



KEEPING YOUR CLIENT UPDATED

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SPCONSULTING

It's no surprise that a client commissioning a consulting service expect to be kept up to date on the progress of activities. Progress reports are not only essential to ensuring that things are on track, but are also closely coupled to the perception of value – a factor that should not be underestimated.

Reporting frequency generally depends on the task at hand: weekly status reporting is common in many projects; close to a critical deadline daily updates may be required, and teams working on faults within business-critical processes may even update their clients on an hourly basis. The personalities of client stakeholders also play a role, some being more hands-off and others more hands-on when it comes to routine communication. A skilled consultant embraces all of these variables and tailors the reporting approach accordingly.

A consulting manager was leading the delivery of a project delivered in Western Europe. The client, a director in a large

pharmaceuticals corporation, was a woman with high standards and a reputation for top performance in the projects that she supervised. From the inception of the project the director conveyed a stressed attitude. She called the consultants once or twice each day, inquiring about the status of different tasks. The consultants were always able to assure the client that everything was on track, however day after day the questions continued. The client never seemed to be at ease.

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The consulting manager raised the matter with her team, keen to improve the style of the ongoing relationship. 'How can we better address the client's concerns?'. Upon reflection they concluded that the client stakeholder was responsible for several projects being delivered by different

consulting firms. She probably spent a good part of each day calling different project managers with similar questions to ensure that there would be no delays in their deliveries.

Proactively, they decided to adjust their progress reporting approach by sending a brief status report via email at the end of each day. The email summarized the tasks completed, tasks planned for the following day and the status of any open issues.

The subsequent change in client behavior was quite remarkable. Not only did the questions stop coming, but at project meetings the client would comment '*I like you guys. You are the ones that I don't have to worry about...*'

A small change in reporting behavior had delivered a significant improvement in the client relationship and perception of value.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Samir Parikh is a principal business consultant, practice manager, and consultancy CEO with over 25 years of industry experience. In 2000, Samir founded *SPConsulting* a global management consulting firm specializing in organizational strategy and change management.

With a track record of projects conducted in more than 50 countries the firm works closely with companies that are transforming into consulting-based organizations, delivering solutions and professional services in highly competitive environments.



FURTHER READING

Samir is the author of *The Consultant's Handbook*, published by John Wiley & Sons. This book provides a comprehensive guide for the practical implementation of consulting skills by professionals working in consulting and professional-services-related disciplines.

The book contains additional guidelines, examples and use-cases to support readers in implementation of consulting techniques, as well as practical tips and lessons-learned from real consulting engagements.