

## Communication Guidelines and Protocols

The outsourcing relationship may commence on a large scale roll out or often as a small scale roll out, typically as a pilot where some simple project functions (task level) such as drawings development are initially outsourced. These simple project activities form the basis of a long-term relationship for greater engagement on complex and in-depth involvement in project activities. Regardless, extensive **communication** is required at an early stage between the senior management as well as at the executive levels of both organizations, also important is the Stakeholder Group.

The **Stakeholder Group** is comprised of a cross functional group of people within the buy-side organization that are end users, customers and/or have a vested interest in the selection and ongoing function and performance that the vendor partner is performing. This group is selected by the HR Executive to lead the selection process and program management of the HR service and/or technology being outsourced. This group typically exists and meets regularly during the Selection and Implementation stages, while some organizations may reconvene with this group on occasion during the program management stage to assess performance and/or at time of contract renewal. Lastly all teams impacted by the partnership and in some cases all employees within the organization should be included during the selection process and/or ongoing program management, when appropriate.

Some key components that require communication and/or feedback include but are not limited to the following.

- Capturing of expectations.
- Process changes, improvements, and enhancements
- Any initiative that impacts a change ownership or headcount
- The addition of onsite vendor employees
- Developing a Control Plan.
- Deploying the Control Plan (monitoring adherence).
- Developing a Framework for progressive engagement.

Communication can be through face-to-face meetings, company communication boards, internal website and/or email, preferably by an empowered committee with members from the Stakeholder Team and/or Leadership.

Communication when the decision to outsource has been made as well as during selection and implementation are critical to ensure the new partner and/or processes are seen as positive outcomes to achieve organizational goals. As these functions expand, evolve and simply as an important component of program management, ongoing communication is required to ensure understanding, continued support, and engagement. You may have any of the dedicated functions\* listed below in place as a sub team within the Stakeholder Group to help serve the process, partnership and evolution of programs and services deployed through an HR services or technology provider. (\*Note these dedicated functions can be comprised of a single person or multiple people with experience and/or vested interest within the function listed.)

- **Delivery Management:** Responsible for work process development, standardization, monitoring adherence to work processes, and meeting quality expectations of the customer.
- **Process Owner Groups:** Responsible for continuous improvement in work processes through the analysis of defects and lessons learned.
- **Project Management:** Responsible for all project management functions at the organization for the tasks and activities outsourced from within a customer's project.
- **Program Management:** Responsible for alignment of project management activities in the organization, with functional or geographical units in the customer organization.
- **Communications Management:** Responsible for aligning the communication needs with customer expectations, across all functions including process development and continuous improvement, project management, program management, learning and development, growth, and engagement efficiency.
- **Learning and Development:** Responsible for maintaining skill inventory and enhancement in the organization, aligned with the customer's roadmap for growth and technology enhancement.
- **Account management:** Owns business intake, growth in intake and relationship, aligned to specific geographical entities or functional groups in the customer organization.

- Centers of Excellence (CoE): These centers should be considered for focused communication needs around specialized skills or functions. Such a center would align strongly with a similar body in the customer organization, simplifying communication and facilitating enhanced alignment with the standards and processes of the customer's Centre of Excellence. Examples within an RPO environment could include Candidate Experience CoE, Compliance CoE, HR Technology and Innovation CoE, Hiring Manager and Customer Satisfaction CoE, Hiring Metrics and Reporting CoE.

You need to catalyze or facilitate the evolution of an elaborate organization comprising these or more functions, adding or removing them as the communication needs decrease or increase with maturity of the relationship between the partners.

### **Transparency and Trust, Mitigating Perceived Risks**

There are several real as well as perceived risks by both partners in the relationship. From the customer perspective, some of the risks could include loss of control on the project, confidentiality concerns, use of inappropriate skills on the project, poor quality leading to rework, illegitimate schedule, and cost overruns, and too much dependence on the partner leading to inability to spread risk.

Perceived risks need to be systematically identified by the team and assessed for failure modes on a periodic basis. A well-defined communication plan should be in place to mitigate perceptions at both ends through a high degree of transparency in periodic reporting on identified parameters. The communication plan could include:

- Periodic reporting of skills inventory and experience, Learning and Development initiatives including soft skills training (communication) and training around requirements management.
- Frequent sharing of Work processes, Quality processes, project health monitoring processes of both partners.
- Sharing Project Review findings, Quality Review findings, and Action Taken reports.
- Periodic reporting of mutually agreed quality and productivity metrics.
- An effective and transparent issues and concerns resolution mechanism between the partners.
- Sharing of long-term plans, growth initiatives, cost structures and perceived future trends.

## Summary

The outsourcing partner relationship has a profile of needs and abilities which is unique. It is at once able to be more innovative as well as capable of anticipated growth and requires special features in the communications tools chosen to serve it. It is recommended that the organizations incorporate scalability as a critical feature of its senior management focus groups as well as its communication tools. Communication solutions must be found which are tailored to this special partnership. Because of the uniquely high need for communication, support tools must be chosen which permit communication to remain clear and organized during periods of dynamic change, nurturing transparency, and trust. Scalability becomes an increasingly important quality of tools chosen to sustain the partnership. The final quality of the project and potential for the future will depend on management's ability to prioritize communication and its quality, bringing trust and transparency to the partnership.