communicating would allow the project to operate in an open atmosphere.”

4.4 Discussion evolving from the findings

When the sponsor company and organisation accepted the subject of this Thesis Report, one of their wishes was that this report could be used as a basis for communications development work in the case organisation’s projects and programs.

Key question to be answered in that development work is the one on how to overcome the obstacles virtuality brings to the business project. Virtuality brings obstacles as it diminishes people’s ability to communicate face-to-face, which was the medium most informants of this study wanted the project communications enable also in the future.

Do virtual teams then have certain preferences regarding the media used? At least Henttonen (2003, p. 132) did not come up with any certain channels or tools that should be used in virtual communications in her study but she found out that more tolerance to technical problems was identified than to other people- or task-related problems in virtual teams. To reflect this finding to the present study it is interesting to note that the result is similar in what comes to tolerance towards technical problems. As it was the case that during autumn 2008 the case program faced technical issues with some central communication tools and yet the collected data did not reveal any mentioning on this issue. So, can it be concluded that virtual teams communicate in a flexible manner no matter what the channel given to them is as long as the network of people is identified and their tasks are proceeding, no matter what the tool being used is.

To develop such a strategy and communications process that allows individual level communication as trustworthy, timely and clearly as possible seems the right way to go. A study conducted by Lee-Kelley and Sankey (2007, p. 53) supports this ideology. As they have noted that there is general agreement throughout the literature that some level of face-to-face contact is necessary – although opinions differ as to when this should take place. Is it at the stage when a team is set-up, as the PoM in the present study's focus group hoped for, or periodically as built into the project schedule? In Lee-Kelley's and Sankey's (2007, p. 57) survey net meeting was also used much especially because of the SARS epidemic in 2003 that banned travelling. However, there was general agreement that while a substitute for face-to-face meeting under the circumstance, it cannot be used as a permanent replacement.

The social benefits of regular face-to-face meetings are also reported by Mazneski and Chudoba (as cited in Lee-Kelley & Sankey, 2007) who see it as ultimately enriching team performance.

So, face-to-face communications was wished for more by the business project informants but in reality the stakeholders are so scattered around the globe that face-to-face communications is not possible. Instead, could video technology be used as a substitute for the face-to-face medium? According to Pritchard (2004, p. 14), the key in videoconferences is the ability to identify gestures, cues, or handoffs that will facilitate more ordinary conversation. Video conferences can also share graphics and presentation content. However, Pritchard continues that video technology is relatively unfamiliar to most users and it generally requires a higher level of rehearsal and testing than other communications tools. In addition the informants of the present study disliked (Figure 20) or did not mention video technology as a preferred medium for them. Despite of these challenges, as video technology however seems to offer the only solution for the situation, would training and increasing the amount of the equipment solve that dilemma? Would the comfort brought by increasing knowledge with video technology increase the usage of such tools and thus offer a solution for combining virtuality and humanity?

Lee-Kelley and Sankey (2007, p. 53) have studied the topic of virtual working and according to their study a recurring theme emerging from the literature is the importance of communication between virtual team members and the effects of using technology to communicate. Robb (as cited in Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007, p. 53) points to the arrival of a 'third generation of collaboration technology'. E-mails and conference calls are generally known as first generation technologies while online discussion boards (electronic meeting places where groups sharing similar interests can communicate in real time), Power Point presentation, video tools and online meeting tools are second generation technologies. Third generation technology refers typically to web-enabled shared workspaces via the intranet or internet.

Somehow it seems that the case organisation firstly needs to strengthen its second generation technology knowledge through training. Also Lee-Kelley and Sankey (2007, p. 60) concluded in their study on global virtual teams for value creation and project success that training was clearly needed for phone and e-mail usage which were the two most used tools in the studied case. Secondly, the case organisation should similarly focus the development work to reach the third technology level. Lee-Kelley's and Sankey's (2007) study came also to the conclusion that Web has great potential but it was not used in practice. According to the present researcher the potential of the web could be used to build for example a third generation technology forum, a recording net forum where everyone is present at the time most convenient for them, a kind of a program news channel build over net by all stakeholders. Requirements would be easy access to the environment (no problems with passwords and connectivity) and to possess the knowledge to use the tool (guidelines) and the roles & responsibilities defined so that information would be always 100% up to date. One should ensure security issues with the technology and backups for the key persons who have responsibilities to load data on the system. This would conclude to a common and clear process available for all, no matter whether it is a big or a small project in question. Could these two objectives, focused training and development work form the plan for developing the case organisation's multinational business projects communications practices?

The status and importance of communications remains central in the business environment also in the future. As was presented earlier in this study it is evident that especially project management's job consists of communication related tasks. According to the focus group, 75% of the Project Managers' time was used in average in interactive communication situations, whereas if compared to other stakeholders such as the Service Managers and the Portfolio Manager the average time spent on interactive situations was less, 51% of their day. Although the size of the studied group was very small, these figures indicate that Project Managers work is much about communicating. Thus, they are the key personas when planned the development for project communications and possible training actions and should thus be involved in the planning process. Although the raised training needs from the present study's informants were very general and basically indicated that any training on communication is welcomed at least every six months it is important to build the future steps together. Like Miller (2006) and the research he has studied point out an identified link between general perceptions of participation in decision making and employee satisfaction. Also participation was considered to open gates for the future development work. From the present study it can also be stated that the response received for the focus group discussion was highly interested and the willingness to participate was clear.

To turn all the collected data into communications development plan in such a detail level that it would cover everything from personal analysis to the overall group behaviour objectives, does not seem like a realistic goal because of the many behavioural patterns and changing circumstances. In the size of the case program, (~150 international members) there certainly are differences in individual communicational behaviour practices that should be taken into account but it seems more realistic goal for one on one communication situations. People's awareness for individual differences however needs to be promoted along with the documented communications plan.

To close this subchapter about the ideas raised by the findings a point made by Fill (1995) leads the way towards the actions needed:

> "In order to build cooperation it is essential that there is consensus about the overall objectives and sound communications. To assist the development of a cooperative network of relationships, the generation of integrated communications by all members, particularly community leaders, is fundamental. In order to ensure consistency and integrated communications, one of the first steps is to appoint a communications coordinator. This person should be responsible for the development and implementation of a communications strategy that controls all the message outputs of the organisation and assists the organisation through the complex networks to which all organisations belong." (Fill, 1995, p. 158)

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Research summary

The purpose of this study was to offer ideas for a practical development initiative on multinational business project communications. The sponsor company had not done any research on this topic earlier and was keen on knowing more about the current situation and direction where business project communications should be driven. The scope of the study was limited to cover stakeholder and medium perspectives in the general communications process in a project lead by the case organisation.

The research questions set for the study looked to salient features of communication through media preferences and stakeholder driven communications planning. The questions were presented in the following form:

- What are the salient features of communication in a multinational business project from the perspectives of media and stakeholders?
- (Sub-question) What media do various stakeholder groups prefer for effective communications?
- (Sub-question) How should stakeholders be taken into consideration when planning the project communications?

The methods of the study consisted of an Excel survey sent for all identified stakeholders in the case program, interviews with representatives from each stakeholder group of the case program and a focus group discussion with relevant participants selected from the case organisation.

The frameworks for the study were summarised into two; Firstly, the Media Richness Model of Effective Media Selection Predictions by Daft and Lengel that outlined the findings related to media perspective. According to the model one should always match the ambiguity of the task with the media. Secondly, an illustration published by Sveriges Informations Förening (1996) that structured the stakeholder related findings was used. According to the framework, the steps set for stakeholder driven communications planning were: Identify stakeholders, get them onboard, keep them onboard, win benefits two-way, and finally communicate "with" instead of "to".

The findings of the study cannot be generalised as such but they provide material for professionals working with similar issues. The main findings for each research question are presented below.

What are the salient features of communication in a multinational business project from the perspectives of media and stakeholders?

From the perspective of the media the most important feature of communication is the need to guarantee the message reaches its audience. The medium needs to overcome any possible obstacles (noise factors, filters or distance). Also, the stakeholders need to have access and know how to select and use the different media.

From the perspective of the stakeholders the most important feature of communication is the need to receive the right messages in a timely manner and understand them. The stakeholders need to feel that they are part of a forum where they have a chance to communicate - not just receive information. Stakeholders must feel that they are members of a project, members of a forum, and members of a value chain of communications. In such circumstances a genuine two-way communications can take place.

Thus, the person who is responsible for planning and managing the communications plan in a project must know the stakeholders at least in a high level if the project is large in size and understand their needs and different viewpoints.

What media do various stakeholder groups prefer for effective communications?

The messages transferred in the case program were most often ambiguous by their nature. Therefore, according to the theory of Effective Media Selection Predictions, the stakeholders of the case program should select rich media, e.g. face-to-face whenever it is possible. However, in reality, the most preferred (and safe) medium was in general e-mail. Not enough data was collected to indicate any repetitious preferences by stakeholder groups, only individual or circumstance related deviations were evidenced.

How should stakeholders be taken into consideration when planning the project communications?

The process needs to be started by listing and positioning all potential stakeholders on a map. Then their interests should be analysed and such actions established that ensure their commitment. Once the stakeholders have been analysed and targeted communications plan and actions have ensured that they are "onboard", the next step is to ensure that they will stay onboard, i.e. they feel that the communication actions are worth following, monitoring and participating. To ensure the stakeholder's staying onboard one can use, for example, the change management tactics described by Obeng (1996, p. 57), also called as general soft criteria: empathy, reliability, fault-freeness, honesty, fun, aesthetics and political sensitivity.

The communications actions must start from securing the practices and providing the guidelines on how communications are managed. Then, the stakeholders are able to 'play on the communications arena' and the program can concentrate on keeping them on the two-way communications arena with the help of an effective change management strategy.

5.2 Practical implications

As the case program was a multinational business project, the challenges posed by virtuality need to be thoroughly evaluated in the future development work in the case organisation. A key question to be answered is: how to overcome the obstacles virtuality brings to the business project in question, which has a tight schedule and is complex in nature. Virtuality brings obstacles as it diminishes people's ability to communicate face-to-face, which was the medium most informants of this study wanted the project communications enable also in the future – even increasingly. Also the Rich Media Model recommended rich media to be used when ever a matter is ambiguous by its content. Overload with e-mails and oversized attachments irritated some of the informants although e-mail was in general selected as the most used medium in the case program.

The results of this study indicated that the case organisation is evidencing a swift in communication media generation technologies. At this point all stakeholders are familiar with and comfortably use e-mail and conference calls, which represent the 1^{st} generation technologies. Therefore, these media are safe to use and the Communication Manager or Specialist can support their use in a project by providing basic guidelines and policies in the written format. Instead, as regards to the so called 2^{nd} generation technologies (e.g. instant messaging, online discussion boards, Power Point presentation, video tools and online meeting tools), stakeholders do not seem to be 100% sure about their use. For example, guidelines on how to use instant messaging correctly were missed among the informants and yet it was stated that in the case program more instant messaging is used than in the 'normal' work organisation. This derives probably from the fact that the base in the program is far more aggressive than in the 'normal' work organisation. Also, the case company just changed the online meeting tool's software and people were still trying to learn the common ways of working with the medium. Therefore, it can be stated that the case organisation and even the case company are somewhere between first and second generation technologies with their use of different virtual communication media.

To enforce the use of second generation tools the case program should offer specific program related training and written guidelines for the stakeholders, and show them how they are supposed to use the tools in that environment. By demonstrating the benefits of these media the program can win people's trust to use them and thus increase the interactivity in the virtual environment despite the obstacles virtuality brings along.

Finally, the 3rd generation technology offers the case organisation a platform to be developed. The third generation technology refers typically to web-enabled shared workspaces via the intranet or the internet. The case organisation should concentrate its development work for building such a future solution that facilitates all communication activities in a flexible and functional manner, e.g. by building a medium with user friendly technology and such practices with which stakeholders can easily pull information relevant for them - like from a tray. Feedback needs to be collected in order to know the platform would be working successfully.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The greatest limitation of this study was the size of the informant group. 238 stakeholders were identified from the case program and more than 1000 employees work for the case organisation in question. As data was received via the three data collection methods from a total of 43 stakeholders it is clearly not enough for making any generalised assumptions. The study, however, managed to reach key informants from the stakeholder groups and was thus able to provide a good insight to the environment studied. Furthermore, as the researcher is an active member of the organisation and the case program, she was able to add value for the study through her own experience and observations.

Some detail level limitations were also identified during the study that had an effect on the analysis of the collected data. For example, the Excel platform for the survey was not very flexible, neither for the respondents nor for the researcher as it required some amount of manual work. But as was pointed out above, the fire walls of the program environment challenged the technical solution and thus Excel was used. Furthermore, in two definitions of media used in the study (video presentation & mobile phone for text messages) it was noted at the analysis phase that it remained unclear whether the media referred to being on a video or watching a video or whether messaging referred to sending or receiving text messages. The media options also failed to list Power Point as one of the media used in the program although the literature presented it as a medium. Thirdly, there were some technical challenges with the recording phone lines that were used in the interviews and some small parts of the data from the interviews was lost. Finally, in the focus group discussion the time pressure slightly limited the discussion part as the moderator had to keep to the schedule and cut the discussion a few times.

5.4 Further study suggestions

This study aimed for high practical value. Therefore the present study can be used in various communications planning situations as a source of ideas. Some previous research on the subject was available, but not specifically on the matters this study focused on, i.e. the stakeholder and media perspectives of the communications process in a multinational project. Earlier stakeholder research seemed to be biased towards only Project Managers and media related research was small in scale and specific in its study environment.

The following previous studies, together with the present findings, serve as a basis where ideas for further studies can be drawn.

The results of Müller's (2003) study with IT Project Managers showed that the information contents of lean media can be perceived as similar to richer media if the communicating partners are familiar with one another and have good relationships, based on an intention to work together. Furthermore, Project Manager's in Müller's study ranked the importance of written media over that of personal and verbal communications, whereas, the present study suggested the use of rich media and stated that written media has lost its importance in project communications.

The present study also suggests that project communications is everyone's business, similarly to quality in business, but e.g. Henderson (2004) and Kliem (2008) highlighted the role of the Project Manager. Henderson's study about encoding and decoding showed a significant communication-performance relationship. Specifically, Project Managers' competency in decoding and encoding was found to associate with team member satisfaction, while Project Manager's encoding was associated with project team productivity. Kliem argued (2008, p. 22) that Project Managers are the only ones who must communicate with all stakeholders. If they succeed as communicators, then the likelihood of their success in carrying out the project increases. If they communicate poorly, the likelihood is that their projects will have poor results.

Lee-Kelley and Sankey's (2007, p. 59) study results indicated a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities and an absence of effective communication early on in the project life cycle. For example, people passed on problems too quickly; they tended to take a quick look and say it's not their problem and pass it on. Or, as people moved in and out of the project or changed roles within it, one didn't sometimes know being responsible for a thing that had been assigned to him/her.

The following focus areas are suggested to be developed in further studies on multinational project communications:
1: To analyse in detail how much and in what specific circumstances certain media are used in a project environment, e.g. how often people visit the project intrapages. This would guide the project to narrow down the amount of media offered for the stakeholders.

2: As each project phase provides its own need for exchanging ideas (see Figure 23) it would be useful to reflect the findings of this study on a project life cycle and analyse the fluctuation taking place in the communications.

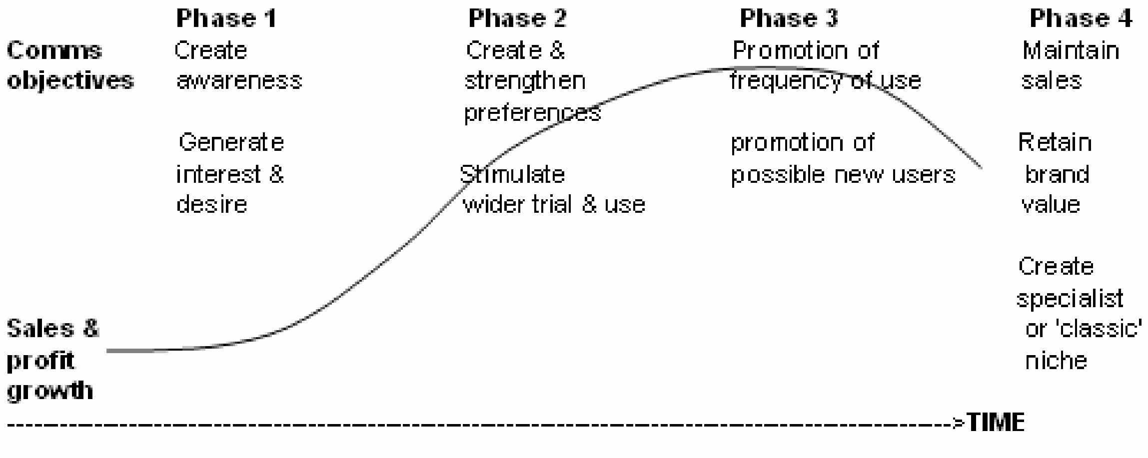


Figure 23. Using the product lifecycle to decide promotional strategy. (Smith et al, 1999, p. 105)

3: A Project Manager (PM) is often seen as the only person having influence on the project communications. A lot of guidance is available for a PM but what about the other stakeholders? Hence, it is important to bear in mind that ‘communications’ resembles ‘quality’, everyone is responsible for good quality or good communications in all their action. So, instead of focusing just on PMs the study would like to encourage further studies on how to enhance the communicative roles of all project stakeholders.

4: Finally, earlier literature seems to ignore the size of a project. Big projects require more investment on planning the project communications than small projects do. It is only stated that the communications network becomes the more complex the more stakeholders are involved. It would be very interesting to continue research from this statement onwards. At present, literature, however, seems to indicate that in project communications a one-size solution fits for all.

REFERENCES

Arredondo, L. (2007). *Communicate Effectively; 24 Lessons for Day-to-Day Business Success*. New York. The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Boddy, D. & Buchanan, D. (1992) Take *the Lead; Interpersonal Skills for Project Managers*. Cornwall. Hartnolls.

Chiocchio, F. (2007). *Project Team Performance: A Case Study of Electronic Task and Coordination Communication*. Retrieved July 14, 2008 from http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=1&hid=108&sid=b1414f2c-2bc7-42ef-8f2

Choo, C (1998). Chapter 1: The Knowing Organisation – A Holistic View of How Organisations Use Information. In Choo, C. *The Knowing Organisation, how organisations Use Information to Construct Meaning, Create Knowledge, and Make Decisions* (pp. 1-25). Aarhus. Aarhus School of Business.

Dow, W. & Taylor, B. (2008). *Project Management Communications*. Indianapolis. Wiley Publishing Inc.

Fill, C. (1995). *Marketing Communications*. Hertfordshire. Redwood Books.

Hartman, J. (2004). *Using Focus Groups to Conduct Business Communication Research*. Journal of Business Communication, October 2004. 402-410.

Henderson, L. (2004). *Encoding and Decoding Communication Competencies in Project Management – an Exploratory Study*. Retrieved July 14, 2008 from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6V9V-4BYC122-1

Henderson, L. (2008). *The Impact of Project Manager's Communication Competencies: Validation and Extension of a Research Model for Virtuality, Satisfaction, and Productivity on Project Teams.* Project Management Journal, June 2008. 48-59.

Henttonen, K. (2004). *Global Virtual Teamwork Building and Communicating Trust through Technology*. Lappeenranta. Paperback.

Huhtinen, H. & Ojala, T. (2001). *Case Study from the Finnish ICT Industry: Communication Aspects and the Use of Communication Tools*. Lappeenranta. Lappeenranta University of Technology.

Hyvä Veli & Hyvä Sisko. (2008). *Muista Pakkoruotsi*. Optio, 24. huhtikuuta. 106.

Kliem, R. (2008). *Effective Communications for Project Management*. Boca Raton. Auerbach Publications.

Lee-Kelley, L. & Sankey, T. (2007). *Global Virtual Teams for Value Creation and Project Success: A Case Study*. Science Direct, 26. 51-62.

Lehtimäki, H. & Ojala, T. (1996). *Coordination through Social Networks*. Tampere. University of Tampere.

Mantel, S. (2006). Chapter 2: The Manager, the Organisation, and the Team. In Mantel, S. *Project Management in Practice* (pp. 26-50). Aarhus. Aarhus School of Business.

Miller, K. (Eds.) (2006). *Organisational Communication: Approaches and Processes*. Belmont. Thomson Wadsworth.

Müller, R. (2003). Determinants *for External Communications of IT Project Managers*. Retrieved July 14, 2008 from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6V9V-487KKBX-2

Obeng, E. (1996). *All Change! The Project Leader's Secret Handbook*. London. Pitman Publishing.

Pal, M. & Buzzanell, P. (2008). *The Indian Call Center Experience: A Case Study in Changing Discourses of Identity, Identification, and Career in a Global Context*. Journal of Business Communication, 45, 2008. 31.

Pritchard, C. (2004). *The Project Management Communications Toolkit*. Norwood. Artech House Inc.

Sandhu, M. (2005). *Managing Project Business Development; an Inter-Organisational and Intra-Organisational perspective*. Helsinki. Edita Prima Ltd.

Saravirta, A. (2001). *Project Success through Effective Decisions: Case Studies on Project Goal Setting, Success Evaluation and Managerial Decision Making*. Lappeenranta. Digipaino.

Schwalbe, K. (2006). *Introduction to Project Management*. United States. Course Technology, Thomson Learning, Inc.

Smith, P. & Berry, C. & Pulford, A. (Eds.) (1999). *Strategic Marketing Communications, New Ways to Build and Integrate Communications*. London & Dover. Clays Ltd.

Sveriges Informationsförening. (1996) *Return on Communications*. Stockholm. Sveriges Informationsförening.

Szukala, B. (2001). *21st Century Communication*. Kent. Broadstairs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1
Text in the e-mail where the questionnaire was attached to

APPENDIX 2
The survey questions

APPENDIX 3
Survey result: What is your native language

APPENDIX 4
Survey result: Communication situation where respondent feels most comfortable

APPENDIX 5
Survey result: Most used media in the case program

APPENDIX 6
Survey result: Medium that has given most valid information on the case program

APPENDIX 7
Invitation to the interview

APPENDIX 8
Structure of the interview plan – not shown to the interviewee, only a support document for the interviewer

APPENDIX 9
The structure of the focus group discussion – handed in for all participants in the beginning of the session

APPENDIX 10
Invitation to the focus group discussion

APPENDIX 1 - Text in the e-mail where the questionnaire was attached to

---

From: Project's resource mailbox
Sent: 12 September, 2008 12:27
Subject: SURVEY: How have we succeeded in the media choice in XXX program's communications?
Importance: High

Project Management Communications
Choice of the media

Dear Program Member,

XXX Program Communications is conducting a survey in order to find out how the program has been able to select the communications media for its stakeholders. Your answer is the building block we need and it will enable us to further improve the program communications. Please give us 10 minutes of your valuable time to answer the following:

Part A, General - You as a communicator (5 questions)
Part B, General - Media behavior (3 questions)
Part C, Program - Program communication (9 questions)

Please answer by 26. September 2008 by sending the answered form to email@address.com. Thank you.

The results will be published anonymously on the program intrasite and emailed to all those invited to this survey.

Many thanks in advance,
Program Communications

SURVEY FORM: << File: Survey_Form.xls >>

APPENDIX 2 - The survey questions

Thank you for taking the time for providing this important information for us.
The survey consists three parts and it will take approximately 10 mins to fill in.

Part A, General - You as a communicator (5 questions)
Part B, General - Media behavior (3 questions)
Part C, case program - Program communication (9 questions)

The results will be published anonymously on the program intrasite and emailed to all those invited to this survey.

Many thanks in advance,
Program Communications

PART A - You as a communicator at work.

1. Please place an X on the eight axis on that spot that **describes you best as a communicator**, e.g. are you more of a information controller or sharer? Please use the space key to find the correct spot.

Controling	....	Sharing
Risk	....	No risk
Closed	....	Open
A lot	....	A little
Don't ask	....	Ask
Don't listen	....	Listen
General	....	Detail
Motivating	....	Demotivating

2. Please fill in the sentence by **ticking one** of the below endings. I feel most comfortable, when I am..

- ☐ sharing information.
- ☐ receiving information.
- ☐ asking for information
- ☐ looking for information
- ☐ other, what: ______________________________

3. The Information I prefer to receive in a project/program is (**please tick 3 most preferred**)

- ☐ schedule related
- ☐ progress related
- ☐ celebration related
- ☐ people who join/leave the program or role changes
- ☐ budget related
- ☐ performance related
- ☐ project management related
- ☐ project organization related
- ☐ nice to know -information
- ☐ request for action
- ☐ personal feedback
- ☐ overall feedback

4. What would you do if you didn't understand a message (written or verbal) you have just received from a very important information source?

- ☐ Ignore it.
- ☐ Ask a colleague.
- ☐ Ask my superior.
- ☐ Ask the sender of the message.
- ☐ Do nothing, except complain about it with my mates.
- ☐ Other, what: ______________________

5. What is your native language?

- ◯ English
- ◯ German
- ◯ Finnish
- ◯ Spanish
- ◯ Chinese
- ◯ Other, what: ______________________

PART B - Your media behavior in general.

6. Please select the **five** media you **most commonly use** during your work day

- ☐ mobile phone for calls
- ☐ mobile phone for text messages
- ☐ desk phone
- ☐ e-mail
- ☐ intranet
- ☐ internet
- ☐ video presentation
- ☐ common repository/net archive
- ☐ written media (report, form, daily planner)
- ☐ ad hoc discussion
- ☐ instant messaging
- ☐ ad hoc meeting (face to face)
- ☐ ad hoc meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
- ☐ ad hoc meeting (with video connection)
- ☐ scheduled meeting (face to face)
- ☐ scheduled meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
- ☐ scheduled meeting (with video connection)
- ☐ scheduled event for information delivery (face to face)
- ☐ scheduled event for information delivery (Net, video, call)
- ☐ other, what: ______________________

7. Please select the **five** media you would most **like** to use during your work day

- [ ] mobile phone for calls
- [ ] mobile phone for text messages
- [ ] desk phone
- [ ] e-mail
- [ ] intranet
- [ ] internet
- [ ] video presentation
- [ ] common repository/net archive
- [ ] written media (report, form, daily planner)
- [ ] ad hoc discussion
- [ ] instant messaging
- [ ] ad hoc meeting (face to face)
- [ ] ad hoc meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
- [ ] ad hoc meeting (with video connection)
- [ ] scheduled meeting (face to face)
- [ ] scheduled meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
- [ ] scheduled meeting (with video connection)
- [ ] scheduled event for information delivery (face to face)
- [ ] scheduled event for information delivery (Net, video, call)
- [ ] other, what: ____________________

8. Please select the **five** media you most **dislike** to use during your work day

- [ ] mobile phone for calls
- [ ] mobile phone for text messages
- [ ] desk phone
- [ ] e-mail
- [ ] intranet
- [ ] internet
- [ ] video presentation
- [ ] common repository/net archive
- [ ] written media (report, form, daily planner)
- [ ] ad hoc discussion
- [ ] instant messaging
- [ ] ad hoc meeting (face to face)
- [ ] ad hoc meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
- [ ] ad hoc meeting (with video connection)
- [ ] scheduled meeting (face to face)
- [ ] scheduled meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
- [ ] scheduled meeting (with video connection)
- [ ] scheduled event for information delivery (face to face)
- [ ] scheduled event for information delivery (Net, video, call)
- [ ] other, what: ____________________

PART C - FICUS Program communication.

9. Please select the stakeholder group in which you belong to:

- ☐ Steering Group Member
- ☐ Program management
- ☐ Program member (internal)
- ☐ Program member (external)
- ☐ Provide internal support/services for the program
- ☐ Follow the program/bystander

10. I have been in this program for:

- ◯ 0-4 months
- ◯ 4-9 months
- ◯ 9- or more months

11. Please select the **five** media **you have used most in this program**

- ☐ mobile phone for calls
- ☐ mobile phone for text messages
- ☐ desk phone
- ☐ e-mail
- ☐ intranet
- ☐ internet
- ☐ video presentation
- ☐ common repository/net archive
- ☐ written media (report, form, daily planner)
- ☐ ad hoc discussion
- ☐ instant messaging
- ☐ ad hoc meeting (face to face)
- ☐ ad hoc meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
- ☐ ad hoc meeting (with video connection)
- ☐ scheduled meeting (face to face)
- ☐ scheduled meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
- ☐ scheduled meeting (with video connection)
- ☐ scheduled event for one-way information delivery (face to face)
- ☐ scheduled event for one-way information delivery (Net, video, call)

- ☐ other, what: ____________________

12. The one medium I use most is ______________________ How often would you like to get information from this medium (please **BOLD** your answer)..

..from the program management?

Bi-Monthly Monthly Weekly Daily Hourly Not at all

..from the cluster manager?

Bi-Monthly Monthly Weekly Daily Hourly Not at all

..from your program member?

Bi-Monthly Monthly Weekly Daily Hourly Not at all

..from your team member?

Bi-Monthly Monthly Weekly Daily Hourly Not at all

..from outside the program?

Bi-Monthly Monthly Weekly Daily Hourly Not at all

13. What medium you would prefer to be used with frequent messaging from the program communications?

____

____

____

14. Does it matter, what media the program should use if the message is positive or negative? Why?

____

____

____

15. What has been the media/medium that has given you the most valid information during the program?

____

____

____

16. In general, do you feel the right messages have reached you in the program?

- ○ Yes.
- ○ No. Please tell us more, so that we can improve the practices:

____

____

____

17. Any other comments you would like to share with us?

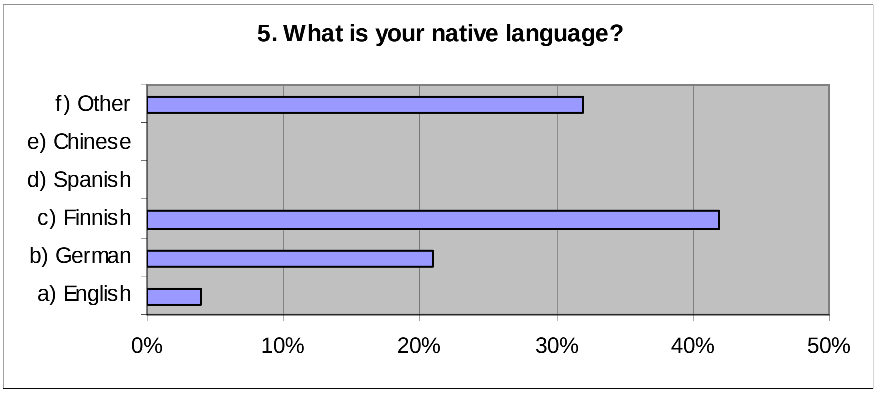
____

____

____

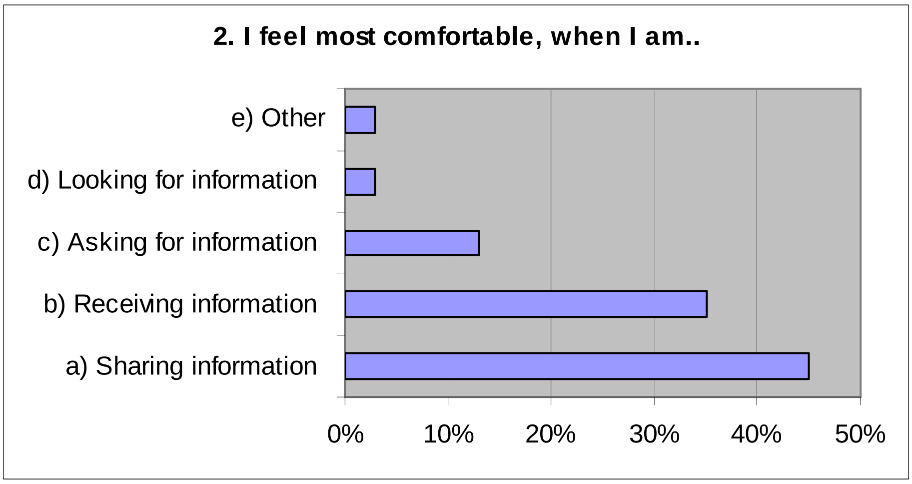
END OF THE SURVEY - THANK YOU FOR YOUR ANSWERS!
Please send your answer form to email@address
The answers will be printed out and handled anonymously after that.

APPENDIX 3 - Survey result: What is your native language?



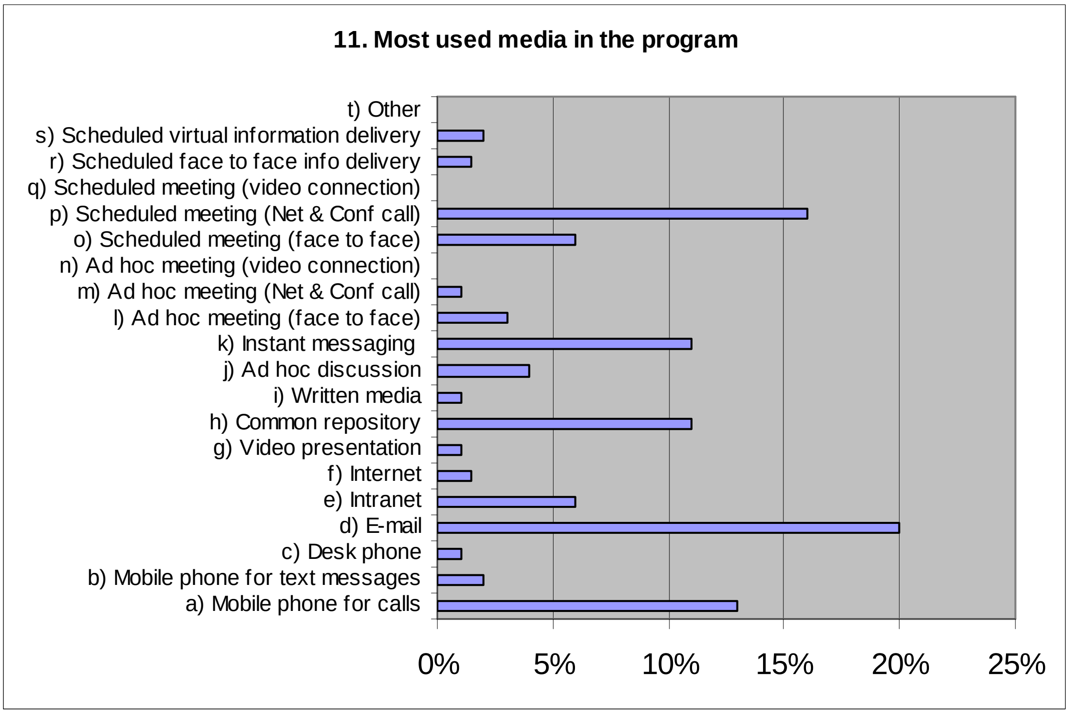
a) English	4%
b) German	21%
c) Finnish	42%
d) Spanish	0
e) Chinese	0
f) Other	32%

APPENDIX 4 - Survey result: Communication situation where respondent feels most comfortable



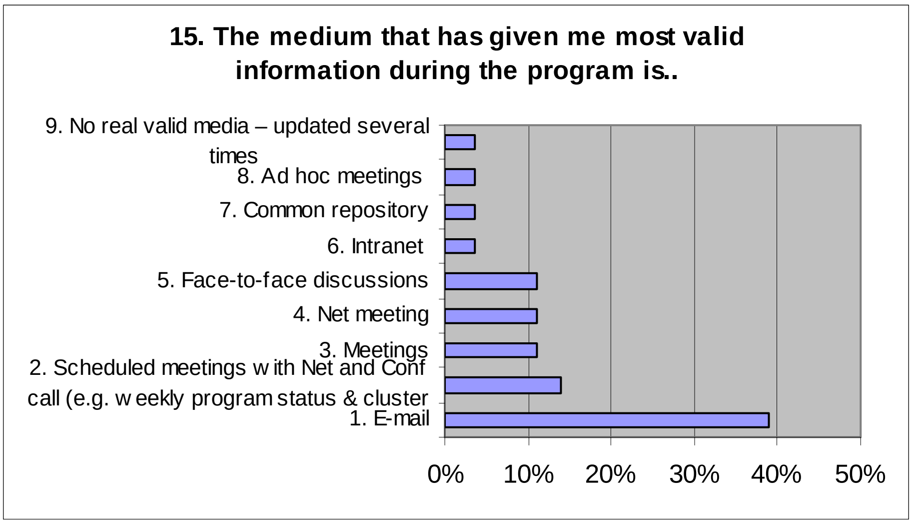
a) Sharing information	45%
b) Receiving information	35%
c) Asking for information	13%
d) Looking for information	3%
e) Other	3%

APPENDIX 5 - Survey result: Most used media in the case program



a) Mobile phone for calls	13%
b) Mobile phone for text messages	2%
c) Desk phone	1%
d) E-mail	20%
e) Intranet	6%
f) Internet	1.50%
g) Video presentation	1%
h) Common repository / net archive	11%
i) Written media	1%
j) Ad hoc discussion	4%
k) Instant messaging	11%
l) Ad hoc meeting (face to face)	3%
m) Ad hoc meeting (Net &Conf call)	1%
n) Ad hoc meeting (video connection)	0
o) Scheduled meeting (face to face)	6%
p) Scheduled meeting (Net & Conf call)	16%
q) Scheduled meeting (video connection)	0
r) Scheduled face to face info delivery	1.50%
s) Scheduled virtual information delivery	2%
t) Other	0

APPENDIX 6 - Survey result: Medium that has given most valid information on the case program



1. E-mail	39%
2. Scheduled meetings with Net and Conf call (e.g. weekly program status & cluster meetings)	14%
3. Meetings	11%
4. Virtual net meeting	11%
5. Face-to-face discussions	11%
6. Intranet	3.5%
7. Common repository / net archive	3.5%
8. Ad hoc meetings	3.5%
9. No real valid media – updated several times	3.5%

APPENDIX 7 - Invitation to the interview

From: laura.kemppila@email
Sent: 28 October, 2008 16:23
Subject: PLS Respond: Invitation to a research interview - Project Communications

You have been identified as a key person from one of the below stakeholder group in XXX program.

- steering group member
- Project Managers/program management
- follow the program / bystander
- provide internal support/services for the project
- program member (internal/external)

I am currently conducting a research on Company X project communications and will use the **XXX program as my primary data source**. The research will be done in three phases.

A) eSurvey (completed)
B) Semi-structured Interviews (October-November -08)
C) Work group discussion (November -08)

I am inviting you to the phase B - and would like to interview you for one hour either by phone or face-to-face.

> ***The first objective*** *of the interview is to determine the communicational roles the key persons in the project environment see for themselves – if any, and explore their opinions of the effects of communication on project performance.*
>
> ***The second objective*** *is to find out about their media preferences and their views of the timeliness and contents of the project communications.*
>
> ***The third objective*** *is to look for any findings that could be used for improving the project management communications in the future.*

The interview session will be informal and the results will be used anonymously in the research. The results of the research will be used when planning the future project communication activities in Company X Finance and Control organisation. **This is your chance to make a difference and influence - please indicate your response by selecting one of the two voting options* on the top part of this e-mail. Thank you.**

Looking forward to having the possibility to talk with you.

With best regards,
Laura

* Options given: Yes, please send me an invitation
I am sorry, not able to participate

APPENDIX 8 – Structure of the interview plan
(Not shown to the interviewee, only a support document for the interviewer)

DEFINE THE TERM MEDIUM IN THE BEGINNING

* * *

EXPLAIN THE OBJECTIVES:

The first objective of the interviews is to determine the communicational roles the key persons in the project environment see for themselves – if any, and explore their opinions of the effects of communication on project performance

The second objective is to find out about their media preferences and their views of the timeliness and contents of the project communications?

The third objective is to look for any findings that could be used for improving the project management communications in the future.

* * *

QUESTIONS:

A. What is your role in this project?
B. In this project – whose communicational input do you need most for getting your job done in this project? How often do you communicate with that person / group of people? Do you feel it is enough?
C. And vice versa – who do you think needs most your input in order to do his/her job in this project? How often do you communicate with that person / group of people? Do you feel it is enough?

1. You are one of the very key persons in this project. What kind of a communicator you are? Do you think it matters?
2. Have you noticed that people would seek information from you or whether they try and avoid it till the last minute?
3. Does the project need your communicational efforts? If yes/no – why is that? What is the impact of your efforts/lack of efforts?
4. Do you notice that you would give more information to some members in the project than to others? If yes, why is that?
5. People are different, some need more guidance, support, convincing than others – do you consider this in your communication?
6. Do you share information proactively? Or do you wait till someone comes and asks you to deliver information? Do you wait till the last minute with the information?
7. Who is responsible for the communications in this project?

Ok. Let's move on to the next question set where the medium is discussed more.

8. Do you have any favourite tools that you like to use in project communications especially? If yes, what are those and why them?
9. Please think about the messages you have received during this project. What do you think about their...
.. content?
.. timeliness?
.. correctness?
10. Is there something that has been distracting you in the choice of communicational media /communication channels in this project? Should some medium be used more or less for instance?
11. Have you received positive feedback on a specific communicational act? If yes, could you please describe the case?
12. Have there been failures in the communication of this project? Is there for example a message that has not reached you and that you have heard about it by accident elsewhere? Or have you been offended by a particular message in a certain medium?
13. What has been the channel for the most important messages in this project?
14. What has been the channel for the most innovative messages in this project?
15. What has been the channel for the most honest messages in this project?
16. What adjectives do best describe the project communications in this project in your opinion?

Third and final question set – about findings, development ideas

17. (For Project Managers only) Have you studied the templates provided by the company methodology for dealing with the project communications? If yes, what?
18. In your own words, please summarize us what has happened -communications wise- in this project during its lifetime?
19. What have been the most significant changes in general in the project during the time you have worked in it?
20. How would you improve project communications?
21. Have you studied communications guidebooks, participated in trainings or used other sources to help you with the communicational tasks included in the project management? If yes, what sources and what material?
22. Is there anything else you would like to share with us in this matter?

APPENDIX 9 - The structure of the focus group discussion
(Handed in for all participants in the beginning of the session)

FOCUS GROUP
Discussion process
25.11.2008

1 © 2008 LKe FocusGroup.ppt / 2008-11-25 / LKe

Objectives

The first objective *of the discussion session is to determine the communicational roles you see for yourselves in the project environment – if any, and explore the effects of communication on project performance.*

The second objective *is to find out about your media preferences and your views of the timeliness and contents of the project communications.*

The third objective *is to look for any findings that could be used for improving the project management communications in the future.*

The fourth objective *is to understand the project/program managers' current communicational tasks and feelings.*

One more objective is to ensure that each and every one of you has the change to speak out at least twice during the session. :o)

2 © 2008 LKe FocusGroup.ppt / 2008-11-25 / LKe

What does media mean in this context?

ad hoc discussion
ad hoc meeting (face to face)
ad hoc meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
ad hoc meeting (with video connection)
common repository/net archive
desk phone
e-mail
instant messaging
Internet
Intranet
mobile phone for calls
mobile phone for text messages
scheduled event for information delivery (face to face)
scheduled event for information delivery (Net, video, call)
scheduled meeting (face to face)
scheduled meeting (with Net and Conference call connection)
scheduled meeting (with video connection)
video presentation
written media (report, form, daily planner)

How do we do this?

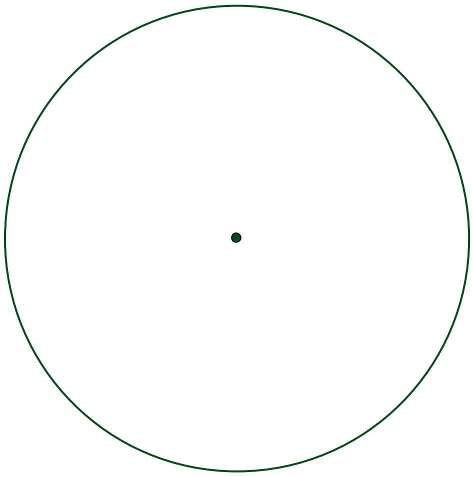
- Four parts

A1, A2, A3	25mins
B	10mins
C	15mins
D – only for project managers	10mins

- First I hope you fill in the answers and then we will raise selected parts under discussion. This way we ensure that we have documented data available from this session. It will be used anonymously in the research and destroyed after wards. OK for everybody?

Part A1 – 5 minutes

Let’s start with a drawing task that will warm you up for the discussion. Please, divide this pie (that represents your common work day) timely into parts that demonstrate **your doings during a work day (~8hours)**.



Part A2 – 10 minutes

Thank you – would you now introduce yourselves and tell..

Name:

Title:

In which parts of the pie you need to communicate during your workday?

What kind of a communicator are you? Do you think it matters in the work environment?

Part A3 – 10 minutes

Q1. Does the project need your communicational efforts? If yes/no – why is that? What is the impact of your efforts/lack of efforts?

Q2. Do you notice that you would give more information to some members in the project than to others? If yes, why is that?

Q3. Who is responsible for the communications in a project?

Part B – 10 minutes

Q1. Do you have any favourite medium that you like to use in project communications especially? If yes, what is it/are those and why?

Q2. Have you received positive feedback on a specific communicational act through some medium? If yes, could you please describe the case?

Q3. People are different, some need more guidance, support, convincing than others and their roles in the project are different. Do you take this into account in your communication and in the choice of the communication medium?

Part C – 15 minutes

Q1. Is there something that has been distracting you in the choice of communicational medium /communication channels in the F&C projects? Should some medium be used more or less for instance?

Q2. Is there a need to develop project communications?

Q3. Please describe briefly a Project "Dream Team" from the communicational aspect? What would it be like?

Part D - For Project Managers only – 10 minutes

Q1: What is the amount of projects/programs you manage currently?

Q2: What is the total amount of people in your projects'/programs' if calculated all together? Please note - same person can be calculated multiple times if s/he is part of multiple projects/programs.

Q3: Please estimate, what is the average amount of e-mails you receive / week?

Q4: Please estimate, what is the average amount of time you spend in phone (conference calls included) / week?

Q5: Could you please summarize the routine communications acts you need to perform / week? (Amount of reports, templates to fill, charts to update, meetings to manage etc.). How much of your week you spent time on this?

Q6: Have you studied the templates provided by the company methodology for dealing with the project communications?

Q7: Have you studied communications guidebooks, participated in trainings or used other sources to help you with the communicational tasks included in the project management? If yes, what sources and what material?

Q8: Do you wish there would be more training available about project communications? What would it be like?

APPENDIX 10 - Invitation to the focus group discussion

Dear Project/Program Manager, Service Manager, Portfolio Manager

I am currently conducting a study on Company X Finance and Control project communications. The results of the study will be used when planning the future project communication activities in the organisation. The research will be done in three phases.

A) eSurvey (completed)
B) Semi-structured Interviews (completed)
C) Focus group discussion (November -08)

I am inviting you to phase C - and would like to see you participate on a late afternoon snack and square table discussion session. The duration of the session is one hour and would take place face-to-face.

The first objective *of the discussion session is to determine the communicational roles you see for yourselves in the project environment – if any, and explore the effects of communication on project performance.*

The second objective *is to find out about your media preferences and your views of the timeliness and contents of the project communications.*

The third objective *is to look for any findings that could be used for improving the project management communications in the future.*

The fourth objective *is to understand the project/Program Managers' current communicational tasks and feelings.*

The discussion session will be semi-structured, yet informal, and the results will be used anonymously in the study. **This is your chance to make a difference and influence - please indicate your response by accepting or declining this invitation. Thank you.**

Looking forward to having the possibility to hear you.

With research regards,
Laura