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# Team Contract Exercise

## General Information

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The purpose of this exercise is for team members to accomplish two things:

- (1) Clarify their goal and mission.
- (2) Determine how the team can best work together to achieve their goals.

The end-product of your team contract exercise is to develop a “live” document, called a **team contract**, which the team will live and work by. There should be a clear understanding among all team members that this is a “live” document, meaning that it is subject to change and feedback from others. There should also be a clear understanding that this is indeed a “contract” for which members will hold themselves and other members accountable throughout the duration of teamwork. In short, teams who develop a team contract put themselves on the line. Ideally, the team contract should be a one page in length.

Your team should strive to have an open, frank and comprehensive discussion about the purpose and goals of the team and how to best achieve these in terms of the group process. *Please note that you are not developing your strategic plan or a proposal, or a budget. Just your mission statement and specifying your team process (how you will work together).* Whereas team culture cannot be controlled or created explicitly, developing a team contract (ideally, at the outset of group work) is a mechanism whereby the team can attempt to create the conditions conducive for maximizing team goals.

The following guidelines should be followed when developing the team contract:

1. First, and most important, the contract is a document that is created by all team members. For this reason, it is never appropriate for one person, say the leader of the group, to write something and ask the other members to look it over and sign. This fails to create buy-in.
2. It is sometimes a clumsy procedure for team members to all attempt to write a document together. One method is to use a whiteboard and have the group take turns scribing in front of all members. Another method is to ask a non-team member (e.g., the secretary or assistant) to take notes of all ideas. Another method is for group members to write their own ideas independently on several note cards and then pool those note cards in a public fashion (e.g., post them on a bulletin board). From this list, a discussion can follow.
3. All members of the team should sign the document. This procedure may seem overly formal or silly in some contexts, but it can set important norms and instill commitment.
4. A time should be scheduled on a regular basis to revisit the team contract. For newer teams, meetings should be more frequent than in more established groups.

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5. The team contract should be posted in a prominent place, preferably where the team meetings take place or in a central area as a reminder of group members' commitment to team responsibilities.
  6. At a minimum, the team contract should contain (1) a clear mission statement with regard to the team's goals; (2) specification for the conditions

that need to be in place so that the team can achieve its mission and goals; (3) discussion of leadership and team management; (4) accountability factors (what will hold the team accountable?); (5) procedures for re-visiting and revising the team contract; and (6) policies for dealing with violations of the contract.

Attached is a sample contract.

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## A Team Contract

Our goals are to improve the coordination of work between Technical Sales and Operations, raise customer satisfaction and reduce delivery time. To achieve these we agree to:

1. We will be on time to scheduled group meetings.
2. Each member is expected to attend all group meetings. If unable to attend, the team member must notify the group of the intended absence (preferably at the prior group meeting) and arrange for another member to take over his/her responsibilities.
3. We will come to each meeting with assignments completed. Maximum utilization of time is key.
4. Everyone will actively participate in each meeting.
5. We will have biweekly, two-hour meetings.
6. Team roles will consist of a team leader, a scribe, and an observer. These roles will be rotated among the group members.
7. We will encourage open discussion and be willing to try new ideas.
8. Last, but not least, we will learn from each other.

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_