DEVELOPING TEAM NORMS
Team-Building Activity

Purpose: This activity enables a team to develop a set of operating norms or a "social contract" designed to set clear behavioral expectations and commitments designed to help the team work more effectively together. This activity can be used when there is conflict work styles on the same team or between different teams. You can also repeat this activity as new members of the team come and go. Some high-performing teams make a point to review their team norms on an annual basis.

Preparation: Before the meeting, print the following list of five behavioral norm categories on individual sheets of flip chart paper and post on the meeting room wall.

Behavioral Norm Categories:

1. **Communication** - effective methods for effective communication
2. **Interpersonal** - how we want to "work" together
3. **Decision Making** - how we will go about making decisions
4. **Accountability** - how we will maintain accountability
5. **Operating Rhythm** - how we will "work" together between different departments to ensure the flow of operations is not interrupted and is controlled as intended

DIRECTIONS

1. 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.

2. Point out the sample norms that are posted in the room.

3. Place a pad of sticky notes on the table and give every person the same kind of writing tool. Ensure that all sticky notes are the same color.

4. Ask every person to reflect on each behavioral norm category and record specific behaviors they consider *ideal* and would improve the team's overall ability to work more effectively, efficiently, and collaboratively. Ask them to write one idea on each sticky note. *Time: 10 minutes*

5. Invite the team members to place their ideas on the charts at the front of the room. Ask them to refrain from discussion while doing so.

6. Read each norm that has been suggested. Allow time for group members to discuss each idea. As each recommended norm is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Sticky notes with similar ideas should be grouped together. *Time: 30-45 minutes*

7. When all of the sticky notes have been organized, assign two individuals to work together to write the behavioral commitment for *each related topic*. In some cases, there may be only one norm. In others, there could be several that may be combined into a single behavioral norm or separated into several norms. NOTE: The syntax for a behavioral norm state should read as follows: **"I commit to" + VERB + statement**. Once the pair has rewritten the behavioral norm, they should place it back onto the piece of flip chart paper for that specific category. *Time: 30 minutes*

8. *Read each of the proposed norms aloud to the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them. You could ask for a thumbs up to indicate support or find another way for each team member to indicate to the team his or her willingness to abide by these ground rules. Time: 30 minutes*

9. Once the proposed norms have been adopted, the facilitator (or someone on the team) should transcribe the norms into an electronic document, along with a place for each team member to date and sign. These could be individual documents with individual signatures or a single document with everyone's signature.

10. The team should review the norms at the beginning of each meeting to ensure that participants are regularly reminded about the agreements they have made to each other.