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 poster sheets that follow and post on the meeting room wall. In addition, print enough copies of page two for all members of the team that will be establishing the company norms. The norms will be : Time, Decision making , Listening, Participation, Confidentiality, Expectations
Supplies Needed: Page 2 handouts, sticky notes, pens/pencils.
Expected Time: Two hours.(This will normally take a couple of consecutive class periods)

Directions: Follow Each Step

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. Point out the other six posters and the questions that are posed on each poster. Time: 15 minutes.
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. 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.
5. Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each sticky note. Time: 10 minutes.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. When all of the sticky notes have been organized, assign two individuals to work together to write the norms suggested under each heading. In some cases, there may be only one norm; in others, there could be several. Time: 30 minutes.
9. 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.
10. When the team agrees that it will abide by this norm, the facilitator writes the norm on the posted paper with the label. Leave that poster in the team's meeting room for future meetings. Each member shoudl record the norms on their handout.
11. The facilitator will transcribe the norms onto a sheet of paper and make copies to distribute to all team members and post the company norms in the normal meeting space.
12. 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 • 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?	

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?