Team Charters

* Make an effective, cohesive team
* Spell out the “North Star” for your team—not simply the goals of management, of one stakeholder, or of the loudest team member
* Create energy, focus, and buy-in from members joining your team
* Help recharge a team that has been in existence from a long time, but needs to regroup and refocus
* Include every team member’s input—achieving buy-in and holding everyone accountable
* Empower individuals to contribute in a focused way
* Outline what makes your team different yet cohesive among its individual members yet holding all members accountable to the same principles
* Spell out team’s mission, scope of operation, objectives, consequences, and if applicable, time frame
* Must be created and supported by every member of the team—therefore, should be redrawn, not passed along, as members come and go.
* Exist before, between, after, and lasts throughout individual projects

A team charter is a **written document created to provide the true “North Star” for a team or project.**

What is the benefit of having a team charter?

* Provides a measurable vision, mission, goal that everyone on the team supports
* Defines operations, including ways to adapt to change, address roadblocks, and even define actions like attendance
* Provides clarity and reduces confusion in cases where conflicting asks or projects arise

Although there may be a sense that the team “can’t afford” two or three days to workshop a team charter, and some less-than-enthusiastic members may pooh-pooh the need for a charter, nothing is further from the truth.

Not having a charter can easily (and quickly) result in chaos and missteps because there is no clarity around roles, operations, or even the team’s direction.

A big risk to not having a charter is inertia. In other words, the loudest or most intimidating team member may end up pushing forward his or her agenda. And this isn’t what the entire team signed up for.

How to create an Effective Team Charter:

1. Every person on a team should be involved, or it will end up struggling or failing. Forge the bonds and set the foundation for success
2. Decide leaders and determine how/who resolves conflict. Provide a road for escalation paths.
3. Talk as long as it takes for everyone to contribute and sign the document.
4. The team should decide if the charter will cover all work for a quarter, a year, or ongoing.