

GUIDE TO FINE-TUNE YOUR STATUS UPDATES

Keep your
stakeholders aligned
in the right way



Vague updates cause remaining questions and frustrated customers. Especially during tough moments, timely and effective status updates are imperative in maintaining trust and transparency with your customers.



Why status updates are important

1. Reduce misunderstandings
2. Keep everyone aligned
3. Show you care
4. Manage expectations
5. Save time
6. Help build trust

Status updates must be (but not limited to):

- Informative and clear, yet brief
- Frequent, yet not noisy
- Honest, without needlessly badmouthing



Before updating, agree with the customer on:

1. Frequency (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly)
2. Medium (Slack, email, Confluence, Jira, etc)
3. Format (how long, what to include)
4. Whom to include

"Infrequent updates create worried customers."

How often should you report out?

The frequency with which you send project updates depends on the type of project you're running and your agreements with the customer. The most important thing is to ensure that your stakeholders are well-informed on the project's health.

How detailed should you get?

A project status update shouldn't describe every little detail. Let the work do most of the talking, and updates add a little colour to the story. When updating, always indicate whether the project is on track, at risk, or off track, give a quick rundown of what's done and what's next, then link other resources for people who want more details.

STRUCTURE

Project status updates may consist of different sections, as they always depend on the context! But following the best practices, try to include the next parts in your updates:

1. Proper Subject Line (for emails)

That is, the subject line should include **the name of the project + “Status Update/ “Progress Report”+ date.**

e.g.

[KeyStone] Status Update 28.04.2024

Prompt: So, put significant thought towards your subject line — it can make all the difference.

2. Summary (if applicable)

A summary can be omitted in case of short updates, like a daily update. But it might come in handy to point out some total numbers or major concerns, like **hours spent, bugs fixed, deadlines,** etc, and/or major **concerns.**

e.g.

- *Total auto tests passed = 178*
- *FE fixed 7 out of 8 bugs reported last week after UAT. The last one ([link](#)) is due today.*
- *We plan to involve additional BE dev, so no worries, we'll deploy on [deadline].*

3. Highlights



Showcase the team wins, such as **completed milestones** and **tasks finished ahead of schedule**, to motivate your teammates to continue their excellent efforts.

If this is a daily update, you might not have much to point out but don't miss the chance to discuss successes alongside challenges for weekly, monthly, and quarterly updates.

e.g. UAT testing was completed ahead of schedule. Well done, Sam!

4. Team updates

Mention all tasks the team is working on and its statuses. Use **bulleted lists** or **tables** for better visualization.

e.g.

- *Anna fixed error handling in the Permission.*
- *Contact page — Taras is fixing minor bugs ([link](#)).*
- *Popups for opt-in are in progress — the estimated due date is [date].*
- *On Monday, we'll start integration with [third-party system].*
- *The calendar loading issue is fixed.*
- *DevOps deployed a hotfix for statuses in Payments to the Master branch.*



5. Blockers and risks (if any)

Flag any blockers the project has run into. These can include **project risks**, unexpected **budget increases**, or **timeline delays**.

e.g.

- *The issue with the Dashboard stability remains.*
- *Can you please share more users for the [X] service? We are currently blocked from running tests on Demo env.*
- *We've faced multiple endpoint fails on STG env; could you please have a look? [link](#)*

6. Next steps

Include a plan for the next steps and action items. For a daily update, it can be the current day's priorities.

e.g.

- *So, today, our plan is to fix the issues with filters and search. Afterwards, we'll focus on tasks 1, 2, and 3 ([Jira links](#)).*
- *Next week, we are finalizing the Membership access and will start to implement the resume-sharing option.*
- *I am also preparing the invoices covering the previous week's hours and will send them tomorrow.*

7. Additional notes

e.g.

- *Dima is out of the office all next week, so please direct any content questions to Katia.*
- *I'm taking the next week off; Anastasiia will fill in, I'll put her in the picture.*
- *Monday is a national holiday...*

QUESTIONS

Questions to customers

There are several possibilities to put urgent project-related questions to customers. All of them have pros and cons, so when choosing what works best for you, consider the whole context. So, you may address your Q-s to customers:

1. at the end of your update
2. in a 'blocker' sections
3. in the section where the question fits best
4. in a separate email or message.

In many cases, I personally prefer the last one, as it helps ensure my questions are not lost or missed, and the original message can be easily included if there is a need to follow up.

BEST PRACTICES

1. Be specific

Effective updates are always specific. Vagueness produces uncertainty and additional discussions. “We have applied a fix.” is a fuzzy message. What fix, exactly? Did you redeploy or patch? Did it affect anything? What **exactly** did you do? Or “We are monitoring the results.” Great, but what are you seeing? Not, clear. So, make your texts more explicit to prevent needless further correspondence and worried customers.

e.g.

not specific:



- *We're facing a temp issue with a server. No data will be lost, but customers may be affected. No worries, we are on it.*

more specific:



- *[status] Monitoring: Our DevOps have redeployed the service and are monitoring the results as we send partial traffic to it. It looks good so far. Will keep you in the loop if any changes.*

“The devil is in the details”

2. Avoid unnecessary intros

It wouldn't hurt if you skip *"I am writing to let you know..."*, *"A quick update on..."* or something similar when starting your update.

Nobody needs pointless opening phrases or formalities that convey no sense, but adding extra symbols to your text and wasting readers' time.

e.g.

Avoid:

- *I also have a question regarding [X] page: can we use content from link?*

Use:

- *Can we use content from link for [X] page?*

Avoid:

- *I wanted to inform you that the production deployment status is as follows...*

Use:

- *The production deployment status is the following.....*

Avoid:

- *I want to clarify with you once again if we need to add...*

Use

- *Do we need to add/ Do you want us to add ...?*



3. Use **active**, not **passive** wording

Write more actively. Passive voice is one of the best ways to look disinterested and detached. At root, passive voice is about hiding the true meanings, shifting responsibility and creating the distance. So, try to convert your sentences into active voice, and you'll come across as a more confident, responsive and clearer writer.

Avoid:

- *A fix has been implemented, and we continue testing.*

Use:

- *Vasyl from the BE team has implemented a fix, and Denys QA continues testing.*

ProTIP

Removing the vague pronoun “we” and instead stating specifically who took action. This helps customers make a mental connection that real people and real teams are at work.

“Live in the active voice, rather than passive. Think more about what you happen than what is happening to you.”



4. Be polite

The Theory of Politeness states that positive politeness implies using practices of "friendly, positive, or supportive verbal behaviour, which considers people's need to feel valued, including linguistic strategies and non-imposing distancing linguistic behaviours which show respect for others".

The keywords here are **people's needs, feel valued** and **show respect** of others.

This is why phrases like

1. *I have to reschedule the meeting.*
2. *I need your approval of my MR.*
3. *I have to request a change of the deadline.*

can't be considered polite.

They remind egocentric 3-year-old kid speech who would rather say to their mom, "I wanna drink," than "Can you please give me some water?." So, such wording should be avoided in business communication and substituted for much more polite *Can/Could you/we please...*

e.g

1. *Can we pls reschedule the meeting?*
2. *Can you pls approve my MR?*
3. *Can we pls change the deadline?*

Politeness

Some other examples to illustrate the politeness concept.

Avoid:

- *If I missed something in my update, please let me know.*

Use:

- *I hope you'll find all the info that interests you.*

Avoid:

- *If you need to estimate some other tasks, please assign them to me.*

Use:

- *Will you please assign to me any other tasks that need to be estimated?/you want us to estimate?*

Avoid:

- *And we are still waiting for some information from your side.*

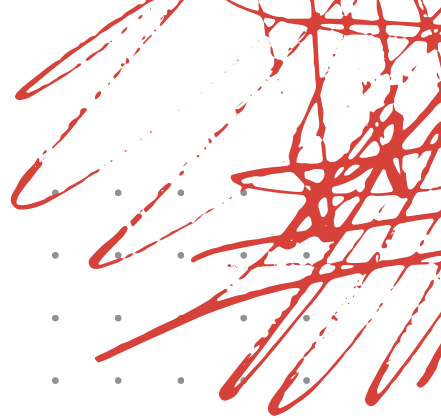
Use:

- *We are blocked by the absence of [info]. Can you please send it today so we can proceed with the [task]?*





NOTES



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THANKS

**In case of question,
you know how to find me :)**