

The Team Charter/Contract

The Purpose of a Team Charter

The team charter is a document describing a team's goals, norms, rewards and sanctions. It is used to define group expectations and forces people to be explicit about their assumptions. It is created before the team starts to work on projects together and offers a framework for the discussion of disagreements within the team.

How to Create a Team Charter

- Each team member writes down at least suggestions for each component
- Suggested points are shared
- Through discussion, the team decides which points to adopt
 - Disagreements are resolved through discussion
 - Aim for consensus, not majority rule
 - Ensure all team members are heard
- The accepted points are written as a charter
 - Each section must contain the minimum number of points listed
 - More points may be incorporated, but don't make too many rules!
- The charter is signed by all team members
- If some part of the charter isn't working, it can be changed later by mutual agreement between team members

Components of a Team Charter

- Goals: What your team hopes to achieve (select 1)
- Norms: Group belief about how members should behave in a given context
 - Meeting (select 2)
 - Working (select 2)
 - Coordination (select 2)
 - Communication (select 2)
 - Consideration (select 2)
 - Continuous Improvement (select 2)
- Rewards: How the team will celebrate achieving goals (select 1)
- Sanctions: How the team will address failure to abide by norms (select 1)

Some Points to Consider and Example Answers

Goals

- Learning objectives: “To ensure all team members understand course material”
- Interpersonal relationship objectives: “To foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and learning”
- Functional objectives: “To have efficient team meetings”

Meeting Norms

- When will the team meet?
- Are meetings mandatory?
- Is lateness acceptable?

Working Norms

- How will decisions be made?
- How will team members give and receive criticism?
- How independently should we work?

Coordination Norms

- Who will lead the team meetings?
- Who will allocate assignments?
- Who is responsible for keeping the meetings on track?

Communication Norms

- How will team members communicate outside of meetings?
- How quickly should a team member respond to a communication?
- Are all team communications public?
- How should a team member communicate an illness?

Consideration Norms

- Are side conversations appropriate?
- How will we handle disagreement?

Continuous Improvement Norms

- How will we track the team's progress?
- How will we evaluate the work of others?
- Do certain outcomes trigger a discussion?

Rewards

- How will we mark achievements?

Sanctions

- How will we respond to a team member failing to meet obligations?
- How will we respond to a team member violating group norms?