Leveraging Team Communication for Optimal Performance

Strong team communication is important because it helps employees remain engaged, build relationships, and stay focused on their goals. In turn, good communication also benefits the organization by improving productivity and bottom-line results. Unfortunately, team members can become siloed in their day to day work routine and fail to make the time to collaborate and brainstorm with their fellow employees. The danger is that employees can become disconnected, lack focus, or even worse, fail to progress in their work-related knowledge and skills.
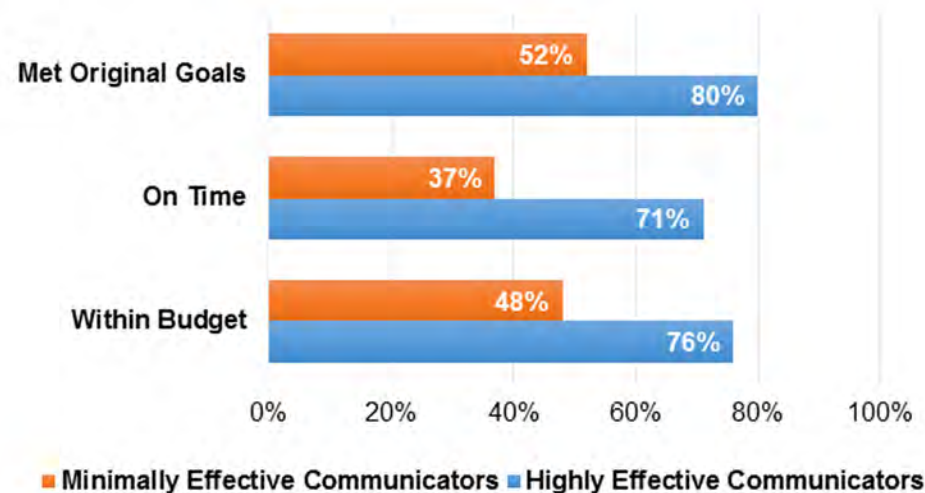
Research

There is a lot of research regarding the importance of communication in project management and the success of strategic initiatives.

According to the Project Management Institute (PMI) *Pulse* research, effective communications lead to a much higher percentage of teams meeting goals, on time, and within budget.

Met Original Goals: 52% / 80%
On Time: 37% / 71%
Within Budget: 48% / 76%

■ Minimally Effective Communicators ■ Highly Effective Communicators

● Unsuccessful Projects
● Successful Projects

Due to ineffective communication
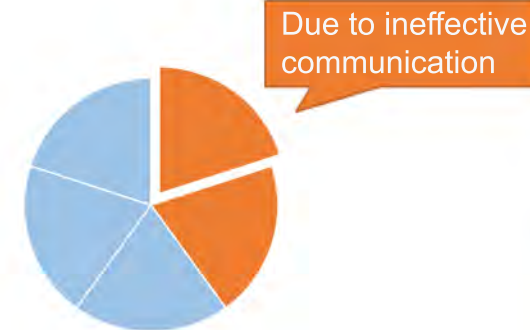
"On average, two in five projects do not meet their original goals and business intent, and one-half of those unsuccessful projects are related to ineffective communications (The High Cost of Low Performance, 2013)."

Quotes

"Communication plays a very important role in team building and extracting the best out of team members (The High Cost of Low Performance, 2013)."

"When we looked at complex collaborative teams that were performing in a productive and innovative manner, we found that in every case the company's top executives had invested significantly in building and maintaining social relationships throughout the organization (Gratton & Erickson, 2007) ."

Leader's Role

1 Set the Tone

Plan and organize communication efforts in advance:
- Be clear and concise
- Utilize proper communication methods
- Reflect and adjust as needed

Be collaborative:
- Engage in face to face interactions
- Build professional networks
- Conduct brainstorming sessions
- Provide and accept feedback

Be a good listener:
- Ask clarifying questions
- Rephrase information to ensure clarity
- Show a sincere interest in employees while listening

2 Provide Opportunities

Leaders should create opportunities for informal and formal team communication to encourage skill building, trust, and to create a sense of community.

Examples: team lunches, training sessions, retreats, team projects, meetings, mentoring sessions.

Encourage all team members to participate and share information, so the team can see how projects are related and learn from each other.

Examples include:
- Reporting goal progress during team meetings
- Share project updates on a web-based platform
- Pair-up employees to provide support and mentoring

3 Clarify Goals/Objectives

As a leader, you should work with your team to develop SMART goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Be sure to:
- Get input from the team on departmental goals and objectives
- Write down and communicate goals on a regular basis
- Review progress towards goals and provide encouragement and resources as needed
- Ensure team members understand their roles and responsibilities for assigned projects
- Provide team members an opportunity to lead projects and develop a sense of ownership

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