

Team Charter Checklist

The first assignment you and your team are required to prepare together is the Team Charter. This checklist contains a description of what you will be required to submit for this assignment. The submittal mode for the charter is via a new page for your team on the course wiki at <http://buildingconstruction.editme.com>.

For this assignment, you'll undertake three steps. First, you'll set up a new page for your team content on the wiki. Then, you'll create and upload the contents of your team charter. Finally, throughout the process of doing this, you'll reflect upon and document the process your team undertook to accomplish this task, and you'll upload this information to the wiki site as well.

Setting up your team's page

The first thing to do is to set up a new page for your team on the wiki. If you click on the *Teams* link in the menu bar, you'll see a page listing the names of all the teams in the class. Establish a link to a new page from your team's name on this page as shown in the demo. This new page will be the home page for your team, and should contain organized links to content developed by your team for the rest of the semester. For now, it should contain (at a minimum) the name of your team and a list of its members and a link to the Team Charter.

Creating a Team Charter

The main part of your assignment is to develop content for the Team Charter as described in lab. The purpose of the team charter is to create a document describing how your team intends to work together to deliver projects for this class. The charter will provide ground rules for handling potential problems, and by posting it on the wiki along with your names, you agree to be governed by the content and rules in the charter throughout the semester. The team charter itself has three main parts: the Team Purpose, your Operating Agreement, and your Capabilities. The next sections describe these in more detail.

Team Purpose

The first part of your charter describes the reason your team has for existing. It captures both the big picture and the practical purpose your team has for working together, and it clearly defines those things you believe you will need to do to be successful. It has three basic parts: a Vision, a Mission, and Objectives. You can also elect to include other information here as you deem appropriate, but at a minimum, you must have these three sections, defined in more detail in the following subsections.

Vision

The vision for your team describes your long term, big picture for how the world will be a better place if your team does what it intends to do. In your case, your team is tasked with completing a series of assignments for a required class at Virginia Tech. So how does this ultimately fit into the big picture? That's up for you all to describe. You may want to begin this brief statement with the words, "We envision a world where..." or "We envision a construction industry where..." and then fill in the blank to describe how you imagine things could be in an ideal world. Or, you could choose a smaller scope for your vision, e.g., "We envision the successful

completion of degrees from Virginia Tech by members of our team, followed by high-paying jobs in the construction industry.” Or maybe it’s even smaller, dealing just with what you see as the end goal of successfully completing this class.

Mission

The mission of your team describes specifically how the work done by your team will help to achieve the vision you describe in the first section. So, if your vision is of a construction industry where individuals work together seamlessly in teams to create high performance buildings that meet or exceed customer goals, your mission for THIS team might be to learn the skills necessary to work effectively together, and to try different approaches to resolving the inevitable conflicts people have as they perform together in teams. Your mission is also likely to include passing this class (or acing it) to enable your team members to move forward in their pursuit of their degrees.

Objectives

Objectives then take your mission to an even more specific level. What specifically will the team have to do to achieve its mission? For this part, consider the external constraints imposed on you in the class, including the rules of no late submittals, the criteria explained in the syllabus about how you’ll be graded, and your own individual goals for what you want to get out of the class. Express this part as a list of discrete statements that describe how you intend to achieve the team’s mission and that follow on from the statement, “Our objectives are...”. An example might be “...to submit all assignments on time at the highest level of quality”. The more measurable and objective your objectives are (and that’s why they’re called objectives, by the way), the better. In the previous example, “on time” is pretty well defined given the constraints established in the syllabus – you have to have a time stamp before 5 pm Eastern on the specified due date. But “highest level of quality” is a lot more fuzzy and you might want to elaborate a bit more on this one. Review the rubrics for evaluating team submittals in the syllabus for some ideas on how to make this more objective and specific.

Operating Agreement

The second part of the charter is possibly the most important if your team runs into problems along the way. Your operating agreement is the working rules you all agree to from the very beginning that will govern how you make decisions, handle problems, and simply get things done on a day to day basis. It captures the values you share as individuals about how you believe you should approach a task, and what level of excellence you’ll be satisfied with in your deliverables. It also acknowledges the externally imposed rules of the working environment (e.g., no late submittals accepted; plagiarism will not be tolerated; etc.) that will govern the success or failure of your deliverables.

At a minimum, your Operating Agreement should address the following items. You can also include other items or restructure these to suit your team’s way of working together. Just be sure we can figure out what’s what when we grade your assignment. See the examples posted on Blackboard and passed out in class for different approaches to organizing this section.

Norms-Behaviors-Consequences

The first thing you must have in your Operating Agreement is a set of norms, behaviors associated with those norms, and consequences associated with the behaviors. A norm is a

statement of a shared value you have as a team. Examples were passed out in class and are posted on Blackboard as well. Norms state what you believe is important about working together. For instance, you may all agree that it's important for people to do the work they say they're going to do in order to achieve your objectives as a team. Or, you may believe that showing up for scheduled meetings and notifying the team if you can't make it is critical to getting work done. Each of these norms implies behaviors that are acceptable and unacceptable on the part of team members, e.g., not completing work you agreed to do, or not showing up for meetings. And each of those behaviors deserves to be addressed by the team with some sort of predetermined consequence.

The goal of this part of the Operating Agreement is to set up these norms and define ahead of time what you all DO and DON'T agree is acceptable, along with consequences of those behaviors. The most effective way to ensure that you cover all your bases is to begin with a brainstorm of norms based on your personal experiences. Think about all the teams you've worked with in the past, and identify things that kept you from being the best you could be, or just flat out annoyed you. These are behaviors you likely will want to address in your norms. Then create a table to ensure that you define unacceptable behaviors and consequences for each norm, like this:

Norm	Unacceptable Behaviors	Consequence
Show up for all scheduled meetings on time, prepared to work.	Being chronically late to the meeting	1 st time – verbal warning 2 nd time – written warning cc'd to professor 3 rd time – name doesn't go on submittal
	Not showing up at all, and not notifying anyone ahead of time	1 st time – written warning cc'd to professor 2 nd time – name doesn't go on submittal 3 rd time – fired from team
	Showing up unprepared	1 st time – verbal warning and you're required to submit your work to everyone via email before next meeting 2 nd time – written warning cc'd to professor 3 rd time – name doesn't go on submittal

You may also want to pre-define exemplary behaviors for which the team will reward members. For instance, it may be expected that everyone does what they say they will do to get a task done. But filling in for someone else who doesn't do their work is going above and beyond the call of duty, and you may want to reward people who do this. You can use the same table approach to define these behaviors and consequences as well. Remember that you have the ability to affect each others' grades in your peer evaluations – rating someone as “no contribution” is the same as giving them a zero for the assignment, and rating someone as “exceeds expectations” actually gets them extra credit above the team grade.

Decision Rules

The second essential part of your operating agreement is a set of decision rules. These rules can be quite simple or very complex, but they should explicitly describe on paper how you will resolve disputes and make decisions on your projects. Most of the time, you probably won't rely on explicit decision rules, but they can come in very handy when your team is having a hard time agreeing on how to move forward.

For this section, you may want to consider thinking about the kinds of decisions your team is likely to have to make. Some of the most important ones will be:

- How to divide up the work (will everyone have to agree unanimously on what they've been assigned to do, or can work be foisted on people who don't show up to meetings? What are the implications of these approaches for your objectives? What happens if someone doesn't do their work and it has to be assigned to other people?)
- How to make decisions on technical approaches to the problem (are there specialists on your team whose judgment should be weighed more heavily than others? Should other team members be allowed to raise questions or debate their inputs? Or are these decisions subject to open discussion and majority vote?)
- How to decide what's "good enough" to submit (will someone on the team be designated the quality control officer and have final authority on when the product is finished? Or will this responsibility be shared?)

There are undoubtedly other types of decisions as well, and you should carefully think through the kinds of problems or disputes you've experienced on other types of teams to try to identify key decisions where things can go wrong. Then you can explicitly address these up front and avoid problems on your own team.

While the rules, norms, and consequences described in your operating agreement are not carved in stone, they should be defined in such a way that you're willing to personally sign your name that you agree to be governed by them. If you don't agree with them, it's your obligation to work with the team to adjust them until you find them acceptable. This process is also a good place to try out different types of decision rules (e.g., majority rules, unanimous agreement required, etc.) so that you can see how they work for your team. As you proceed throughout the semester, realize that you probably won't even need to refer to these very often unless your team experiences problems. But if you DO experience problems, these rules will be the lifeline you can use to deal with them in a fair and equitable fashion.

Capabilities

The third component of your Team Charter is a description of your team's capabilities. These should be divided into two main categories: Individual capabilities of your team members, and Collective capabilities of the team. These two parts are described further in the following subsections.

Individual Capabilities

In the individual capabilities section of your charter, you should have a place for each team member to describe themselves and the skills, abilities, and experiences they bring to the table to

meet your team's objectives. At a minimum, each team member should provide the following information to be posted in this section:

- Name – be sure to include your full name and any titles or honors you bear.
- Photo – include a current photo of yourself
- Biosketch – include a short paragraph that describes your relevant capabilities and experiences with respect to this project team. Limit your description to those attributes you believe are directly relevant to the work you will be doing here.
- CV or Resume – include a link (either to an attached document or another page) to your official curriculum vita or resume that provides a more comprehensive description of your experience.
- Individual SWOT Analysis – include a link to a personal SWOT analysis (see the template provided on Blackboard) where you reflect on your personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats with regard to class and the team projects associated with it. You can also include a statement of personal goals for this class in this section if you choose.

Collective Capabilities

The collective capabilities section of your team should be a result of a discussion you all have together after you've completed your individual capabilities sections, particularly the SWOT analysis. In this section, you should include, at a minimum:

- Statement of Team Capabilities – Include a short paragraph summarizing the assets your team brings to bear on the problems you will be solving this semester. Consider this paragraph to be your chance to sell your team to a prospective buyer of your services. Highlight all the reasons your team should be hired to do the work you will be doing.
- Collective SWOT Analysis – based on the individual SWOT analyses of your team members, develop a collective assessment of how you as a team rate in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. If you have key weaknesses that will threaten your ability to perform well on this project, provide your team's goals and/or approach for addressing those weaknesses (Note: in real life, this is often done by bringing in subcontractors with the needed skills and abilities).

Be sure to spell- and grammar-check your work and review for consistency and format. All your sources should be properly cited and referenced using ASCE reference guidelines. Plagiarism will be noted in this assignment and documented as per the syllabus.