

RESCOMM

- fruitful relations

Internal communication 101

According to mine and my colleagues' experience the following interrelated aspects have to be addressed (seems like a matter of course, but isn't):

- A. The co-operation / communication within the Work Packages (WPs).
- B. The communication between the WPs and management.
- C. Differences regarding language and work culture.
- D. Explaining the relationship between the communication/dissemination WP and the other WPs.
- E. Implementing the communication strategy among all participants.

Why?

- a) The effectiveness of the WPs are – to some degree – depending on the mutual understanding of the co-workers' traditions of communication (mail, phone, Skype) and personal competencies. This aspect interacts with the lines of command and the division of labour, but is, nevertheless, rarely addressed.
- b) As above.
- c) The work cultures in e.g. Norway and Hungary are very different. This is documented. If you misinterpret someone's phrasing or body language, it can lead to a conflict which may delay or damage part of the work. Of course we don't need to include socio-cultural classes... but a few tools and common experiences will be of great value.
- d) At certain points the WPs will be involved in the work of the communication WP. This may seem peripheral to them if they have not built a basic understanding of how information is integrated into the project.
- e) The participants in each country communicate all the time via their existing networks as part of their daily routines. It is important that they communicate the same messages about the project as the management does. If not, this might damage e.g. our press strategy.

The quality of communication and the quality of co-operation are interrelated

How?

Making a "communication investment", including e.g.:

- Small workshops, integrated in the kick-off seminar.
- Means and procedures of internal communication (meetings, email, Skype) being worked out and communicated from day one.
- A thorough orientation to all members on the role of external communication in the daily project work.
- Evaluations of project co-operation at e.g. month 6, 12 and 24.
- Monitoring (modest) of internal communication by the communication WP.
- Provision of an "internal hotline" (with confidentiality) in order to detect and resolve problems before they become serious.
- Promotion of "co-operation values & guidelines" which shows the importance of cooperation to the success of the project and makes it legitimate to address this kind of issues (which always will arise).

The above, of course, has to be adjusted depending on the nature of the project and the composition of the participants.

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