Team Agreements

Research on successful teams consistently highlights the importance of effective group agreements. Creating a team agreement is an opportunity for us to collectively decide which behaviors are ok and which are not ok within our team, and to build a framework for how we want work with each other. Elements of the agreement can be simple (e.g., no cell phones at meetings) or more complex (e.g., build trust, communicate clearly). The agreement is a living document that will change over time.

How long will this take?
At least 60 minutes.

When should I use it?
When teams jump into doing the work without establishing how they want to collaborate, it's a recipe for clashing and miscommunication. **Team Agreements** provides a structure for the team to draft ground rules everyone can agree on and abide by, to help you work together more effectively from the start.

What will I need?
+ Post-it notes
+ White board

Pairs well with:
Working Styles: To learn about each other's working styles and needs, as a way to inform Team Agreements.

How can I do this with a dispersed team?
Instead of writing the questions on a white board, put them into a Quip document and ask everyone to add their answers while they brainstorm. Then bucket the ideas into themes directly in the Quip document and move towards agreements in the document. Share the document with everyone on the team.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Ask the team the following questions: (you may want to write them on a whiteboard or Quip):

   • Think about the best team you've been on. Which helpful behaviors or tasks would you like to bring to our team? (For example: asking clarifying questions when you don't understand something.)

   • What do we need to stop doing? (For example: stop giving side glances in meetings.)

2. Have each person write their thoughts onto a Post-it (1 per Post-it), and place a + on the positive ones and an X on the negative ones.

3. In a small group: have each person read their Post-its aloud. In a large group: have them break into smaller groups for discussion and report back to the full group.

4. Place all Post-its on the white board. Group similar items into themes based on similarities. If there are outliers that don't fit into the themes, that's okay–keep them.

5. Turn these themes and important outliers into a list of measurable behaviors. This could be time-consuming, so first have the group vote on the 2–3 most crucial positive behaviors and negative behaviors. You can address additional behaviors in a follow-up session.

   For example, if one positive norm is to encourage equal participation in meetings, ask yourselves what that behavior looks like. This measurable behavior could be for the team leader to solicit input from everyone during team meetings around a key decision, starting with the person who's spoken the least in that day's meeting.

6. Write the list of behaviors into the Team Agreement template: What we will do and what we won't. Solicit thoughts or questions from the team. All team members will have access to the Team Agreement, posted in Quip.

7. As a wrap up, ask the group:

   • How will we hold each other accountable to this list of behaviors?

   • Have participants write their initials, on the board or in the Quip doc, next to the items they will commit to and hold others accountable to.

8. On a regular basis as the team leader it's important to ask the team, how are we doing on our team agreements (using a 1–10 scale).

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Team Agreements Template

We Will	We Won't
Example "we will" agreements: • It's ok to miss something and to announce it • Asking for help, "I am stuck" • Speak up when it's not working • Connect individually (once per month) • Test and share "your story"	**Example "we won't" agreements:** • Have side glances in a meeting • Withhold feedback • Give feedback to the wrong person (triangulation)

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