How to Write a Clear Weekly Project Status Update

Work World · about 25 minutes · 2026-11-06

Turn a week of project activity into a factual update that readers can scan and act on. These 23 steps cover audience, reporting scope, source data, milestones, forecasts, overall status, outcomes, priorities, blockers, budget and schedule, decision requests, plain language, confidentiality, verification, async distribution, action logs, and template improvement.

Things you will need

- The approved reporting period, audience, owner, and publication cadence
- The current baseline plan, milestones, and agreed completion criteria
- Authoritative task, budget, quality, risk, and decision source links
- Verified outcomes, forecasts, assumptions, and variance explanations
- Explicit decision requests and actions with owners and due dates
- A consistent accessible template and a durable canonical update location

Defining the Update and Gathering Evidence

1. **Name the readers and their decisions**
   Identify the audience and the decisions or actions the update should support.
2. **Fix the reporting period and scope**
   Set the reporting period, scope, and publication time before collecting information.
3. **Gather facts from authoritative sources**
   Gather evidence from the project's agreed sources of truth.
4. **Confirm milestone status with its owners**
   Verify the status of important milestones and deliverables with their owners.
5. **Separate facts from forecasts and assumptions**
   Separate confirmed facts, current forecasts, and unresolved assumptions.

Structuring a Scannable Update

6. **Lead with the status and its reason**
   Lead with the overall status and the reason behind it.
7. **Report outcomes instead of activity**
   Summarize completed outcomes instead of listing every activity.
8. **Commit to realistic next-period priorities**
   State the next period's priorities as realistic commitments.
9. **Describe blockers with effect and response**
   Describe blockers, risks, and issues with their effect and response.
10. **Report schedule, budget, and scope changes together**
    Report significant schedule, budget, scope, and quality changes together.

Writing Clearly and Making Requests Explicit

11. Write with concrete verbs and numbers

Use concrete subjects, verbs, dates, and quantities wherever they add meaning.

12. Explain why each material variance matters

Explain why a material variance matters and what is being done about it.

13. Make every ask specific and answerable

Make every decision request or ask visible and answerable.

14. Remove jargon and confidential detail

Remove unnecessary jargon, personal information, and confidential detail.

Reviewing and Distributing the Update

15. Verify each figure against its source

Verify every number, date, name, status label, and supporting link before publishing.

16. Edit for concise, objective scanning

Edit the update for concise, objective, and accessible scanning.

17. Choose a dependable async channel and time

Choose an asynchronous channel and posting time that readers can rely on.

18. Tailor detail without changing facts

Tailor the presentation without creating conflicting versions of the facts.

Closing the Loop After Publication

19. Open one clear route for corrections

Invite questions, corrections, and missing context through a clear response route.

20. Log decisions, owners, and due dates

Record decisions and actions with owners, dates, and links to the discussion.

21. Return every change to its record

Update the canonical plan, milestone record, risk register, and other affected sources.

22. Chase blocked actions before next week

Follow up on blocked actions and overdue decisions before the next weekly cycle.

23. Improve the template from recurring questions

Improve the template from recurring questions and reporting outcomes.

Sources

1. How to Track Project Progress
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2. Business Status Update Template
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   https://handbook.gitlab.com/handbook/communication/
4. Choose Your Words Carefully
   https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/words/
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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/Write-a-Clear-Weekly-Project-Status-Update. Corrections: https://www.howco