



ACHIEVING TEAM EXCELLENCE

THE POWER OF A SOCIAL CONTRACT
FOR TODAY'S COMPLEX WORLD



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SECTION 1

Building Exceptional Teams: Bridging the Gap Between Aspiration and Reality

At our core as leaders, we all want to make a difference; most even dream of building something extraordinary. Psychologists have long understood that once our basic survival needs are met, we all crave belonging, purpose and significance. From the day we are born, our brains are hard-wired for connection and relationship. As we mature, that drive for connection and purpose motivates us to be part of something bigger than ourselves. But what is that? A company? A revenue goal? A mission statement? No. It is a deep desire to be an integral part of a group, a true team, that is committed to making a difference.

But how do we get there?

The first step is to overcome the obstacles that hold most teams back. Most company leaders know the keys to creating effective teams:

- Shared vision and purpose
- Alignment of responsibilities
- Mutual accountability versus the leader holding everyone accountable
- Committed team members
- Disciplined execution that delivers exceptional results

Business leaders also typically know the most frequently utilized steps to create effective teams:

- Clear core values
- Agreed upon principles of performance
- Specified leadership competencies
- Clear assessment metrics

And then there's the "but." But... we've all experienced the gap between our aspirational values and what actually shows up. We aspire to work and interact in a certain way but when push comes to shove, we settle for far less than we had hoped for. We end up tolerating a culture far less than ideal or desired. Because in reality, our culture is not what we say it is. It's not necessarily the words we put on a wall. Rather than rising to our aspirational values, our culture ends up being defined by the behaviors that are tolerated.

So, what are we to do? Are underperforming, conflicted teams inevitable? Do we simply give up on the culture we sincerely want to create?

No. There is a different path. There is a tool that will guide your team to achieve the greatness they desire.

SECTION 2

Unveiling the Power of a Social Contract: A Blueprint for Team Excellence

But what precisely is this transformative tool that promises to steer your team towards greatness? It's known as a Social Contract.

A Social Contract is, as it sounds, a document that defines an agreement. However, it is so much more than that. A Social Contract is a work that is meticulously crafted by your team for your team, built during a team Social Contract workshop guided by a skilled Teamalytics facilitator. It is built together, through rigorous, respectful debate and ultimately captures and defines your team's shared desire and commitment to strive for a non-negotiable standard in a written document. And, just as important, it includes your team's willingness and pledge to hold each other accountable to that standard. To help provide inspiration and guide your journey in developing a Social Contract, we have included several Social Contract samples at the end of this document.

After the initial Social Contract Workshop, a working group takes the initial draft away and evolves the document into a more refined final draft that is then shared with the team at a follow-up session where the team makes any final changes then adopts and commits to the Social Contract.



Once it is finalized, your team's Social Contract becomes a blueprint for how team members will interact on a daily basis. It will influence and shape interpersonal interactions, providing a "Behavioral North Star" whenever there is any question as to how the team is supposed to interact. It deepens relationships with team members. It moves teams towards the goals they want to achieve and helps them achieve the difference they want to make. It captures many of the aspirational values you want to achieve and takes them off the wall and puts them into daily practice, moving them from aspirations to reality. Moving you from the culture you've been tolerating to the culture everyone wants to be a part of.

Now, before you start thinking that this is a little too pie-in-the-sky-naïve, let us offer you a guarantee. No, not a guarantee that a Social Contract will solve all of your team and culture related problems. The guarantee is that the Social Contract will be violated. Repeatedly. Often severely. Usually by the company leaders more than anybody.

SECTION 3

Embracing Failure as Part of the Journey: The Role of Social Contracts

So why do all of this only to set the team up to fail?

Because failing does not mean the Contract is meaningless. The agreed upon Social Contract does not represent the team in its entirety. Any violation is simply a snapshot in time; it is not the final destination. The Social Contract is a picture of who we want to be. It is an agreement to a standard that is so high that it is unreasonable to believe we will never fail. Will we always listen intently, always respond respectfully, never interrupt, always be prepared, never lose our cool? Of course not. There will be failure.

But it is still the standard we are striving for. We are committed to. We are determined to live by. It is still our behavioral true north.

The successful outcome of a Social Contract that is implemented well is not the creation of artificial harmony. Neither is it a document that leaders use punitively to impose compliance. A Social Contract is not a list of rules to be followed.

In a thriving Social Contract environment, colleagues engage in robust professional debates, leading to:

1. Enhanced personal and professional relationships.
2. Fearless expression of diverse viewpoints.
3. A culture of sincere apologies and corrections.
4. Responsive leadership, inviting candid feedback with humility and a commitment to change.

This is not easily done. Living this way takes vulnerability, humility, sacrifice, and the courage and strength to have an unreasonable commitment to your team and your mission. But this is how you evolve into the team you aspire to be.

This is where people make the difference, they've desired their whole lives.



SECTION 4

Living the Social Contract

To harness the full potential of a Social Contract, it's crucial to understand how it can benefit your team across various areas of operations. Building the contract with team buy-in and commitment is just the beginning; its true power lies in how it is implemented.

ONE-ON-ONE SETTINGS

Initially, team members may find it more comfortable to provide and receive feedback in one-on-one settings. However, as teams nurture psychological safety and trust, they can address deviations from the Social Contract in real-time during one-on-one conversations or larger meetings.

TEAM MEETINGS

Another pivotal step in living the contract is integrating it into your team's regular meeting routine. At the very least, we recommend incorporating the following elements into one of your monthly team meetings:

- Dedicate the first 2 minutes to distributing or displaying the Social Contract as a reminder of the team's shared commitment. Occasionally, highlight specific behaviors to focus on. For instance, before a strategy session, remind everyone of their commitment to listening to all perspectives and making decisive commitments.
- Appoint one or two individuals to provide feedback on how well the team adhered to the Social Contract during the meeting. They can rate the team on a scale of 1 to 10 and offer one or two improvement suggestions.
- Allocate 2-3 minutes at the end of the meeting to gather feedback from those tasked with providing evaluations.

ONBOARDING

When new team members join, introduce them to the Social Contract. Explain its significance, how it was created, and why it plays a crucial role in your team's culture.

INTERNAL CULTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

In some cases, teams choose to have members sign a physical copy of the Social Contract and display it in a board or meeting room as a symbolic gesture of their commitment. However, it's important to note that merely posting the contract symbolically won't suffice. It must be actively upheld, and any violations addressed to maintain its integrity.

ANNUAL PLANNING PROCESS

While most teams make few changes to the contract once it's finalized, we recommend reviewing the Social Contract annually to assess whether any adjustments are needed to align with evolving team dynamics and goals. This periodic review ensures that the contract remains a relevant and effective tool for guiding your team toward greatness.

CONCLUSION

Navigating Complexity: The Vital Role of the Social Contract in Building Strong Teams

In today's intricate and rapidly evolving work environment, the importance of a Social Contract has grown exponentially. The workplace has become more complex than ever before, driven by a multitude of factors. Including:

GENERATIONAL VALUES AND BELIEFS

The coexistence of different generations in the workforce has led to a divide in values and beliefs, necessitating a thoughtful approach to bridge these gaps.

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION

Increasing cultural and political polarization has seeped into our workplaces, creating additional challenges in team dynamics and communication.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS AND AI

The relentless pace of technological advancements and the integration of AI demand constant adaptation, making it crucial for teams to navigate these changes effectively.

HYBRID WORK ENVIRONMENTS

The shift to hybrid work models and leading virtual teams in a “work-from-anywhere” world requires new strategies for collaboration and cohesion.

ECONOMIC AND GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

The ever-present macroeconomic and geopolitical uncertainties, coupled with mounting pressure from stakeholders to achieve growth, add to the complexity of today's business landscape.

Given these multifaceted challenges, leaders must adopt a more nuanced and intentional approach. The Social Contract emerges as a potent tool, serving as a Behavioral North Star. It enables teams to collectively navigate through turbulent waters, emerging from the storms as stronger, healthier teams capable of delivering impactful results. The Social Contract acts as a guiding principle that fosters unity and resilience, allowing teams to thrive in the face of complexity and uncertainty.

SOCIAL CONTRACT SAMPLES

Inspiration for Creating a Powerful Social Contract

Here are several Social Contract examples to inspire you and your team.

The first is the Teamalytics Social Contract. At Teamalytics, the values and expectations that sustain our culture are defined by our social contract. This is our commitment to build the kind of team necessary to fulfill our vision and mission. Our social contract is our North Star; our aspirational description of who we know we are capable of being. Like all teams, we can fall short of these ideals at times. In these times, we hold each other accountable to this commitment and get back on track being the team and teammates we have all committed to become.

TEAMALYTICS

We are committed to:

- **Uncommon Team:** Strengthen connections, hold ourselves and each other accountable, avoid artificial harmony, affirm
- **Service:** Be humble, go above and beyond for each other and our clients, integrity
- **Lasting Impact:** Transformational not transactional, tangible actions that lead to personal and professional change
- **Trustworthiness:** Built trust through mutual vulnerability, integrity, inspirational and exceptional expertise
- **Growth:** Desire excellence personally and professionally, be hungry for feedback, try new things, take risk, learn
- **Fun:** Laugh together, look for and focus on positives, seek joy

When issues, miscommunications, or frustrations arise, we commit to seeking resolution by following the best practices we have agreed to.

To keep this alive:

- Ask team members how they are doing on the social contract
- Have checkpoints at the beginning and end of meetings
- Don't reduce this commitment to being punitive but rather as a call to action to honor the mission, grow stronger with team members, and model truth and grace in conversations

HOSPITALITY COMPANY

FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

We commit to:

- Reaffirm our commitment to this promise every day, and formally in every Leadership Meeting
- Connect on a personal level
- Provide guidance instead of answers
- Include team members in key decisions with transparency
- Assume positive intention of teammates
- Sponsor one another
- Open your mind to others' points of view
- Participate and encourage open dialogue and debate Pause before reaction
- Have the courage to speak up Leverage experience of this team Listen empathetically

When we make a mistake, we will:

- Pause and reflect before responding
- Accept personal responsibility and ask for forgiveness
- Reengage calmly and identify the issue
- Refocus and move on

GLOBAL SERVICES COMPANY

LEADERSHIP TEAM

We promise to:

- Do The Right Thing- Always
- Engage in open, honest communications
- Consult and collaborate with each other as business partners
- Treat one another with respect
- Recognize contributions of others
- Value diversity of thought, experiences, and opinions
- Foster an environment of inclusion, trust, and empowerment
- Hold each other accountable for living our values and abiding by our Social Contract Challenge ourselves to the highest levels of performance
- Allow no conflict to escalate to angry, confrontational, personal attack

Should we err, we will:

- Take a time-out
- Accept personal responsibility and ask for forgiveness
- Reengage calmly and identify the issue
- Refocus and move on

WE WILL REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO THIS PROMISE EVERY DAY!

ENERGY RETAILER COMPANY

LEADERSHIP TEAM

We Commit To:

- Challenge ourselves to be the best
- Act with integrity
- Treat everyone with respect and as a team member
- Be open to others' points of view
- Believe the best about each other
- Communicate openly and honestly
- Be reasonable
- Resolve conflict in a positive and timely manner
- Celebrate success

When we make a mistake, we will:

- Understand what went wrong
- Accept personal responsibility
- Refocus and move forward

WASTE MANAGEMENT COMPANY

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Our team is built on the contributions made every day by each and every team member, contributions that make each one of us a valuable part of that team.

Holding this to be true, we will treat each other:

- With respect
- With honesty and dignity
- With trust and without prejudice

We will do this:

- Through open and clear communications
- Through accountability for our actions
- By creating a supportive and non-intimidating environment
- Knowing that the success of each team member is the success of the team

We promise to address conflict with each other quickly and in person. We will avoid personal differences when resolving conflict. We will listen to each other patiently, admitting fault where it is found and giving forgiveness freely and without conditions.

We make this promise to each other.

We renew this promise every day and pledge our best effort to its fulfillment.

Teamalytics has uniquely qualified coaches, breadth of experience, and proprietary analytics to help clients build and sustain strong teams within an increasingly complex workplace.

For three decades we've worked with leading organizations across industries to tackle team dissonance so that they can face complex challenges like corporate changes, mergers, transformation, and performance gaps.

Schedule a consult with one of our experts to explore how Teamalytics helps teams build and live by a Social Contract.

[Schedule A Consult](#)



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