Communication Planning for EA

Communication is a key to transforming an enterprise through strategic planning, enterprise architecture (EA) and enterprise portfolio management (EPfM). Critical to the success and effectiveness of communication is planning why, how, when, and with whom communication will take place. The answers to those questions are determined through communication planning.

Communication is commonly positioned by most organizations as a key ingredient for success; however, most organizations do not consistently communicate well. The primary reasons for ineffective communication are the lack of proactive communication planning and the lack of communication skills training and practice for IT professionals. An organization must develop better communicators to have more effective communication, but many organizations can use effective planning to overcome some of the communications deficiencies among its personnel. With well-trained communicators, planning enhances the effectiveness of communications.

Need for Communication

Enterprise-level planning disciplines –strategic planning, enterprise architecture (EA) and enterprise portfolio management (EPfM) – are especially dependent on effective communication. To be effective, these disciplines require a highly collaborate, but also coordinated and consistent, effort among many different people, working in a variety of different areas of an enterprise. Communication is a key element of collaboration, often among virtual teams with members geographically separated, as well as the means to ensure consistency among the collaborators on terms, definitions, goals, models, and many other targets and support elements of their work.

Sponsorship and support are required for these key disciplines to be successful, and once again, communication is a critical enabler of obtaining and sustaining sponsorship and support. Another factor reinforcing the need for effective communication is the ongoing cultural change that accompanies many transformation initiatives. Communication is one of the keys to creating awareness of the need for cultural change and reinforcing the expected behavior and mindset changes.

Too often, the necessary communication is an afterthought to a milestone or event within an enterprise. This is due to a lack of planning ahead, not necessarily a lack of desire to communicate. There are many different types of communications, depending on the purpose; and each type may demand different media, audiences and frequency. Proactive communication planning is the only way to ensure that the right communication occurs at the right time to the right people.

Process of Communication Planning

Effective communication leverages proactive planning of why, how, when and with whom to communicate. The process for communication planning involves the identification of the communication events (milestone and events associated with an initiative that require communication) and then the planning of the specific communication required for each event.

Communication Stages Pattern
There is a sequence of communication stages (see Figure 1) that satisfy many communication needs across a related set of activities (program, project, phase, activity), but are particularly relevant to EA activities:

- o Build Awareness
- o Solicit Support
- o Facilitate Collaboration

o   Obtaining Approval

o   Communicate Results

In addition, there are two other communication functions that must be accounted for in communication planning:

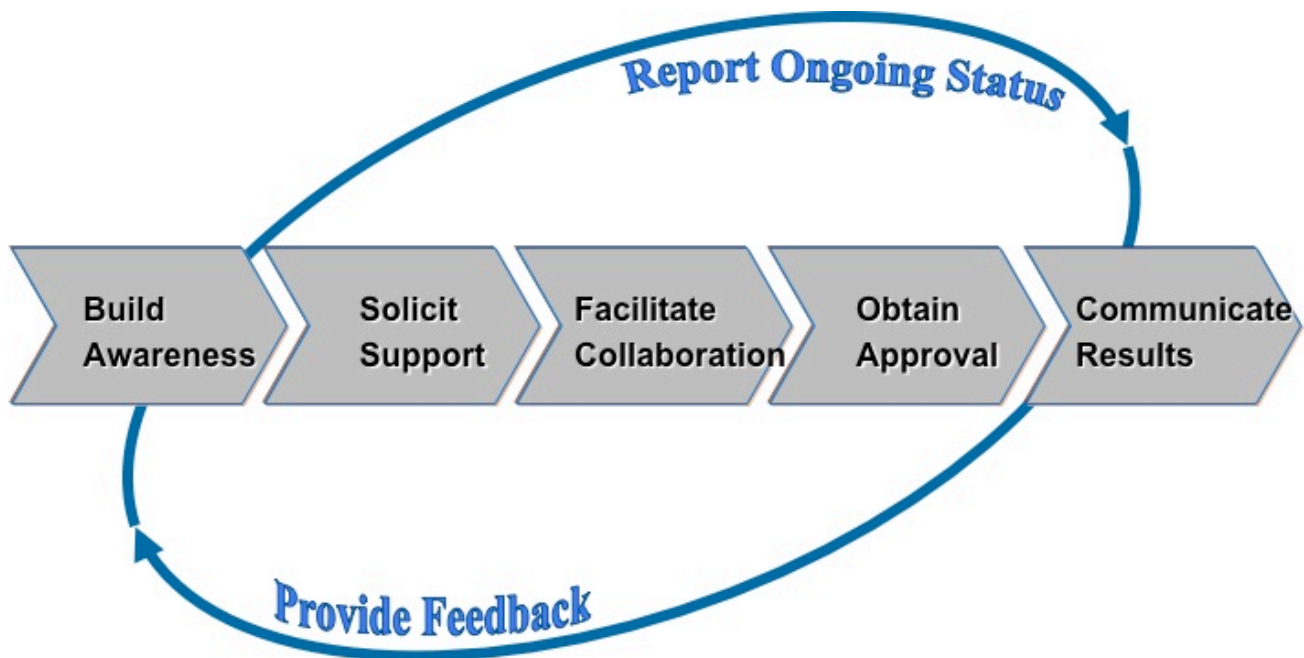o   Report Ongoing Status

o   Provide Feedback

Figure 1

Build Awareness. The first communication stage for most initiatives involves building awareness of the need, importance, benefits and expectations of the initiative. This stage will involve group and individual, formal and informal communications. The goal of building awareness is to develop enough understanding among the stakeholders to facilitate the next stage, soliciting support, and among potential participants to facilitate their participation. Examples of this stage's communications include seminars, presentations, and questionnaires, as well as the dissemination of initial scope documentation, such as project charters.

Solicit Support. The next stage is to solicit the support of the stakeholders of the initiative. Deeper and more pointed communications are required for soliciting support than for building awareness, so there is work involved in identifying the issues relevant to the initiative that will appeal to the audience. Messages are then crafted to explain how the initiative will aid in resolving their issues. Examples of this stage's communications include interviews, one-on-one or small group discussions, and presentations, as well as the dissemination of executive summaries, project plans, and initial drafts of the initiative's expected outcomes.

Facilitate Collaboration. This stage involves not only motivating people to work together toward a common goal, but also to support their ability to do so. Motivational communication will include presentations and group discussions focused on the need for different group's expertise and the benefits they can expect from participating. Supporting communications include disseminating working group notes, models, agendas and other documents that facilitate groups of people working together for a common goal.

Obtain Approval. This stage occurs when a milestone has been reached that requires approval before continuing. Obtaining approval involves more than asking for a signature or a vote. It involves the presentation of the conclusions reached during the work effort, the alternatives considered, and the reinforcement of the benefits or expectations to be achieved with approval granted. This stage involves face-to-face presentation to and discussion with the approving party or person.

Communicate Results. To reinforce the initiative's success and the success of future endeavors, this stage will communicate the results of the initiative. Were the goals accomplished, expectations met, benefits

achieved? Too often, an organization will complete an effort without communicating its results, only to leave some members of the organization wondering about the outcome or even if the effort has been completed. In addition, many initiatives are intended to create information to be used by different parts of the organization. This stage is responsible for communicating what the completion of the initiative means to the organization. This stage could include the dissemination of large amounts of information via internal and external web sites, group discussions formatted as brown bag lunches or town meetings, a final presentation, the kickoff of necessary training, and the establishment of continuous improvement communications.

Report Ongoing Status. Throughout an initiative, there may be a need to report what is happening with the effort to reinforce gathered support, increase collaborative participation, and sustain momentum. All of the previous 5 stages may require one or more reporting events. Reporting will include updates to web sites as well as electronically or paper distributed reports on progress, budget, schedule and resources.

Provide Feedback. Every communication event should provide the ability to obtain feedback from the audiences. Feedback can sometimes be incorporated into the communication event itself, when the mode provides for dialogue (in-person meetings and presentations or online chat sessions). But even when there is a chance for immediate feedback, a mechanism must be established for follow-up feedback after the event. Discussion databases, bulletin boards and electronic mail are very adequate mechanisms for obtaining feedback.

Communication Tasks
For each communication stage, there is a series of tasks that must be performed (See Figure 3).

- o Define the purpose of the communication
- o Identify the audiences
- o Determine the communication mode for each audience type
- o Determine the communication frequency for each audience type
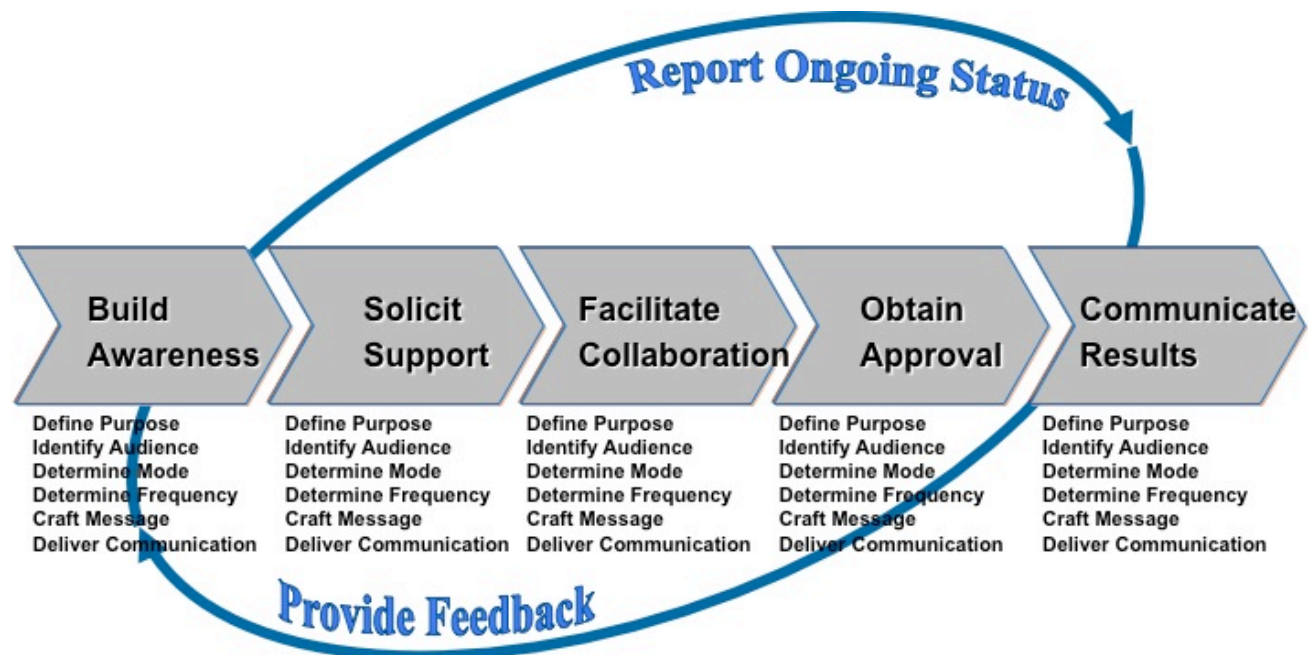- o Craft message
- o Deliver communication

Figure 2

Define the purpose of the communication. Each communication has an implicit purpose associated with it (build awareness, solicit support, etc.), but the goal of this task is to define that purpose specifically. For

example, if the communication planning activity is focused on getting started with an enterprise architecture effort, Table 1 shows purposes that likely should be supported in the communication plan.

	Purpose of Each Communication Stage
Stage 1	Build awareness of the need for an enterprise architecture, what an enterprise architecture is, how the enterprise will engage in creating one, and the expected outcomes for the enterprise
Stage 2	Solicit support from executive management, senior business unit leaders, and the CIO.
Stage 3	Facilitate the collaboration between business representatives and the EA team on the derivation of strategic capabilities from business strategy to drive enterprise architecture development.
Stage 4	Obtain approval from the Executive Steering Committee on the strategic capabilities
Stage 5	Deliver the strategic capabilities.

Table 1 – Communication Purposes

Identify the audiences. The next tasks in each stage, although considered simultaneously with the first task (purpose) is to identify the target audiences for the communications. Table 2 adds primary audience to each purpose. Keep in mind, that there could be secondary audiences to consider for each communication as well.

	Purpose of Each Stage	Primary Target Audience
Stage 1	Build awareness of the need for an enterprise architecture, what an enterprise architecture is, how the enterprise will engage in creating one, and the expected outcomes for the enterprise	Senior IT management, CIO, and executive corporate management
Stage 2	Solicit support from executive management, senior business unit leaders, and the CIO.	Executive management, senior business unit leaders, and CIO
Stage 3	Facilitate the collaboration between business representatives and the EA team on the derivation of strategic capabilities from business strategy to drive enterprise architecture development.	Executive management, senior business unit leaders, and CIO
Stage 4	Obtain approval from the Executive Steering Committee on the strategic capabilities	Executive Steering Committee
Stage 5	Deliver the strategic capabilities.	The enterprise

Table 2 – Target Audiences

Determine the communication mode for each audience type. Communication modes vary from formal to informal, written to spoken, textual to graphic, unidirectional to group discussions and 1 to 1, 1 many, or many to many. Depending on the purpose and target audience, some modes of communication will be more effective than others. Communication modes depend on what the intent of the communication is for each audience. Communications can inform, educate, persuade, interrogate and support. Table 3 suggests some general communication modes for each of these intents. However, in determining mode, the actual audience needs to be considered. Different people are prone to one mode of communication than others. For instance, lengthy presentations are not prone to persuading senior business management as much as a

short, to-the-point presentation followed by two-way dialogue to expand on their concerns or ideas. However, IT staff may very well gain from a 4 - 8 hour workshop, involving presentations and hands-on exercises. See the next section ("Effective communication is dependent on understanding the audience") for more guidance on audience considerations.

Communication Intent	Communication Modes	Examples
Inform	Primarily formal, written, textual and graphic, unidirectional, 1- many	Web sites (for information that may change often), databases, shared documents, manuals
Educate	Informal and formal, written and spoken, textual and graphic, bi-directional, 1-1 or 1-many	Presentations, brown-bag lunches, town meetings, workshops
Persuade	Informal and formal, primarily spoken, supported by written, bi-directional, textual supported by visual, 1-1	One on one meetings, small group discussions, presentations, facilitated discussions
Interrogate	Formal, but some informal, written or spoken, textual, bi-directional, 1-1 or 1-many	Interviews, questionnaires, surveys
Support	Very dependent on what the communication is supporting, but generally will be formal and informal, written, textual and graphic, 1-1 or 1-many	Working papers, models, discussion databases, draft documents, lists

Table 3 – Communication Modes

Determine the communication frequency for each audience type. The same rules apply to determining how often a communication must occur. Reinforcing desired behavior, sustaining momentum, satisfying multiple schedules and periodic status reporting are all reasons for multiple instances of a particular communication. However, the intent of the communication and the target audience will affect how often a particular event can occur. Senior executive management may have much less time available for a specific initiative because their broader responsibilities, while the participants will have much more time available to be focused on the initiative.

Craft message. The purpose, audience, mode and frequency of communication will all affect the crafting of a message. Another, equally critical, element of crafting the message is determining the level of detail required to achieve the purpose with the target audience. Too much information or too little information can undermine the effectiveness of communicating a message. One technique that will aid in determining the level of detail to deliver is RACI charting. This involves categorizing the audience as to whether they are Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, or Informed regarding the activity at hand. Also, the content of the communication must appeal to the target audiences needs.

Tips on Crafting Messages:
o   Use audience-specific language.
o   Be prepared to address objections
o   Be specific & compelling
o   Practice messages on test subjects

> o   Messages should have a positive spin.
>
> o   Use scenarios to illustrate the message

Deliver communication. The final task is to deliver the communication to the target audience with the determined mode and frequency. But planning must take preparation into account as well. Delivering the message is dependent on the atmosphere. Planning must consider the lighting, audio/visual equipment, seating arrangement and temperature in presentation rooms. Determine what, if any, material (agenda, overviews, presentation material, etc.) should be delivered to the audience ahead of time. Preparation must also include practicing the delivery of critical messages, considering potential sources of resistance and how to deal with them, and developing supporting material. In addition to delivering the communication in person, web pages are also a very critical tool in enterprisewide communication.

> **Tips on Delivering Messages**:
>
> o   Create clear and concise presentations
>
> o   Build sample documents
>
> o   Hold educational meetings
>
> o   Seek one-on-one time
>
> o   Analyze politics
>
> o   Culture dictates technique
>
> o   Use third-party guest speakers

Essentials of Communication Planning

Communication planning is dependent on two essential competencies: understanding the target audiences and effective program/project management.

Effective communication is dependent on understanding the audience. Perhaps the most critical element to effective communication is understanding the audience. There are many techniques that aid in categorizing people (target audiences) to better understand their needs, and, consequently, enable more relevant and effective message creation and delivery.

o   Decision Styles Inventory, which focuses on how different types of people make decisions.

o   RACI, categorizing people according to their role in the relevant activity.

o   Technology affinity, categorizing people relative to their perspective on technology.

o   Stakeholder analysis, identifying the needs of the people with a vested interest in the communication topic and appealing to their needs in your message.

o   SWOT analysis; identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the target audience members, as well as the opportunities and threats posed to them.

o   "Pain chain" analysis, where the communicator must identify the typical "pains" that are felt by different people in an organization and orienting the communication to show pain relief.

Effective communication planning is dependent on effective program/project management.
Communication planning is an undercurrent to program/project planning. Without program/project management guiding the planning of initiatives, there is no set of defined events or milestones to plan communication for. Without a program/project plan to reference, communication planning can quickly become a non-value-added activity. Effective program/project management should instill communication planning as a best practice within an enterprise's program/project management community. This will include

the use of standard templates following the communication stages that are applicable to an initiative. Figure 3 is a sample communication plan template. This template is intended for identifying all of the communication events and capturing the details of each event. It does not have schedule elements (dates and durations), as these events will need to be incorporated into the overall program/project schedule.

			RACI	Frequency	Mode	Content	Reporting Mechanism	Feedbback Mechanism	
Program, Project, Phase or Activity									
	Build Awareness								
		Primary Target Audience							
		Secondary Target Audience							
	Solicit Support								
		Primary Target Audience							
		Secondary Target Audience							
	Facilitate Collaboration								
		Primary Target Audience							
		Secondary Target Audience							
	Obtain Approval								
		Primary Target Audience							
		Secondary Target Audience							
	Communicate Results								
		Primary Target Audience							
		Secondary Target Audience							

Figure 3

Conclusion

Effective communication can often happen "off the cuff" or at the "spur of the moment"; however, relying on spontaneous effective communication will not likely sustain most EA efforts. It is the responsibility of EA leadership to create and maintain a systemic communication plan to support the establishment, execution and effectiveness of the EA program.

Directions: Proactive communication planning focused on understanding the purpose and audience for critical communications events is a strong recommendation from EAdirections for all levels and sizes of EA efforts.