

PROJECT AD REM

**A Project Plan to Improve Cross-Team Communication
and SOP Alignment in an Amazon Operational Context**

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Introduction and Rationale

Project Ad Rem (PAR) is a fictional Amazon improvement project addressing a recurring communication failure between Team A Primary Contact and Team B Escalations and Resolution Team. The issue is treated as a project because it requires a temporary, controlled response with defined objectives, deliverables and accountability. Burke (2013, p. 3) states that project success is “*completing the project deliverables on time, within budget and to the required quality [...]*”, and Marks (2012, p. 3) describes project management as the means “*by which a project is brought to a successful conclusion*”. A formal intervention is therefore justified because repeated defects indicate a persistent weakness rather than an isolated error.

The intervention centres on inconsistent communication routes, fragmented escalation practice and conflicting interpretation of SOPs. The weakness is procedural in form but cross-functional in impact. Simon and Murray-Webster (2018, pp. 20–21) state that project work “*cuts across traditional boundaries and requires people to come together temporarily [...]*”, while Clegg, Skyttermoen and Vaagaasar (2020, pp. 17–18) argue that “*Projects meet needs defined by interests*”. Informal clarification is insufficient because the weakness affects stakeholders, work interfaces and quality outcomes. Lock (2018) argues that project definition begins at conception and requires clarity before authorization. Marks (2012, p. 30) further states that requirements should be “*formalized at an early stage and converted into a clear and concise set of objectives*”.

Project Scope, Objectives and Deliverables

Heagney and Lewis (2022) define a project as a temporary endeavour with a clearly defined scope and performance requirements, and Burke (2013, p. 11) states that project objectives outline “*the scope of work, how the project should be managed and the critical success factors [...] (time, cost and quality)*”. The plan is therefore built around a specific problem, a defined scope and a measurable target. Wysocki, Kaikini and Sneed (2014, p. 104) argue that scoping should answer “*What will you do?*” and “*How will you know you did it?*”, while Marks (2012) emphasises the need to define both in-scope and out-of-scope elements clearly.

Clear boundaries are necessary because the scope statement may include “*explicit scope exclusions*” that help manage expectations (Project Management Institute (PMI), 2013, pp. 81–82). In this project, unclear boundaries could quickly lead to scope creep, so agreed scope should be placed under formal change control (Kidston and Haward, 2015).

Table 1. Aim, objectives and scope of Project Ad Rem

Element	Content
Aim	Improve communication efficiency and SOP consistency between Team A and Team B
Objective 1	Review current SOPs, communication routes and escalation practice
Objective 2	Identify gaps, overlaps and contradictions between both teams' guidance
Objective 3	Develop one aligned communication framework and one consistent SOP interpretation model
Objective 4	Deliver town halls and calibration sessions to support implementation
Objective 5	Reduce communication-related defects by 85%
In scope	SOP comparison, communication mapping, stakeholder consultation, town halls, calibration, final SOP alignment, monitored rollout
Out of scope	Wider restructuring, system redesign, unrelated process changes, non-communication defects

The project must also define its outputs. Simon and Murray-Webster (2018, p. 69) define outputs as the *“tangible or intangible products typically delivered by a project”*, and PMI (2013, pp. 287–288) defines a deliverable as *“any unique and verifiable product, result, or capability to perform a service [...] required to be produced”*. This matters because value depends not only on completed activity but on whether outputs support improved practice. Hedeman and Seegers (2009, p. 22) state that *“A successful project is output-oriented, not activity-oriented”*, and Marks (2012, p. 39) advises project managers to *“Be as clear as possible in defining the project deliverables”*.

Table 2. Project outputs and deliverables

Deliverable	Purpose
Current-state communication review	Summarise existing communication routes and issues
SOP gap analysis	Identify contradictions, overlaps and missing guidance
Standardised communication framework	Define one agreed communication route and format
Aligned SOP guidance	Provide one consistent interpretation model for both teams
Two town halls	Communicate change and support understanding
One manager calibration session	Align leadership interpretation before rollout
Implementation tracker	Monitor actions, ownership and adoption
Closure report	Record outcomes, lessons learned and handover

These outputs are the direct products of the intervention. Their value depends on whether they support measurable improvement, because benefits are the “*quantifiable and measurable improvement resulting from outcomes*” (Simon and Murray-Webster, 2018, p. 69). Deliverables alone do not justify the project; they matter only if they contribute to reducing communication-related defects.

Activities and Work Breakdown Structure

Once scope and deliverables are defined, the project must specify the work needed to produce them. PMI (2013, pp. 287–288) defines this as “*the process of identifying and documenting the specific actions to be performed to produce the project deliverables*”. Westland (2007) similarly notes that a WBS comprises the stages, tasks and activities required to complete the project, while Kidston and Haward (2015, p. 48) state that once scope is agreed, “the scope of work is divided into various hierarchical breakdown structures”.

Table 3. Activities required to deliver project outputs

Deliverable	Key activities
Current-state communication review	Collect SOPs, map communication routes, gather defect examples
SOP gap analysis	Compare both teams’ guidance, identify overlaps, contradictions and missing instructions
Standardised communication framework	Draft agreed communication route, escalation format and ownership points
Aligned SOP guidance	Rewrite or align key guidance, validate with managers and SMEs
Two town halls	Prepare slides, confirm attendance, deliver sessions, collect questions
One manager calibration session	Review aligned approach, confirm interpretation, agree final messaging
Implementation tracker	Assign actions, owners and deadlines; monitor progress
Closure report	Review outcomes, capture lessons learned, confirm handover

The table translates each deliverable into project work. As Heagney and Lewis (2022, pp. 71–72) state, “*The main idea of doing a WBS is to capture all of the tasks*”, and Lock (2013) notes that task lists should include both operational and documentation-based work. Adoption therefore depends not only on revised guidance, but also on validation, communication, tracking and formal handover.

That work is then organised through a WBS. PMI (2013, p. 83) defines the WBS as “*a hierarchical decomposition of the total scope of work to be carried out by the project team to accomplish the project objectives and create the required deliverables*”, while

Simon and Murray-Webster (2018) describe it as a hierarchy leading to the work needed to complete the project. Kidston and Haward (2015, p. 49) further note that “A WBS can be further broken down into work packages and planning packages”. Its value is practical: it separates analysis, design, implementation and closure into controllable parts, clarifying accountability and reducing omission risk.

Table 4. Work Breakdown Structure for Project Ad Rem

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Initiation	Project setup	Define problem, confirm sponsor, approve charter
	Stakeholder setup	Identify stakeholders, confirm roles, set expectations
Analysis	Current-state review	Collect SOPs, map routes, gather defect examples
	Gap analysis	Compare guidance, identify overlaps, contradictions and omissions
Design	Communication framework	Draft agreed route, escalation format and ownership
	SOP alignment	Draft aligned guidance, review with managers and SMEs
Implementation	Knowledge-sharing	Prepare materials, deliver two town halls, run calibration session
	Rollout	Publish final guidance, launch revised communication practice
Closure	Review and handover	Track adoption, review outcomes, issue closure report

However, the WBS should not be mistaken for the schedule. Heagney and Lewis (2022, pp. 71–72) state that “A work breakdown structure does not show the sequence in which work is performed”, and PMI (2013) notes that work packages are the level at which work is scheduled, estimated, monitored and controlled. The WBS therefore defines the full work content of the initiative, while timing and dependency must still be addressed separately.

Schedule, Milestones and Gantt Chart

Once the work is defined, the plan must show when key outputs will be completed and how activities will be sequenced across the eight-week period. PMI (2013) defines a milestone as an important moment or occurrence in a project, whilst Simon and Murray-Webster (2018, p. 107) state that milestones “represent the completion of deliverables or highlight key decision points on the project” and “have no (zero) duration”. This matters because the project requires clear control points rather than a simple task list.

Table 5. Deliverables, milestones and timeline

Week	Milestone	Related deliverable
1	Project charter approved	Project initiation completed
2	Stakeholder and communication mapping completed	Current-state communication review
3	SOP gap analysis completed	Gap analysis report
4	Draft communication framework completed	Draft communication framework
5	Final aligned SOP approved	Aligned SOP guidance
6	Town halls and calibration session delivered	Knowledge-sharing outputs completed
7	Revised communication model launched	Rollout completed
8	Post-implementation review and closure completed	Closure report and handover

The schedule must also reflect sequence, because *“The activities and tasks are then sequenced, resources are allocated and a detailed project schedule is formed”* (Westland, 2007, p. 8). Heagney and Lewis (2022) note that critical activities must finish as scheduled to protect the end date, whilst Lock (2018) similarly emphasises that significant stages must be completed on time. The timing framework therefore supports control by linking analysis, approval, communication and rollout in a fixed order.

The schedule is further summarised through a Gantt chart. Simon and Murray-Webster (2018, p. 105) note that *“The most common usual way of showing a project’s schedule is to use a Gantt (bar) chart as it is relatively simple to read and understand”*, whilst Milošević (2003, p. 176) states that *“The Gantt Chart is an effective tool for smaller and simpler projects, where there is no need to show dependencies between activities”*. It is therefore suitable here because the initiative is short, tightly scoped and primarily concerned with timing visibility rather than complex network logic.

Table 6. Gantt chart for Project Ad Rem

Activity / Work Package	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8
Project initiation and charter approval	X							
Stakeholder setup and communication mapping	X	X						
Current-state communication review		X						
SOP gap analysis		X	X					
Draft communication framework			X	X				
SOP alignment and approval				X	X			
Town halls and calibration session					X	X		
Rollout and adoption tracking						X	X	
Closure and handover								X

The chart shows controlled overlap between analysis, design and implementation. This is efficient for a short project, although it also creates dependency risk: delays in drafting or approval would affect communication activities and rollout. The Gantt chart remains useful as a visibility tool, but only where milestone discipline and timely stakeholder decisions are maintained.

Resource Plan

To deliver the schedule credibly, the project requires both human and material resources. Simon and Murray-Webster (2018, pp. 108–109) define resources as *“the people, equipment, facilities or any other entity that is needed to complete an activity and therefore costs money”*, whilst PMI (2013, pp. 97–98) defines resource estimation as *“the process of estimating the type and quantities of material, human resources, equipment, or supplies required to perform each activity”*. Resource planning is therefore not an administrative detail; it tests whether the timeline is realistic and whether key activities can be delivered with the available capability.

Table 7. Resource plan for Project Ad Rem

Task area	Personnel resources	Material / technical resources
Initiation	Sponsor, Project Manager	Charter template, meeting platform
Analysis	Project Manager, Team Managers, SMEs, Quality Analyst	SOP files, defect reports, shared folders
Design	Project Manager, SMEs, Managers	SOP draft template, framework document
Implementation	Project Manager, Managers, Team Representatives	Town hall slides, communication templates, meeting platform
Monitoring and closure	Project Manager, Quality Analyst, Managers	Tracker, reporting file, closure template

This resource base reflects the needs of a cross-team improvement effort rather than a technical delivery project. Westland (2007, p. 8) states that *“A detailed resource plan is required to identify the type of resource required, such as labour, equipment and materials”*, whilst Lock (2013) notes that resources can include people, tools, machines and money. In this case, the project depends mainly on staff time, specialist review capacity and access to operational documentation. This also creates a constraint: the plan assumes that key managers and SMEs will be available when review, approval and communication are required. Resource planning therefore supports feasibility, but it also shows where delivery could slow if decision-makers or subject experts are unavailable.

Stakeholder Matrix

Because the initiative crosses team boundaries, stakeholder management is central to delivery. Hedeman and Seegers (2009, p. 20) state that *“All three stakeholder interests need to be represented effectively in the project organization, at the delivery level as well as at the directing level”*, whilst Clegg, Skyttermoen and Vaagaasar (2020, p. 18) note that *“Projects often have a large number of stakeholders with whom relations can be both rewarding and challenging”*. The key issue is therefore not only to identify stakeholders, but to distinguish who authorises, who contributes and who is expected to adopt the change.

Table 8. Stakeholder matrix for Project Ad Rem

Stakeholder	Interest	Influence	Engagement approach
Sponsor	High	High	Milestone approvals, escalation support
Project Manager	High	High	Daily coordination and delivery control
Team A Manager	High	High	Validation, sign-off, rollout support
Team B Manager	High	High	Validation, sign-off, rollout support
SOP SMEs	High	Medium	Draft review, guidance alignment
Quality Analyst	Medium	Medium	Defect evidence, post-launch monitoring
Frontline agents	High	Low/Medium	Town halls, guidance, feedback collection

According to Simon and Murray-Webster (2018), stakeholders are individuals or organisations having an interest in, involvement in, or influence from the work, while Marks (2012) highlights the need to identify who is affected by or interested in the project. The matrix also clarifies where the main delivery risk sits. High influence is concentrated around sponsor and management approval, but successful adoption depends on frontline users with lower formal authority. The matrix is therefore not just descriptive; it highlights the difference between decision power and implementation dependence.

Risk, Monitoring and Control

The project requires a clear control structure for both delivery risk and operational effect. Kidston and Haward (2015, p. 33) state that *“Effective project management requires effective planning and control”* and *“rigorous monitoring that enables proactive control of the project”*, while PMI (2013, p. 64) defines monitoring and control as *“the process of tracking, reviewing, and reporting the progress to meet the performance objectives defined in the project management plan”*. This is especially important in a short intervention, where slippage in approval, participation or adoption could undermine the intended benefit before rollout.

Table 9. Risk register for Project Ad Rem

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	Owner
Low attendance at town halls	Medium	High	Schedule early, manager reminders, attendance tracking	Project Manager
Delay in SOP approval	Medium	High	Pre-book review points and sign-off deadlines	Team Managers
Resistance to standardisation	Medium	High	Early consultation, clear rationale, calibration session	Sponsor / Managers
Limited SME time	High	Medium	Short review windows, prioritised actions	Project Manager
Weak adoption after rollout	Medium	High	Follow-up monitoring, feedback loop, manager reinforcement	Managers

The register focuses on risks that are credible in this type of project: not technical failure, but approval delay, limited expert capacity and weak behavioural adoption. Kerzner (2025) identifies role conflicts, unclear project objectives and outcomes, and dynamic project environments as common barriers to team performance. These factors are relevant where different teams interpret process change differently. The register therefore protects adoption and decision flow as well as delivery dates.

Control measures are also needed to show whether risk is being contained and whether the intervention is producing evidence of improvement. Heagney and Lewis (2022, pp. 26–27) warn that “*Unless progress is monitored, you cannot be sure you will succeed*”, while Kidston and Haward (2015) caution that counting activities alone is misleading. Hartley (2020) similarly argues that control should include scope management, stakeholder reporting, team communication and performance review rather than narrow activity measurement alone.

Table 10. Monitoring and control measures

Control area	Measure	Method	Timing
Delivery progress	Milestone completion	Review against project schedule	Weekly
Participation	Town hall attendance	Attendance tracker	Week 6
Content approval	SOP and framework sign-off	Manager validation	Weeks 4–5
Action follow-up	Open and closed actions	Implementation tracker	Weekly
Operational effect	Communication-related defects	Quality review and metric comparison	Weeks 7–8

These controls connect governance with outcomes. Simon and Murray-Webster (2018, p. 69) define benefits as the *“quantifiable and measurable improvement resulting from outcomes”*, which means the project cannot be judged only by completed meetings or approved documents. It must also show whether outputs reduce communication-related defects. The control framework is stronger because it combines delivery checks with post-implementation evidence.

Project Closure and Handover

The initiative must close formally and transfer ownership into business-as-usual operations. Simon and Murray-Webster (2018, p. 143) state that *“It is during this phase that the project is handed over to the customer or to ‘business-as-usual’ operations and brought to an administrative and physical close”*, while Hedeman and Seegers (2009, p. 114) note that *“A clear end to a project transfers ownership from the project management team to the customer”*. Closure is therefore not only an administrative ending; it marks the transfer from project delivery to operational ownership.

Table 11. Closure and handover activities

Closure activity	Purpose	Owner
Final SOP sign-off	Confirm approved final guidance	Team Managers
Handover of documents	Transfer framework, SOP and tracker to operations	Project Manager
Post-implementation review	Evaluate defect movement and adoption issues	Project Manager / Quality Analyst
Lessons learned record	Capture improvements for future use	Project Manager
Formal closure confirmation	Confirm end of the project and BAU ownership	Sponsor

Formal closure also protects learning and accountability. Heagney and Lewis (2022, pp. 156–157) state that *“Project managers should create a central repository for all project information and documents”*, while Westland (2007) notes that closure includes publicly announcing the project’s completion, transferring documents and distributing final deliverables. This is important in a project that relies on process alignment rather than physical delivery, since the retention of documentation, ownership and lessons after the project team disbands determines its long-term value. Closure is therefore more than an ending; it is a control point in its own right.

Conclusion

Project Ad Rem demonstrates how a recurring communication failure can be redefined as a manageable project problem and addressed through a structured planning framework. The plan establishes coherence between scope, deliverables, activities, milestones, resources and controls, thereby moving the issue beyond informal correction and into a model of accountable intervention. Its significance lies not in the production of project artefacts as ends in themselves, but in their capacity to support more consistent cross-team practice, clearer ownership and measurable operational improvement. The project is strongest where its tools are applied analytically rather than mechanically: the WBS structures the work, the schedule sequences delivery, control mechanisms test progress, and closure secures transfer into business-as-usual operations. Taken together, the plan offers a credible, disciplined and operationally relevant basis for sustained change.

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