

Connecting people, projects and outcomes: A communication framework for SAP success

How clear, consistent communication drives
successful SAP transformations



Introduction

When project teams reflect on why major programmes struggle, communication often emerges as one of the most significant contributing factors. Not because there wasn't enough communication. But because the right information didn't reach the right people at the right time.

In complex SAP programmes, communication is far more than status reports, steering committee updates, or project newsletters. It is the mechanism that aligns stakeholders, supports decision-making, drives adoption, manages expectations, and maintains momentum throughout transformation.

Yet despite its importance, communication is often viewed as a supplementary activity rather than a critical success factor. The reality is very different.

The most successful SAP programmes recognise that communication is not something that happens alongside delivery. It is an essential part of delivery itself.

This guide explores why communication matters, the risks of getting it wrong, and how organisations can create communication strategies that support successful project outcomes.

Why communication matters in SAP programmes

SAP transformations impact far more than technology. They affect:

- Business processes
- Ways of working
- Roles and responsibilities
- Reporting structures
- Customer service operations
- Supplier interactions
- Organisational culture

As a result, projects often involve hundreds or even thousands of stakeholders with varying levels of interest, influence, and understanding.

Without effective communication, confusion quickly develops. People create their own assumptions, rumours fill information gaps, and confidence in the programme begins to decline. Effective communication provides clarity. It creates shared understanding around the programme's objectives, progress, challenges, and expected outcomes. Most importantly, it helps people understand why the project matters and what it means for them.

The hidden cost of poor communication

Many project challenges that appear to be technical issues are actually communication issues in disguise. Examples include:

- Delayed decision-making
- Stakeholder resistance
- Misaligned expectations
- Poor adoption rates
- Scope misunderstandings
- Resource conflicts
- Testing participation challenges
- Low morale and engagement

When stakeholders don't feel informed, they often disengage. When disengagement increases, delivery risks follow. Poor communication can also erode trust between project teams and business stakeholders, making future engagement more difficult and reducing programme confidence. mOver time, even strong delivery performance can be overshadowed by perceptions created through ineffective communication.

The five principles of effective project communication

1. Communicate early and often

One of the most common mistakes organisations make is waiting until major milestones have been achieved before communicating progress. By then, stakeholders may have already formed opinions based on incomplete information.

Successful programmes communicate from day one. Even when every answer is not available, providing visibility helps build confidence and engagement. Regular communication helps stakeholders feel connected to the journey rather than surprised by outcomes. Consistency often matters more than volume. A simple, predictable communication rhythm creates trust and transparency.

2. Tailor messages to the audience

Not all stakeholders require the same information. Executives need strategic insights. Process owners require operational detail. End users want to understand how their day-to-day roles may change. One-size-fits-all communication rarely delivers the desired outcome. Effective communication strategies recognise different stakeholder groups and adapt messaging accordingly. Examples might include:

Executive leadership

Focus on:

Programme objectives

Business benefits

Risks and decisions

Budget and timeline performance

Business stakeholders

Focus on:

Process impacts

Responsibilities

Readiness activities

Key milestones

End users

Focus on:

Upcoming changes

Training opportunities

Support resources

Benefits to daily work

People are far more likely to engage when communication feels relevant to them.

3. Make communication two-way

Communication is often treated as a broadcast activity. Messages are distributed, updates are published, and presentations are delivered. However, successful programmes create opportunities for dialogue. Stakeholders need the ability to:

Ask questions

Raise concerns

Provide feedback

Challenge assumptions

Share insights

Two-way communication helps project teams identify risks earlier and improve stakeholder buy-in. It also demonstrates that the programme values business input rather than simply informing people of decisions that have already been made. The most engaged stakeholders are often those who feel heard.

4. Be honest about challenges

There can be a temptation within major programmes to focus exclusively on positive updates. While celebrating progress is important, stakeholders quickly lose confidence if communication feels disconnected from reality. Trust is built through transparency.

Effective project communication acknowledges:

Delivery challenges

Emerging risks

Schedule adjustments

Resource constraints

Lessons learned

This does not mean creating concern or unnecessary alarm. It means communicating honestly while demonstrating how the project team is managing challenges.

Stakeholders are generally more accepting of difficulties when they understand the context and approach being taken.

5. Connect communication to business outcomes

Project updates often become centred around activities. Workshops completed. Requirements documented. Test scripts executed. While these details are important for delivery teams, business stakeholders are more interested in outcomes. Effective communication consistently answers two questions: Why does this matter? How will it benefit the organisation? By connecting programme activity to business value, communication becomes more meaningful and helps maintain executive and stakeholder support.

Communication throughout the project lifecycle

Communication requirements change as programmes progress. A successful communication strategy evolves alongside the project.

Mobilisation phase

The focus should be on:

- Creating awareness
- Establishing project objectives
- Defining governance structures
- Building stakeholder engagement

At this stage, communication should generate understanding and excitement around the vision.

Design and build phase

The focus shifts towards:

- Progress updates
- Decision-making support
- Managing expectations
- Stakeholder participation

Transparency becomes essential to maintaining confidence as complexity increases.

Testing phase

Communication should encourage:

- Business participation
- Defect resolution ownership
- Readiness planning
- Deployment confidence

Strong communication during testing often improves engagement and accelerates issue resolution.

Deployment and go-live

This period typically generates the highest level of stakeholder attention.

Communication should prioritise:

Readiness updates

Support arrangements

Training completion

Go-live expectations

Clear, timely communication helps reduce uncertainty and maintains momentum during transition.

Hypercare and adoption

Communication remains important after implementation. The focus should include:

Performance updates

User support

Early success stories

Continuous improvement opportunities

Celebrating achievements helps reinforce positive adoption behaviours and demonstrate programme value.

Common communication mistakes to avoid

Even well-managed programmes can fall into communication traps. Common examples include:

Communicating too infrequently

Overloading stakeholders with information

Using technical language for business audiences

Failing to address concerns openly

Assuming messages have been understood

Focusing only on project activities

Neglecting frontline users

Successful communication is not measured by the number of emails sent. It is measured by stakeholder understanding and engagement.

Measuring communication effectiveness

Communication should be treated as a strategic programme capability rather than an administrative task. Organisations can monitor effectiveness through:

Stakeholder feedback

Employee surveys

Training participation rates

Engagement levels

Change readiness assessments

Communication open rates

Attendance at project sessions

These indicators provide valuable insight into whether messages are being understood and acted upon. If communication is not driving engagement, the approach should be adjusted.

Communication as a driver of change

At its core, every SAP transformation is a people transformation. Technology may enable change, but people determine whether change succeeds.

Communication plays a central role in helping individuals understand:

Why change is happening

What is changing

When it is happening

How they will be affected

Where they can access support

Without communication, even the most technically successful implementation can struggle to deliver business benefits. With effective communication, organisations create alignment, confidence, and commitment across the programme.

Final thoughts

Communication is often described as a soft skill. In reality, it is one of the most critical project management disciplines within any complex SAP transformation. It influences



stakeholder engagement, decision-making, governance, user adoption, and ultimately programme success.

The organisations that communicate clearly, consistently, and transparently are typically the organisations that manage change more effectively and realise greater value from their investments. Communication should never be viewed as an afterthought. It is the thread that connects strategy, delivery, and adoption throughout the entire transformation journey.

About TCT

At TCT, we help organisations build the governance, assurance, and communication frameworks required to support complex SAP transformations. Our experienced consultants work alongside programme teams to improve stakeholder engagement, strengthen decision-making, and ensure critical messages reach the right audiences throughout the project lifecycle.

**Want to improve engagement and communication across your SAP programme?
Speak to TCT about building a communication strategy that supports successful transformation outcomes.**



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