



Explanation of Project Charter Elements

Project Management Workshop

Summary

Spending time at the beginning of a project to define a Project Charter will help keep everyone focused and avoid confusion and disagreement later. This document lists the key elements of a Project Charter and explains what is meant by each term.

Element	Explanation
Name of Project	The name doesn't need to be chosen immediately. The name should be simple and truly reflect the nature of the project and its goals.
Need / Problem	What are the ultimate, basic needs that the project must fulfill? Avoid jumping too quickly to solution and confuse completing the solution with fulfilling the need. Don't consider the solutions until you have thoroughly investigated what the needs or root problems are. Once you have defined a problem or need ask "Why is that a problem? Or "Why do we need that?" Once you've answered that, ask "Why?" again. If you can answer "Why?" 5 times, you will be at the root of the issue.
Goal / Mission	Brainstorm. Come up with as many possible solutions as you can. Encourage creativity. There is no such thing as a dumb idea here. Sometimes the wildest ideas are the best ones. Select the one(s) that meets the needs or solves the problem while being SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-based) and fitting the constraints and assumptions below.
Objectives / Deliverables / Scope	These are the tangible items that show you have achieved the goal / mission. (i.e. you can see or hold in your hand) Convert the goal into things that are SMART. (e.g. if the goal is to raise awareness, the deliverables could be: published reports, advertisements, events)
Strategy / Activities	How are you going to achieve the objectives? Will you work alone or in committee? Will there be coordinators? Will there be sub-committees? Who are your "customers"? How will you involve them? How will you determine if you have met the goals / satisfied your customers adequately? How will you communicate? Where will you work? Where will you meet? How often?
Roles	All projects need one Project Manager who is responsible for achieving the goals / mission. This responsibility cannot be shared. The other roles depend upon the project. The expectations of these roles need to be well defined: E.g. project sponsor, customer-committee liaison, researchers, media contact, secretary, treasurer, note taker, report writer
Milestones	These are smaller, time-based, tangible steps that build towards the overall goal / mission. They must have due dates and be organized according to priority. If possible, achieve the most important ones first
Constraints & Assumptions	Constraints are things you have no control over and need to work around. Money and time are the most common. Assumptions are things you have no control over and depend upon. (e.g. that you will have the authority to make certain decisions)