

Task Guide - Creating Company Norms

Responsible: Chief Officers and Leadership team

Project Description:

Norms are the unwritten rules for how we act and what we do. They are the rules that govern how we interact with each other, how we conduct business, how we make decisions, how we communicate. Norms are part of the culture of a company. Identifying a set of norms is an effective way to democratize a group. Writing norms helps create groups that are able to have honest discussions that enable everyone to participate and be heard. Any group that meets regularly or that is trying to “do business” needs to identify its existing norms or develop new norms. In companies that would include leadership teams, departments and special project groups. It’s ideal to set norms at the beginning of a group’s work together. If you don’t set norms at the beginning, when the behaviors become ineffective you have a harder time pulling behavior back to where it should be, because every group has unspoken norms for behavior, groups need to work at being explicit about what they expect from each other. “Get those assumptions out on the table.”

Preparation:

Before the meeting, print the six **Norm Sheets**. In addition, print enough copies of **Establishing Team Norms** for all members of the team that will be establishing the company norms. The norms will be : Time, Decision making , Listening, Participation, Confidentiality, Expectations.

Prior to the meeting, pass out the Establishing Team Norms paper and ask each leader to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Point out the sample norms and ask them to write one or two ideas for each category. They will bring this completed sheet to the norm meeting and this will save a lot of time.

Directions: Follow Each Step (Expected Time: 1 class period)

1. Got to a meeting space where the leadership team can talk.
2. Indicate to the team that effective teams generally have a set of norms that governs individual behavior, facilitates the work of the team, and enables the team to accomplish its task.
3. Recommend to the team that it establish a set of norms: (1) To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting; (2) To increase productivity and effectiveness; and (3) To facilitate the achievement of its goals.
4. Starting with TIME, invite each leader to share their ideas with the group. Ask them to refrain from discussion while doing so.
5. When everyone has shared, allow time for group members to discuss the advantages and disadvantages to each suggestion.
6. After discussion, its time to make a final descision, this is done by someone “making a motion” to discuss a norm suggestion. This is followed by some agreeing and “seconding” the motion. This motion is now on the table for discussion. When discussion is done. A new motion is made with any revisions to accept a norm. This requires a “second” Then the leader calls for a vote “all in favor say “I” all opposed Say “nay” If the vote is a majority it passes.
7. When the team agrees that it will abide by this norm, the facilitator writes the norm on the **Norm Sheet**. Each member should record the norms on their handout.
8. Repeat this process for all norm categories Time: 30-35 minutes.
9. Following the completion of the norms, the cheif officers will transcribe the accepted norms onto a sheet of paper and make copies to distribute to all team members at the next leadership meeting.
10. The facilitator should review the meeting norms at the beginning of each meeting to ensure that participants are regularly reminded about the agreements they have made to each other.

ESTABLISHING TEAM NORMS

WHEN ESTABLISHING NORMS, CONSIDER:	PROPOSED NORMS
TIME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When should we meet as leaders? • What will be the start time of all meetings? • What will be the end time of all meetings? 	
LISTENING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we encourage listening? • How will we discourage interrupting? 	
CONFIDENTIALITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the meetings be open? • Will what we say in the meeting be held in confidence? • What can be said after the meeting? 	
DECISION MAKING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we make decisions? • What will be the votes need to pass a decision? • Can the Chief officer override a vote? • How will we deal with conflicts? 	
PARTICIPATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we insure everyone's participation? • Will we have an attendance policy? • Will associate be used to cover for missing leaders? 	
Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What behavior should be expected from leaders? • Are there any requirements for participation? • What is the phone policy for these meetings? • Should an agenda be posted the day before a meeting? 	

SAMPLE NORMS

- Meet only when there is a meaningful agenda.
- Start and end on time.
- Allow everyone to contribute an agenda item.
- Post the agenda before the meeting.
- Avoid interrupting others when they are speaking.
- Have healthy refreshments.
- Have a different facilitator and recorder for each meeting.
- Differentiate between brainstorming and discussion.
- Address only company related issues.
- Express disagreement with ideas, not individuals.
- Maintain confidentiality about disagreements expressed during the meeting.
- Reach decisions by consensus.
- Listen respectfully to all ideas.
- Conduct group business in front of the group.
- Conduct personal business outside of the meeting.
- Silence all cell phones during meetings.
- Avoid checking or sending text messages or e-mail messages during meetings.
- Avoid personal grooming (brushing hair, applying makeup, cleaning fingernails) during meetings

Time

- When do we meet? • Will we set a beginning and ending time?
 - Will we start and end on time?

Listening

- How will we encourage listening?
- How will we discourage interrupting?

Confidentiality

- Will the meetings be open?
- Will what we say in the meeting be held in confidence?
 - What can be said after the meeting?

Decision Making

- How will we make decisions? • Are we an advisory or a decision-making body?
- Will we reach decisions by consensus? • How will we deal with conflicts?

Participation

- How will we encourage everyone's participation?
 - Will we have an attendance policy?

Expectations

- What do we expect from members?
- Are there requirements for participation?