

How to Send a Great Stakeholder Update

Formats: Markdown (canonical) | Word (DOCX) | PDF **Updated:** 2026-03-22 **License:** CC BY 4.0 -- Kate Makrigiannis / k8mak.com

A 4-step quick start guide for writing stakeholder updates that get read, get responses, and keep leadership aligned without wasting anyone's time.

When to use this

You need to send a recurring status update to stakeholders who aren't in your daily standups. Could be an email, a Slack message, or a message in Teams. This guide gives you the structure, the ordering, and the habits that make updates actually useful -- not just compliance artifacts.

Process

Step 1: Lead with what matters -- blockers and wins

Assume your stakeholder will skim the first 1-2 bullets and nothing else. Put the most important information there.

Top section: Blockers and Asks

Start with anything that requires stakeholder action. If you need a decision, approval, or escalation -- put it first. Be specific about what you need and by when.

```
**Blockers / Asks**
- Need design review approval for the onboarding flow by Friday to stay on track for Sprint 7 launch
- Waiting on API access from the data team (requested Mar 15, no response)
```

Second section: Wins and Decisions Made

Highlight what shipped, what was decided, and what progress looks like. Stakeholders want to see forward motion. Concrete outputs beat vague progress language.

```
**Wins / Decisions**
- Shipped password reset flow to production (was top support ticket driver)
- Decided to defer dark mode to Q3 -- team aligned on prioritizing care plan export instead
- User testing complete: 8/10 participants completed the new intake form in under 3 minutes
```

Why this order? Most teams lead with wins because it feels good. But stakeholders need to act on blockers -- and they stop reading after the first few lines. Wins buried below blockers get attention. Blockers buried below wins get missed.

Step 2: Add context -- what's coming and where to look

After the top-priority content, add forward-looking context and reference links.

Coming Up Next

Split into two categories so stakeholders can see both the build work and the learning work.

```
**Coming Up Next**
- Dev: Starting clinician dashboard sprint (2 weeks, targeting Apr 4 demo)
- Discovery: Running 5 patient interviews on medication adherence (results by Mar 28)
```

Important Links

Include 2-3 links max. These are for stakeholders who want to dig deeper -- not a link dump.

```
**Links**
- [Sprint board](link) -- current sprint status
- [User testing summary](link) -- onboarding flow results
- [Roadmap](link) -- updated Now/Next/Later view
```

Step 3: Polish the packaging

Small formatting decisions determine whether your update gets read or archived unread.

Subject line: Use a consistent format so stakeholders can find your updates later. Include the team name and date.

```
Subject: Compass Squad Update -- Week of Mar 17
```

Closing: End with one clear ask. Not three asks. Not "let me know if you have questions." One specific thing.

```
Please confirm the design review is on your calendar for Friday at 2pm.
```

Review before sending: Have one teammate read it. They'll catch jargon, missing context, and assumptions you didn't realize you were making. Takes 2 minutes. Prevents reply-all confusion.

Step 4: Distribute and maintain the habit

An update that sits in one inbox doesn't do its job. Make it findable and repeatable.

Archive it: Save each update somewhere the team can reference. A shared doc, a Confluence page, a Slack channel -- doesn't matter where, as long as it's consistent.

Share broadly: Post the update in every channel where stakeholders might look. Email + Slack + your team's status page. The same update, everywhere. Redundancy is a feature, not a bug.

Monitor for reactions: Check if stakeholders responded to your blockers within 24 hours. If they didn't, follow up directly. Silence on a blocker is not the same as acknowledgment.

Schedule it: Pick a day and time. Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons work well -- they avoid Monday chaos and Friday checkout. Block 15 minutes on your calendar. Make it a habit, not a heroic effort.

Worked example

Team: Compass Squad (health-tech product team) **Frequency:** Weekly, Tuesday mornings

Channel: Email to leadership + posted in #compass-squad Slack channel

Subject: Compass Squad Update -- Week of Mar 17

Blockers / Asks

- Need VP sign-off on the revised data retention policy by Thursday -- launch is blocked until legal confirms
- Waiting on staging environment access for the care plan export feature (IT ticket #4521, submitted Mar 10)

Wins / Decisions

- Shipped medication reminder notifications to production -- 2,400 patients opted in during first 48 hours
- Completed care plan PDF export QA -- ready for staging once access is granted
- Decided to kill custom avatar feature (Money Pit in our 2x2) -- freed up 3 story points for Q2

Coming Up Next

- Dev: Care plan export to staging this week, targeting Mar 28 demo to clinic partners
- Discovery: Running 5 clinician interviews on vitals dashboard requirements (synthesis by Mar 24)

Links

- [Sprint 6 board](#)
- [Q2 roadmap -- updated](#)

Can you confirm the data retention policy review is scheduled before Thursday?

Facilitator tips

If you're coaching a team on stakeholder communication:

- **The "skim test" is everything.** Print the update. Cover everything below the second bullet. Can you still tell what matters? If not, restructure.
 - **Blockers first is counterintuitive but critical.** Teams resist leading with problems because it feels negative. Reframe it: leading with blockers shows you're managing risks, not hiding them. Stakeholders trust teams that surface issues early.
 - **One update format, used consistently, beats a perfect format used once.** Don't redesign your update every week. Pick a structure and stick with it. Stakeholders learn where to look.
 - **"Let me know if you have questions" is not a closing.** It's a polite way of saying nothing. End with a specific ask or a specific date. Give the stakeholder something to respond to.
 - **Updates are trust-building artifacts.** A team that sends clear, consistent updates earns autonomy. A team that goes quiet gets micromanaged. The update isn't overhead -- it's the mechanism that buys your team space to work.
 - **Jargon kills trust.** "We completed the API integration sprint" means nothing to most stakeholders. "Patients can now see their lab results in the app" means everything. Translate your work into outcomes.
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How did it go?

After sending your update, check:

- ☐ Blockers and asks appear in the first 1-2 bullets
 - ☐ Every blocker includes what you need and by when
 - ☐ Wins describe outcomes, not activities ("shipped X" not "worked on X")
 - ☐ Coming-up-next includes both dev work and discovery/research
 - ☐ Subject line follows a consistent format with team name and date
 - ☐ The closing has one specific ask, not a vague invitation
 - ☐ A teammate reviewed it before you hit send
 - ☐ The update is archived where the team can find it later
 - ☐ You sent it on the same day/time as last week
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Part of the [k8 Agent Toolkit](https://k8mak.com/resources). Download other formats at k8mak.com/resources.