

# Project Communications Plan



## Purpose:

Communication is essential to every part of a design and construction project. Effective communication can manage the expectations of the parties and help ensure a project's success, while poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, disputes, and claims. Documentation creates the narrative of the project process, memorializes important decisions, and forms the practical and legal project record.

This Communications Plan is intended to define the communication and documentation requirements among project participants during implementation of the project. This includes communication between the design professional (consultant) and client (owner); within the design team (prime consultant-subconsultants); and among the consultant-client-contractor team. In addition to regular meetings, the plan should include a schedule for presentations, the documentation that will be provided at key milestones, client review/decision periods, and other pertinent approvals impacting schedule. To promote efficiency in project delivery, we recommend that meetings, presentations, and reviews be limited in quantity and concise in scope.

The Communications Plan should identify:

- What regular information will be communicated
- How it will be communicated
- Schedule/frequency of distribution
- Who is responsible to author project documentation
- The recipients of each type of communication
- Any constraints that may affect the communications

**Make sure your communication plan addresses how changes will be handled, managed, and documented.**

It is incumbent on the project manager of the prime consultant to take the lead in managing project communications and creating the project record during the design and documentation phases of the project. Once a project is under construction, primary responsibility for project documentation is usually assigned to the general contractor or CM. However, it is important that the design professional maintains diligence in communication and the accuracy of documentation through the construction and project close out phases. As with all plans, updates or changes may be required as changes occur in the project due to personnel, scope, budget, or other reasons. While shared electronic drives and platforms, such as Newforma, ProCore, SharePoint, Google Drive, Dropbox, and Slack have changed the way communications are transmitted and stored, there are basic points of information that can and should be shared—which is the focus of this sample Communication Plan.

Make sure your communication plan addresses how changes will be handled, managed, and documented.

In addition, remember that words matter, documentation endures, and it is discoverable in all forms. Do not elevate your standard of care through word or action, and do not modify your scope of services without proper authorization and documented contract revision.

## Instructions:

The Communication Plan should be customized for each project. In advance of creating your plan, you will need to consider the communication style of the client's project representative and your firm's own project managers to assign the best fit. You'll also need to have a clear understanding of the client's decision-making process. Knowing who has what level of authority on the client side will enable you to move quickly and effectively when a decision or authorization of additional services is required.

Complete the fields at the top and summarize the identified details. Share this form with members of the project team members to help them understand what to expect and what their role is in project communications.

Formal meeting reports should be distributed promptly to promote continuous information flow throughout the project. These documents should include an Aging Statement, such as

*"It is assumed that this report reflects an accurate account of discussions held and decisions reached unless written notification to the contrary is received within (  days)."*

Phone calls and informal meetings should also be documented, particularly when the content of discussion affects the development of the project, modifies prior decisions, or otherwise impacts the work effort of the design professional and other members of the project team.

Handwritten notes have limited merit but are of no use if they don't make it into the project record. Text messaging and instant messaging should be avoided as they are more informal and difficult to store and retrieve; if they are used, they must be transcribed into email or other documentation for inclusion in the project record.

# Project Communications Plan Example

[Owner/Client Name]

[Contract Date]

[Project Name]

[A/E Project Manager]

[Project Location]

[A/E Project Principal]

## Project Description:

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## Project Participants and Stakeholders

ROLE	COMPANY	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Client (Owner) Designated Representative			
Other Client (Owner) Team Members (list all)			
A/E Project Principal			
A/E Project Manager			
A/E Project Designer			
A/E Project Architect/Engineer			
A/E Team Members (list all)			
Consultant Team Managers (list all)			
Construction Team (list all)			
Other Stakeholders (list all)			

ITEM*	SCHEDULE FOR DISTRIBUTION	CREATOR	DISTRIBUTION TO	HOW IS IT DISTRIBUTED?
Agenda	1 day before the meeting	Project Manager	Meeting Attendees Project Principal File	Email
Meeting Minutes	3 days after the meeting	Project Manager	Meeting Attendees Project Principal File	Email
Correspondence (letters, emails, telephone conversation records, other memos)	When created	All	As determined by project team File	Email unless hard copy required by mail
Reports (A/E, engineering, and Client (Owner) consultants)	When created	All	As determined by project team File	Email unless hard copy required by mail
Design Phase Presentations – Deliverables	1 day before the meeting	Project Designer	Meeting Attendees Project Principal File	Email
Phase Approvals	1 week from presentation	Client	Meeting Attendees Project Principal File	Email

\* Note: Refer to Contract Documents for specific document submittal requirements

## Project Communications Plan Example

ITEM*	SCHEDULE FOR DISTRIBUTION	CREATOR	DISTRIBUTION TO	HOW IS IT DISTRIBUTED?
Change Management (Internal/Design Team)	When identified	A/E Team Members	Project Manager	Telephone call
Change Management (Client Notification/ Approval)	Prior to performing services	Project Manager	Client (Owner) Designated Representative	Telephone call or email, followed by formal change authorization as required
Construction Phase Field Reports	2 days	A/E and Consultant field representative(s)	As determined by project team File	Email or electronic per CA phase documentation protocol
Pay Requests	Draft 1 week prior to end of each month	Contractor/CM	A/E field representative Client	Hard copy or electronic per CA phase documentation protocol
Construction Phase Submittals	Per submittal schedule	Contractor/CM	A/E construction phase representative	Hard copy or electronic per CA phase documentation protocol
Requests for Information (RFIs)	When created	Contractor/CM	A/E construction phase representative	E-mail or electronic per CA phase documentation protocol
Closeout Documents	10 days after Date of Substantial Completion	Contractor/CM	Meeting Attendees Project Executive File	Hard copy

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