**Instructional Media - Project Charter**

A project charter is a formal document that describes your project in its entirety — including what the objectives are, how it will be carried out, and who the stakeholders are. It is a crucial ingredient in planning out the project because it is used throughout the project lifecycle.

The charter is created before the project begins and should be used to ensure that the project sponsor, the members of the project team and the project’s external stakeholders have a common understanding of all aspects of the project. Achieving this common understanding takes time and frequently requires extensive negotiation. However, the discussion that takes place during the creation of the charter is often the most important aspect of creating the charter, and can in fact, contribute to the building of a cohesive team. Also, taking the time to do this work upfront is far less painful than discovering major disconnects among managers, team members and stakeholders later in the project.

This template lists the essential elements of a project charter. The text in red provides some additional explanatory detail and mentions some important points that are often overlooked or misunderstood during the creation of this important document.

The larger the project, the more information will be contained in this document. For small projects, it may be desirable to identify the critical few, the aspects that are critical to project success, and jettison those elements that are seen as less important. The charter is important, but it is also important to remember that it is a tool for the team’s use, not an end in itself.

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