



## Common Pitfalls Even Experienced PMs Make & How to Avoid Them

Rachelle Grant  
Director – TELUS Business Solutions National PMO  
April 5, 2019

“The most crucial success factor in project management is effective communications to all stakeholders—a critical core competency to all organizations” PMI's 2013 Pulse of the Profession In Depth Report

“Highly effective communicators are more than 5 times more likely to be high performers than minimally-effective communicators” PMI's 2013 Pulse of the Profession In Depth Report

## Pitfall #1: One size fits all status reports



- Terms used in reports & what you emphasize matters!

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## Pitfall #1: One size fits all status reports



### How to Avoid:

- Ask each key stakeholder why the project is important to them
- Listen for key words/themes
- Use these key words/themes to demonstrate understanding of their business
- Assess what they care about & why
- Know motivations & politics behind the “why”
- Use a stakeholder analysis tool to help you categorize stakeholders into groups to send status updates more fitting to their needs

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# Stakeholder Communication Assessment Sheet

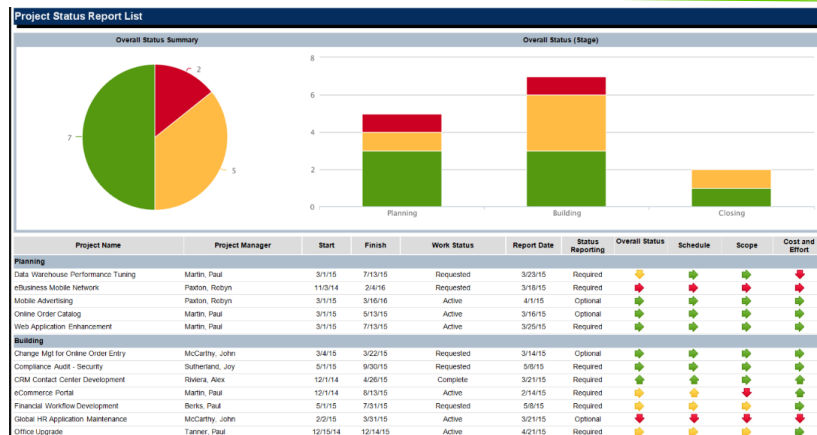


Stakeholder	What they don't care about	What's important	Key Words/Themes	Coms Type	Who Delivers	Frequency	Purpose	Barriers
Director Sponsor – John McGregor	Not interested in details	Progress against budget	Financial	F2F	Jane Smith	1 X Week, 15 minutes	Communicate variances	Very busy. Limited time to invest
Director Sponsor – Rob Smith	NA- cares about it all	Must meet Oct 20 <sup>th</sup> milestone. Commitment to SVP. Neck is on the line!  Secured \$1M investment. Must	Momentum Velocity	F2F mid week touch point Director Steer Co Ad hoc for issues impacting Oct	Program Manager	1X mid week touchpoint 1X director steer co	Secure support & help for roadblocks early	Drive to committed date may
Core project team members	Funding issues						Status updates Ensure engagement Risk review refresh	Varies
Customer Project Lead	Doesn't want TELUS internal details	Don't impact my business operations					Status updates Validate progress & solution against business need	Schedule

**Key Tips:**

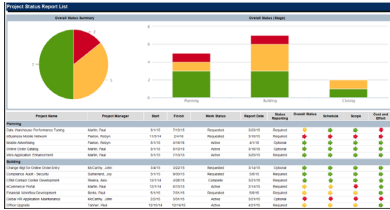
- There are many stakeholder tools –find one that works for you & use it
- You don't need to share this assessment with others
- Review at key milestones or when communications issues crop up.
- Tweak your stakeholder assessment plan as required. People's needs do change
- Pay attention to consistent questions you get asked by key stakeholders following your status report ---they are telling you what's important to them!

# Pitfall #2: Status Reports Without Stories



- Pie charts, colours & metrics create nice visuals but don't drive project engagement

# Pitfall #2: Status Reports Without Stories



## How to Avoid:

- Be able to answer the question “Why should my stakeholders care?”
- Use stories to generate interest & emotionally connect people to what the team is doing
- Use language/terms that resonate with the key stakeholders (i.e. stakeholder cares about momentum, what story can you tell about momentum?)



## Pitfall #3: Setting & Forgetting Your Risk Log



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## Pitfall #3: Setting & Forgetting Your Risk Log



### How to Avoid:

- Create quick touch points with the key team members at least once a week to focus on risks & issues.
- Combine risks & issues discussion together
- Prep before the touch point so you can focus the team on key themes
- Talking about how the team has successfully avoided risks helps the pessimists become more optimistic, teases out things to celebrate and can feed lessons learned early & often
- Ensures our "Chicken Littles" remain active and engaged participants without deflating the team or taking away from momentum

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## Pitfall #4: Not pairing down the update

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Pair down your key points to use the time that you're given for your update, instead of always going over. There is always the next time & people will respect you for respecting their calendar.

the future is friendly.