

HANDOUT

GÉANT 4 - Top Tips for Creating and Using TCPs as Part of Virtual Meetings in our Community

There is really one underlying thing that needs to be understood regarding communication planning in virtual teams.

Ad hoc communication in distributed teams is extremely low level and uncontrolled and when it does happen it often is individual to individual and does not assist the larger team and can often lead to misunderstandings.

One advantage of a team working in a single location is that anything from a conversation over a coffee to a comment made whilst waking past a desk can often have value and effect in a project or any team activity. The ability to call a team together at virtually no notice is irreplaceable. When team members are distributed in various locations as in a virtual team this simple communication path is closed.

Therefore people fall back onto using and being over reliant on E-mail which is incredibly prevalent in the community. Simply because you send an E-mail does not mean it is necessarily read, understood or acted upon.

It is vital that as a function of a virtual team activity clear methods of communication are agreed and planned frequency of these regular communications is set. The team should plan to have group communications at regular intervals via Audio, VC or similar to ensure all members are aware of all ongoing tasks, risks, issues and dependencies.

Communication should be a managed activity tailored to suit the project, its goals and its timescales. Short projects more regular communications, long projects less frequent unless by exception.

The basis info is always the same. Who will discuss what, with whom, when and how will that be recorded.

The Communications Management Plan defines the following:

- What information will be communicated—to include the level of detail and format
- How the information will be communicated—in meetings, email, telephone, web portal, etc.
- When information will be distributed—the frequency of project communications both formal and informal
- Who is responsible for communicating project information
- Communication requirements for all project stakeholders
- What resources the project allocates for communication
- How any sensitive or confidential information is communicated and who must authorize this
- How changes in communication or the communication process are managed
- The flow of project communications
- Any constraints, internal or external, which affect project communications
- Any standard templates, formats, or documents the project must use for communicating (these take many forms from written Word docs and PowerPoints to simple Excel spreadsheets with no single approved format. The project team can use whichever format they most like working with)
- An escalation process for resolving any communication-based conflicts or issues