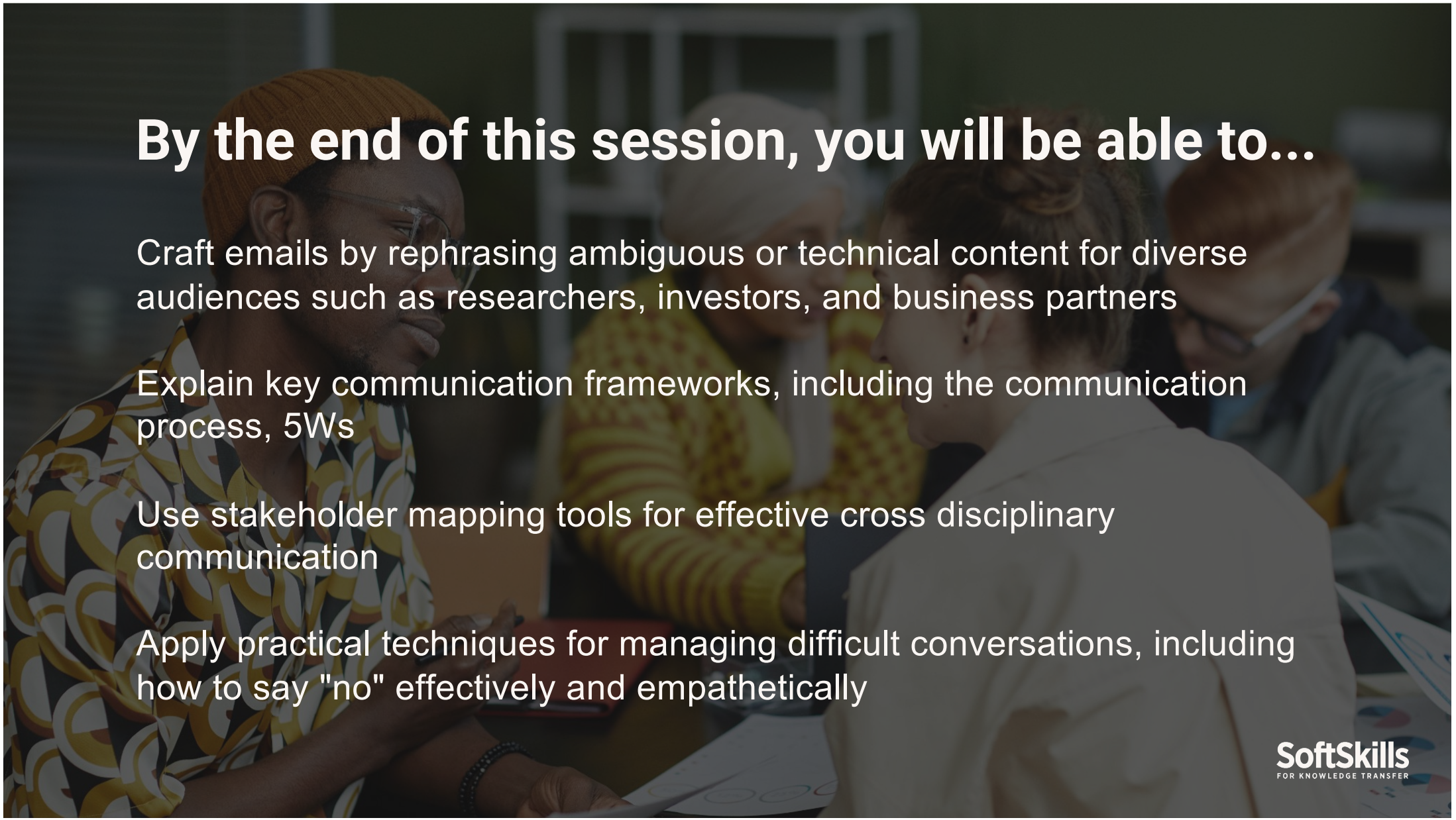
Welcome: Communication with Impact for Knowledge Transfer

KTSoftSkills - Soft Skills for Knowledge Transfer
Project n. 2022-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000089663



By the end of this session, you will be able to...

Craft emails by rephrasing ambiguous or technical content for diverse audiences such as researchers, investors, and business partners

Explain key communication frameworks, including the communication process, 5Ws

Use stakeholder mapping tools for effective cross disciplinary communication

Apply practical techniques for managing difficult conversations, including how to say "no" effectively and empathetically

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Agenda

Time	Topic	
30 min	Introduction & Icebreaker Game	Group Exercise
30 min	"The Email" An exercise on written communication in KT processes	Group Exercise & Discussion
15 min	Break	
60 min	Theories about Interdisciplinary Communication	Mini Lecture & Group Exercise
15 min	Break	
30 min	How to Say "No"	Role-play Exercise
30 min	Debriefing & Wrap up	Group Discussion

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Two Truths and a Lie

Step 1. Prepare three statements about yourself—two true, one false.

Step 2. Tell your statements to the group. The group will guess the false one.

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Group Exercise: The Email

Group Exercise: The Email

You are a knowledge transfer professional in the Technology Transfer Office of a renowned university.

You received an email from a researcher in your university. Rephrase the email in a way that you understand.

Share your email with your groupmates.
Discuss the challenges you faced with your task.

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Subject: Exciting new commercial activity.

Dear KTO colleague,

We presented some of our latest research conclusions last week at the international conference and lots of people came up to us afterwards telling that this could be applied in industry uses. One company even asked us for a meeting and we will be talking to them tomorrow.

We knew beforehand that there have been challenges in cost effective production of packaging for frozen goods, and now understand that our approaches may solve that problem. We joined your department webinar last month about how research results could be patented and know that we should contact you if we think there is something we should consider.

Can we set up a meeting as soon as possible to discuss what the next steps are?

Many thanks

Professor Enthusiastic

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Debriefing

1. Was the email easy to understand and rephrase? If not, why?
2. What makes an email effective?
3. Do you think writing an effective email is important for your work?
4. What are the tips and tricks you use to write effective emails?

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How to write effective emails?

Do	Don't
Use specific subject lines	Use vague subjects like "Update"
Keep language clear and simple	Overuse jargon or acronyms
Tailor tone to your stakeholder (formal/informal)	Copy-paste same message for all
State actions and deadlines clearly	Bury action items in long paragraphs
Proofread before sending	Send emails with typos or unclear structure

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What is *communication*?

A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior (Merriam-Webster)

Three critical elements of communication:
- Ethos
- Pathos
- Logos

ETHOS is your *credibility*
It is the reason people should believe what you're saying. It is built by demonstrating technical expertise, and/or strong levels of integrity and character

PATHOS is making an *emotional connection*
It is the reason people believe that what you're saying will matter to them. It is built by demonstrating attention, active interest, and enthusiasm in your team and collaborators

LOGOS is about *logic* and *reason*
It is strategic thinking, problem solving and analytical skills that make people build logical connections and express them in a clear and compelling way

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Communication

Effective communication is a multifaceted skill

The ability to express thoughts, emotions, and ideas clearly and persuasively can open doors, foster meaningful connections, and influence both personal and professional paths

Communication serves as the cornerstone of all meaningful human interactions and include:

- 🗣️ Verbal
- 🤝 Non-Verbal
- 📝 Written
- 📊 Visual

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Verbal Communication

Verbal communication involves conveying ideas and information through spoken words. As the cornerstone of *human interaction*, it allows individuals to articulate thoughts, emotions, and concepts clearly and efficiently.

This form of communication is vital in daily life, facilitating collaboration and nurturing relationships.

Example of verbal communication: interpersonal; public; group.

Verbal communication is ideal for face-to-face interactions, team meetings, brainstorming sessions, and situations that require immediate feedback and emotional connection.

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Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication refers to all forms of communication that do not involve spoken or written words.
It includes factors like tone, pitch, and body language, all of which play a crucial role in shaping how messages are understood and interpreted.

Example of non-verbal communication: facial expression; body movement and posture; eye contact; gestures; space.

Non-verbal communication plays a key role in expressing emotions, highlighting important points, and impacting how your message is perceived.
It is especially important in contexts such as negotiations, presentations, and public speaking.

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Written Communication

Written communication refers to the transmission of ideas and information through written text. It provides a structured and lasting means of communication, commonly utilized in formal and professional environments.

Example of written communication: email; text messages; memos; social media posts; reports.

Written communication is well-suited for formal reports, documentation, emails, and any context where maintaining a permanent record is crucial.

Visual Communication

Visual communication utilizes images, symbols, and graphics to deliver messages effectively. It plays a crucial role in many different disciplines, and data visualization.

Example of visual communication: infographics; charts and graphs.

Visual communication is highly effective in presentations, sales pitches, data analysis, and any scenario where information must be delivered quickly and leave a lasting impression.

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Enhancing Power

- *Verbal communication* strengthens the message by incorporating tone, emotion, and emphasis through speech variations, intonation, and pacing. It enables real-time interaction and feedback, helping to clarify and reinforce the intended meaning.

- *Non-verba*l cues enrich communication by providing insight into the speaker's emotions, intentions, and attitude. They help clarify ambiguity, highlight key points, and enhance audience engagement.

- *Written communication* strengthens the message by ensuring accuracy, structure, and the ability to express complex ideas effectively. It also provides the opportunity for careful editing and refinement to enhance clarity.

- *Visual communication* amplifies the message by making it more engaging, memorable, and easy to understand. It simplifies complex information, enhances retention, and provides visual context that complements both verbal and written communication.

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Communication process

- Communication process refers to the steps through which the message is transmitted from one person to another in an understandable manner.
- It is dynamic in nature rather than static.
- Refers to all types of communication: verbal, non-verbal, written and visual.
- Modern models of communication process take into account its interactive, multi-layered and non-linear characteristics.

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Models of communication process

Linear model Communication as a one-way process where the sender intentionally transmits a message to the receiver.

Focused on message

Eg. Podcast about licensing.

Interactive model
Communication as a two-way process, in which participants alternate positions, and generate meaning by sending messages and receiving feedback within physical and psychological context.

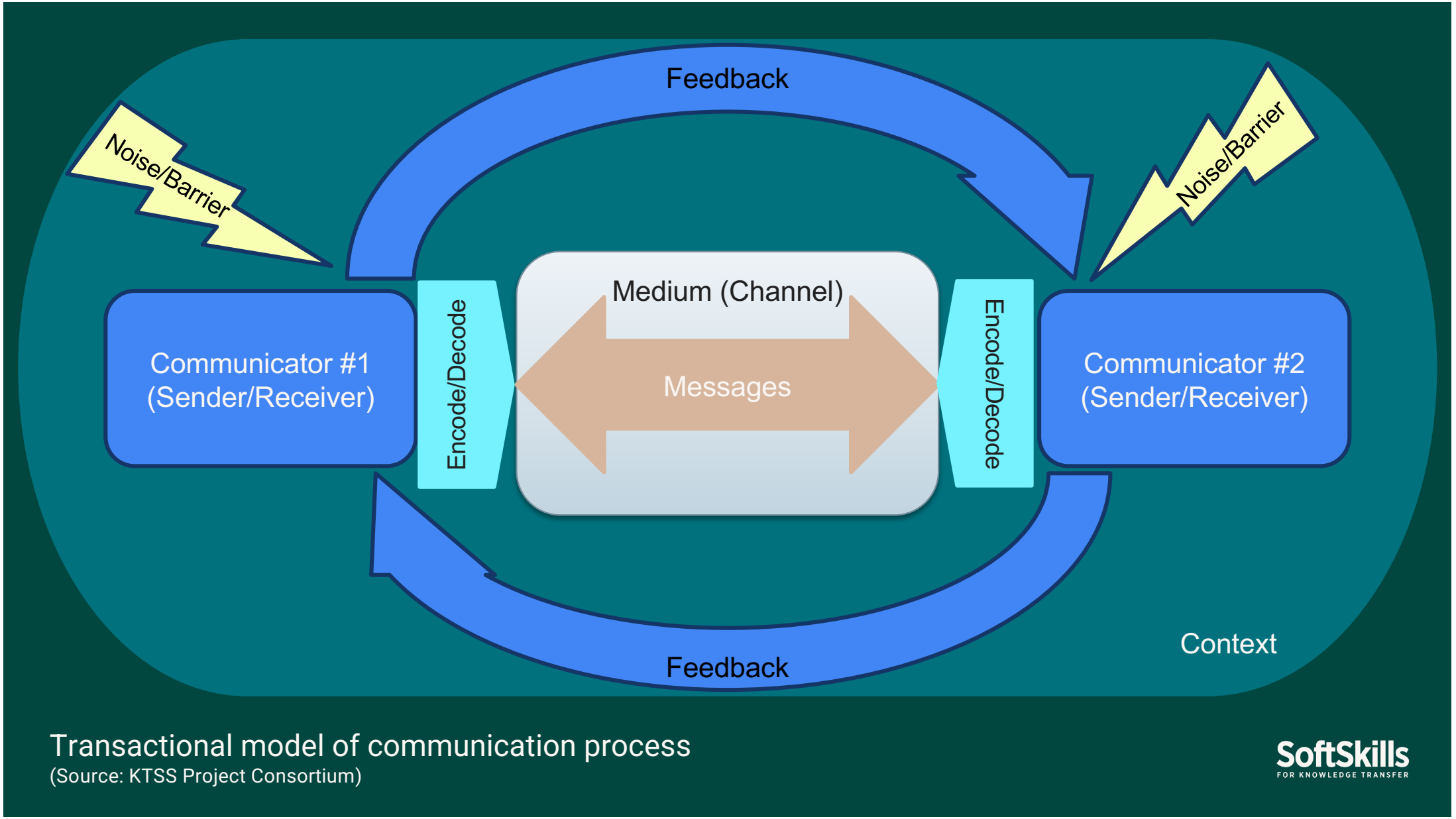
Focused on interaction

Eg. Exchange of e-mails between KT professional and researcher.

Transactional model
Communication as a process where communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts. Participants are senders and receivers simultaneously.

Focus on relationships, intercultural alliances and engaging to create communities.

Eg. face-to-face conversations between KT team members.



Transactional model of communication process
(Source: KTSS Project Consortium)

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Elements of communication process (1)

01

Sender (Communicator #1) - generates the message and conveys it. Eg. KT professional sharing research results with industry partner.

02

Message - the content of communication (idea, information, feeling), which includes both spoken words and non-verbal signals like gestures, facial expressions, a tone of voice. Eg. research findings, greetings.

03

Encoding - converting messages into communication symbols: words, pictures, gestures, symbols, etc. Encoding translates the internal thoughts into language. Eg. translating complex data into understandable presentation.

04

Medium (Channel) - the manner in which the encoded message is transmitted. Eg. e-mail, meeting, call.

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Elements of communication process (2)

01

Decoding - translating the encoded message into an effective language, understood by the receiver. Eg. industry partners interpreting research findings.

02

Receiver (Communicator #2) – person for whom the message was sent. Eg. industry partner participating in meeting with researcher.

03

Feedback - reversal of communication in which the receiver expresses his reaction. Ensures that he received and understood the message, fulfilling purpose of communication. Eg. lawyer's opinion about project agreement.

04

Noise/Barriers - the factors that hinder the smooth flow of communication, causing distortion or interference. Barriers of physical, psychological, linguistic/semantic, cultural nature. Eg. scientific jargon, distance, cultural differences.

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Effective Communication

In order for the communication to be effective, it has to be intentional and planned. Planning the communications gives the message a purpose, makes sure that it is understood correctly and that the information gets turned into action.

There are multiple strategies on how to make your communications more effective. This module focuses on "The Five W's" and the "SMRC model of communication".

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The Five W's

The Five W's are essential in the first steps of planning effective communication. They help to get the communication process on the right track from the beginning and they are dependent on the information that needs to be communicated at the time.

The Five W's are: *Who, When, What, Where* and *Why*.

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The Five W's: Who?

Who are you communicating to? Identify your target audience on a concrete level. Use proper language to deliver your message to different audiences, e.g. researchers and investors.

Communicate widely in order to give the receivers local ownership and a chance to influence the process. Open and timely communication builds trust and creates an athmosphere of involvement.

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The Five W's: When?

Consider carefully the time and place where you communicate your message with relevant people. Do you need to share the message both internally and externally? If yes, inform the internal stakeholders first and external second.

Do you share the information to people 1:1 or in larger meeting? Should you include discussion or is it more of informative session?

Key communications should also be made as soon as possible after significant events or decisions.

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The Five W's: What?

Communicate your message clearly, and think what is the key home message that you want everyone to remember.

When deciding on what to communicate, remember that there might be things that are not certain yet. Part of knowing what to communcate is also knowing what you don't know or what might change. This should be considered as an information that you should communicate as well.

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The Five W's: Where?

Choose the most effective channel to get the message across. Depending on the information and situation, this could be an email, press release or a meeting. Keep in mind that sharing knowledge in coffee rooms, corridors etc. is not the most efficient way, since it can distort the message.

Make sure that you have the time to communicate properly and that people know that they are receiving important information. If possible, provide a space for questions and discussion as well.

The Five W's: Why?

What is the reason you want or need to communicate your message? What are your goals? What do others gain from the information?

Understanding the motives and goals behind the message and communication process helps you to better plan your communications in a way that supports both your message and the way that people take it in.

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SMCR Model of Communication

- SMRC (Source-Message-Channel-Receiver) Model of communication is a traditional communication framework. The model breaks down communication into four components shown below. Each of the components are vital in the communication process.

Source	Message	Channel	Receiver

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SMCR Model

01

Source: Creates and initiates the communication. Responsible for creating understandable message. The effectiveness of the message largely depends on the sender's abilities and characteristics.

02

Message: The information that the sender wants to convey to the receiver. Without message, there is no communication.

03

Channel: The medium through which the message is transmitted from the source to the receiver. The effectiveness of the communication depends on the choice of the channel.

04

Receiver: Individual or a group that receives the message. Receiver's characteristics are as vital as sender's skills in determining how the message is interpreted. Receiver determines whether the communication has been successful or not.

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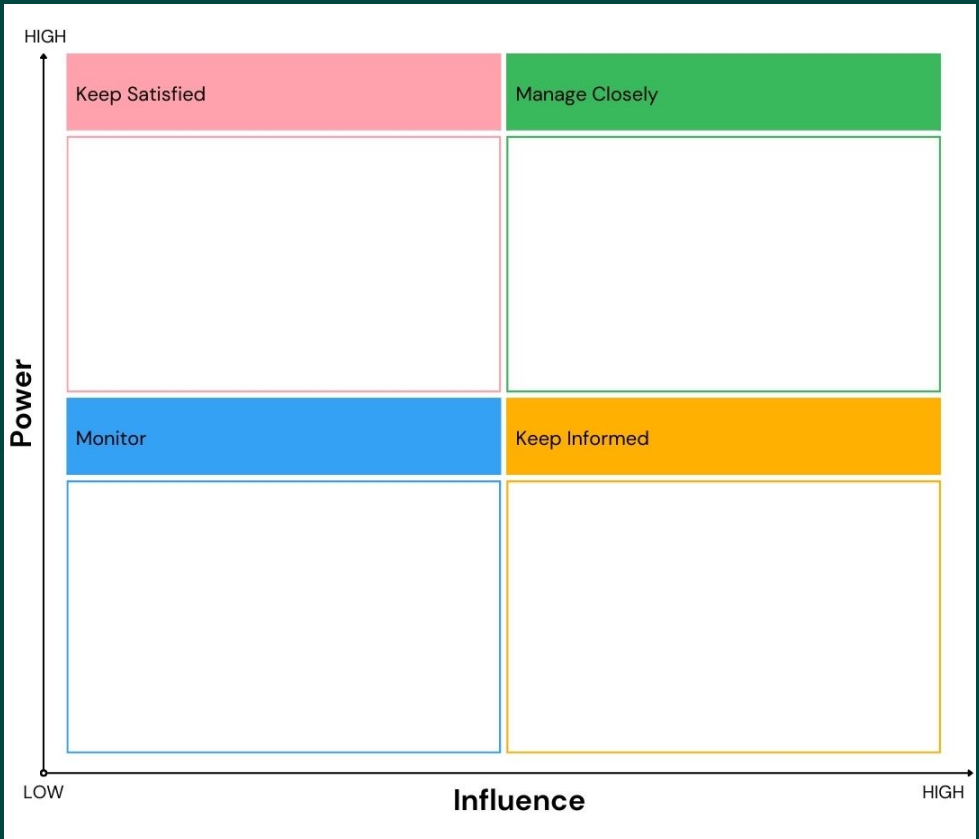
Stakeholder Map



(Source: KTSS Project Consortium)

A **stakeholder map** is a visual representation of individuals or groups who have an interest in, or are affected by, a project, activity, or decision.

It helps identify and categorize stakeholders based on their **influence**, **interest**, and **relationship** to the work.

Mapping stakeholders is the first step toward **strategic, targeted communication**.

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KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER STAKEHOLDERS TABLE

Stakeholder (Backgrounds)	**What they care about?** (Goals)	**How they may misunderstand?**	**Bridging Tactics**

(Source: KTSS Project Consortium)

Researchers: use scientific language, often focused on funding for research and publications

Industry: Potential product development, collaboration terms, longer-term collaboration

Investors: Impact on the market, financial terms, growth potential, building trust

KT team: IP protection and management, legal terms, bridging between stakeholders

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Why to use it?

To understand who matters most and how they prefer to be engaged.

To avoid communication gaps or misalignment.

To prioritize efforts and tailor messaging.

How to use it?

List stakeholders (e.g., researchers, investors, licensing teams).

Assess each one's level of interest and influence.

Plot them on a simple 2x2 matrix (High/Low Interest vs. High/Low Influence).

Plan engagement: Decide what to communicate, when, and how often.

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Effective stakeholder mapping to bridge the gap between research and application

Facilitate “translation” work between disciplines, ensuring key insights are not lost.

Tailor messages for each group (e.g., simplify language for businesses, focus on impact for funders).

Plan timing and tone of communication (e.g., early involvement for researchers, periodic updates for partners).

Stakeholder maps are living tools—update them as projects evolve or new actors emerge.

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Interdisciplinary Communication

Innovation dies in translation — or lack of it. Non-technical stakeholders (investors, users, regulators) are critical.

Some questions to ask yourself:

- What do they already know?
- What do they care about?
- What decisions are they trying to make?

Tip:
Avoid assumptions. A startup investor ≠ a medical doctor ≠ a policymaker.

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Some Tools That Work

Analogies & Metaphors
“Think of it like…” (e.g., AI model = recipe with ingredients and rules)

Narratives
“Let’s follow a user through the experience…”

Visuals
Diagrams, process flows, concept maps

Simple Language
Avoid jargon. Use verbs over nouns

Before vs. After Example:

❌ "This photonic crystal manipulates light via periodic dielectric modulation."
✅ "It’s like a tiny maze of mirrors that redirects light in precise ways."

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Group Exercise: Translation

You are a part of the knowledge transfer team in the Technology Transfer Office of a renowned university. After exchanging a few emails with a researcher, you asked him/her to fill an Invention Disclosure Form (IDF) about a possible opportunity.

Based on the IDF you received from the researcher, prepare an **informal pitch** for a deep tech investor who is interested in this domain.

Your pitch will be 1-3 minutes, aiming to attract further collaboration discussions. Other team will provide feedback to your pitch.

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Role play:
How to Say "No"
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Instructions

Split into group of 2 or 3 people: each group has a Requester (researcher), a Responder (KTO), an optional Observer.

Start with the first scenario. The requester try to get a "yes", while the responder has some reasons to say no.

After each role-play, switch roles and repeat with a different scenario.

Scenarios

Round 1

A researcher approaches the KTO excited about a recent lab finding and requests a patent filing. After evaluation, the KTO concludes that the invention lacks novelty and does not meet the criteria for patentability.

- Researcher insists it's "just like" other things that have been patented.
- TTO must say no to filing, and explain why.

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Scenarios

Round 2

A researcher applies for proof-of-concept (PoC) funding to develop a prototype. The TTO must decline the request because the project doesn't meet evaluation criteria (e.g., no commercial potential, unclear use case).

- Researcher feels frustrated and says, "But this is the future!"
- TTO must say no to funding, and maintain trust.

Round 3 (optional)

A researcher wants to publish a paper on results tied to an ongoing licensing negotiation. The TTO must say no due to confidentiality and potential risk to IP value.

- Researcher argues it's important for their academic career.
- TTO must hold the line on timing and protection.

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Alternative Scenarios

Round 4 (optional)

A researcher sends KTO an urgent request at 6pm, asking to review and edit their grant proposal before submission tomorrow morning — for the third time this month. KTO have other priorities and cannot help tonight.

- Researcher argues it's very important for their academic career and for the university.

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Debriefing

Rejector's Perspective

- How did it feel to say no in a professional context?
- Which part of your response worked best? Why?
- Did you feel you were clear and respectful? Would you change anything?

Requester's Perspective

- How did it feel to hear "no"? Did the delivery soften the impact?
- Did the refusal maintain the relationship or create tension?
- What tone or wording made the refusal more acceptable?

How to Say "No"?

There are several core drivers for finding oneself in a situation when “No” has to be delivered and some examples are set out here.

Driver 1- concrete choices have to be taken and are in the remit of the KTO

Driver 2 - external boundaries do exist which impact on KTO ability to move forward

Driver 3 – realistic and necessary limits need to adhered to

Examples

Limited time ; Limited budget ; Need to Focus ; Need to pick most likely successful projects

- "No we will not file a patent";
- "No you didn't get Proof of Concept Funding"

Dangerous to progress; Need to set boundaries.

- "No we can’t license exclusively to them…";
- "No you can’t publish until…";
- "No you can’t share that it’s confidential”

Need to set lower boundaries; Need to meet a standard.

- "No we can't do all that for free";
- "No we can't accept these licensing terms"

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Rejection

Why Is It So Hard to Say No?

- Fear of disappointing others
- Fear of missing out (FOMO)
- Pressure to be liked or helpful
- Worry about conflict
- Lack of practice setting boundaries

Key Principles for Saying No

- Be clear, not vague
- Be honest, not overly apologetic
- Be firm, not aggressive
- Be respectful and polite
- Offer alternatives if appropriate

An alternative way to initiate rejection

"How am I supposed to do that?"

This isn't a direct "no," but it signals resistance. It shifts the burden back to the other person without closing the door. You stay cooperative while expressing that the request may be unrealistic. Use this sparingly—overreliance can backfire if it becomes predictable.

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Important Note: Cultural Limitations

One Size Doesn’t Fit All

- The communication strategies, models, and examples used in this course are primarily drawn from European cultural norms.
- Concepts like assertiveness, direct feedback, eye contact, or open disagreement may not be appropriate or effective in all cultural settings.

Context Matters

- High-context vs. low-context cultures interpret communication cues differently.
- Power distance, hierarchy, and collectivism can significantly impact on how communication is expressed and received.

How to Learn More?

- You are welcome to take our training module "Socio-cultural skills for Knowledge Transfer".

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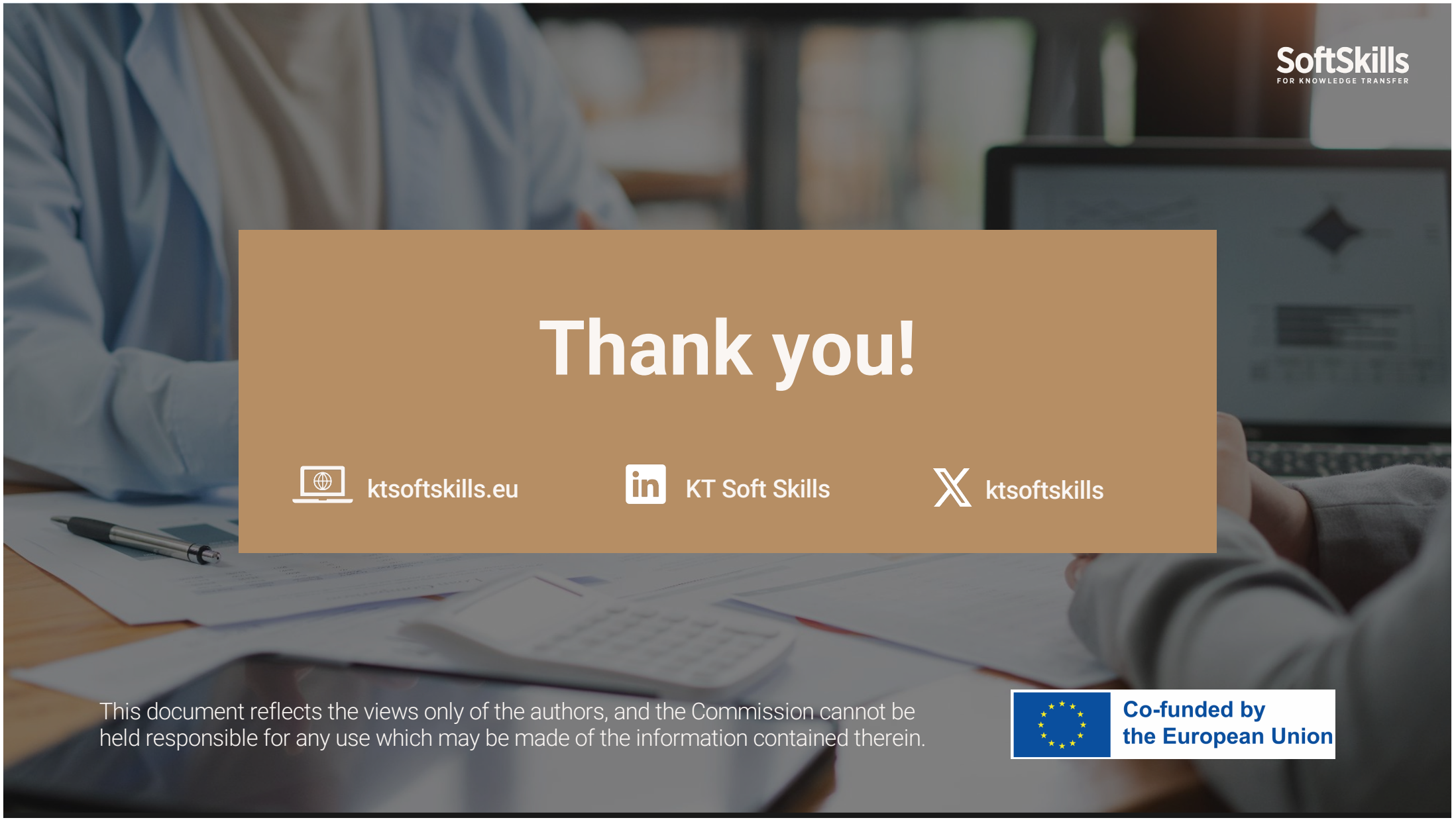

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