

# Using team charter to improve performance

[Business](#), [Management](#)



A team charter is a document that is written by a team. It defines the purpose of the team, the way the team will work and the outcomes expected by the team (Why Team Charters Matter, 2010). It serves as direction guidelines that the team members, team leader and stakeholders establish at the beginning of the project. It's created to understand the abilities of the contributing members and how the team will operate within the boundaries established. Every individual has a style in which they learn and how they interact as in a team. These individual characteristics are intrinsic to onespersonalityand therefore they are hard to manipulate.

However the strength and weaknesses of every individual in a team can be guided and administered using a team charter (Katzenback, J. R. & Smith, D. K. , 1993). Differences within a team can be used as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. The team charter should be used to try to improve the team's performance by assigning different tasks to different individuals based on their abilities and skills, motivated every team member, applying the teams objectives, ground rules and by avoiding potential barriers that can affect the achievement ofgoals(Dumaine, B.

, 1994). The charter identifies a team sponsor or a person outside the group that can provide direction and support for the group. Many teams fail since they do not have a person they can go to when they get stuck or encounter obstacles. By using the team charter, sponsors can communicate their support and interest for the group. The charter also provides the assurance that someone is watching their back and hence increases confidence in the team (Bales, R. F. , 1950).

Most alignments in groups concern belief, expectations, purpose and attitude as well as priorities and practices. Coming to agreement on such issues may take a lot of time and resources. In order to become a high performance team, an agreement must be achieved. The team charter should be used to build such an alignment. The teams should be allowed to deal with the core aspects of the team, including goals, purpose and measure of success (Cox, P. L. , College, C. , & Bobrowski, P. E. , 2000).

The conversations surrounding roles and responsibilities, critical success factors, risks, working together and the their enumeration in the team charter helps the members of the team to understand each other, build a unique team identity, and make a team that is aligned in depth and breath. This would mean that the team would be in a position to define things similarly, talk about the roles they play in the team, name the same goals, have the same priorities, share the same values, and more importantly agree on how things will be done (Dumaine, B. , 1994).

A charter outlines roles and interactions, therefore members can concentrate on their tasks without pausing to discuss issues already in the charter. The charter therefore is used to address roles and responsibilities if confronted with a dynamic environment. Teams fail to reach performance potential due to process loses associated with different perspectives concerning appropriate actions and poor communication (Steiner, 1972). In this regard, the team charter should provide the team with a template that will guide interaction and minimize misunderstanding and confusion.

The team charter is used to provide agreement and clarity. They provide more than just overall direction to the team. The charter provides a chance

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for the team to build agreements on how they make decisions, how often they meet and other logistic issue (Using a Team Charter, 2010). They help to structure and ensure an effective planning process. Team charters helps to make sure that teams plan successfully before moving forward. The amount of time spent on planning is repaid during the lifetime of the team both in time saved, frustrations avoided and conflicts avoided.

The roles of each member in the team are clearly defined within the charter. It identifies the team leader the expectations of the team members and the expertise every member should provide. It also defines the boundaries and scope. Often teams do not know what's inside their control and what is expected of them. A chartering process helps the teams to understand what their boundaries are, what their limitations are and what part of the problem they are responsible for (Katzenback, J. R. & Smith, D. K. , 1993). The team charter name and logo can be used by the team as a symbol of unity.

It gives the team a personality, puts the members in the right frame of mind and reinforces the members' feelings. It's a symbol that the team can fall back to and remind the members what they are all about. It gives the members the experience of being a team and a symbol they can be proud of. The charter is used to ensure that people show up in meeting set by the group. It's a resource for resolving group problems (Steiner, 1972). It sets boundaries, outlines the expectation of members of the group and gives the team a base to work from.

It provides goals upfront so that every member knows what is expected of them. It provides support and a structural mechanism for aiding in team performance. In most cases, teams take time to establish behavioral norms

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needed for effective performance. In most cases many group norms emerge from individual group members who come into the group with expectations from other workgroups. The charter therefore is used by the team instructors as some sought of a vehicle to “ jumpstart” the process and send signals about some central key values required for effective performance (Cox, P.

L. , College, C. , & Bobrowski, P. E. , 2000). It helps to increase attendance and decrease lateness at group meetings. It can also be used to increase communication between group members through participation at group meetings. The charter is used to decrease social loafing and helps in managing conflict effectively between the members when it arises (Gersick, C. J. G. , 1988). It’s used to identify strengths and weaknesses between members and hence increase the quality of group assignments.

A charter is used to make sure that everyone understands the difference between working as a team and competition (working individually against each other) and that collaboration is the name of the game. It also introduces the importance of operating in a learning culture (Using a Team Charter, 2010). Gersick, C. J. G. (1988). Time and transition in work teams: Toward a new model of group development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 31, 1, 9-41. Dumaine, B. (1994). The trouble with teams. *Fortune*, Sept. 5, 86-92. Steiner, I. D. (1972).

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