

# Guide to Completing the University of Phoenix Learning Team Charter

University of Phoenix Learning Teams are required to “charter” their teams at the beginning of each course.\* During their first learning team meeting, members should use the Learning Team Charter form to guide them through the process. At the conclusion of the meeting, members should sign the form and make copies for each team member and the instructor. The form is then submitted to the instructor at the second course workshop. This is a guide to completing the form.

*(\*Note: Learning teams sometimes remain intact as a student cohort moves from one course to the next. Over time, team members naturally tend to take the chartering exercise for granted. An important aspect of the team process to keep in mind is that even when team members remain together, the instructor and team project are usually different. Additionally, team members grow and develop over time. These changes affect the context in which the team operates and suggest that it is literally not the “same” team.)*

*The discipline involved in “renewing” a work team is an essential management skill. The Faculty of the University encourages members of learning teams to approach each course with this in mind. Although chartering your team may require less time in succeeding courses than it did the first time, it is important to use chartering as an opportunity to reflect on changes in the task, the instructor, and the relative skills of team members. In that way team members will maximize the learning and skill development that this process can bring.)*

## **COURSE AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

---

The top sections of the Charter are largely self-explanatory. Students identify their course and instructor, and share contact information. The upper-right hand portion provides space for team members to sign that they collaborated in the completion of the Charter and agree with its contents. This helps to create a sense of shared commitment among team members and can assist later in task accomplishment as well as conflict avoidance and resolution.

## **TEAM MEMBER SKILL INVENTORY**

---

This is meant to be the point in the process when team members can identify for the others what they think they bring to the team in terms of the task and maintenance roles they can fulfill. It is also a place where they can identify if there are skills or knowledge areas they would like to work on during the team process and to solicit the help of others. For example, team members may tend to volunteer in areas of relative strength. In the short-term, this may save time in the accomplishment of group tasks. Over the longer-term, however, it may limit the learning and skill development of that member. This part of the process encourages reflection about the individual learning the team may help to facilitate.

## **LEARNING TEAM GOALS**

---

In this section, the team lists its goals for the course. These include but are not limited to objectives relating to task completion, task quality, or the development of specific team “process” skills (e.g., holding effective meetings or project planning). This section provides an opportunity for team members to practice setting specific and measurable goals—a skill that is central to the management process. A subsection calls for members to identify barriers that may hinder goal attainment. This encourages teams to develop contingency plans and take an active approach to problem identification and problem solving.

## **GROUND RULES**

---

By identifying and agreeing upon ground rules at the beginning of the course, teams minimize the risk of conflict and facilitate task completion. Ground rules may pertain to reaching agreement about meeting times, meeting protocol, team roles (e.g., agenda building, meeting facilitation, record-keeping, etc.), notifications, assignment responsibilities, and other task and maintenance issues. Members are also encouraged to discuss the best ways to contact one another and limits on contact.

## **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

---

This is an essential element of a good team charter. Conflict cannot—and probably should not—be completely avoided, but it can and should be managed. By identifying the likely kinds of issues that might bring team members into conflict and agreeing beforehand how to deal constructively with those conflicts, team members will help to ensure the optimum functioning of the team. One common conflict, for example, is the perception that one or more team members are not doing a fair share of the work. This can be the result of unclear or conflicting expectations, or of an intentional or unavoidable failure to follow through on assignments or attendance. Either way, by agreeing on the “rules of engagement” before conflicts even arise, teams can manage it more ably if it should arise. This valuable skill is one that will carry over into each team member’s work and personal life.