

ChARM: MANAGING & REPORTING TOOL

ChARM is a simple method for planning and running groups of activities. These can be organised as projects, team-work, events, campaigns or to-do lists. This method describes the four key phases; Starting, Planning, Reviewing and Closing.

The method has been turned into an 'easy-to-use' solution which is hosted, stored, accessed and delivered totally online and requires very little training.

ChARM addresses some of the fundamental problems of working in today's stressful environment:

1. Most of the people working on projects don't know where they 'fit' into the 'big picture'.
Organisations tend to provide project management training (such as PRINCE2) to a small number of staff, although many more will actually be carrying out work on the project. These people receive no training on how to plan their work, estimate effort, and monitor and report progress. They don't understand the 'jargon' of the project management method and can't interpret the project plans to find out what is required of them and when.
ChARM provides everyone working on a project with the means to contribute to the planning process and plan and monitor their own work, seeing clearly where their work fits into the overall project.
2. Most of the people working on projects don't have any tools.
Project management software is usually complex and expensive and tends to be issued to the same members of staff who has received the project management training. The people carrying out the work on the project tend to be issued with Gantt charts and resource plans which they don't understand. **ChARM** provides every team member with a simple, easy-to-learn tool which is jargon-free and complies with best practice. Its simplicity means that maximum effort can be devoted to project work and not to navigating complex software.
3. Many of the people working on projects suffer unnecessary levels of stress.
In most organisations, people are allocated to projects on a part-time basis and still have their 'day jobs' to do. Because they (and let's be honest, their managers too) have no training in project management and no method or tools, they are unsure how much effort is required of them to get the project work done, and still get through their main work-load. This uncertainty

generates stress, which becomes progressively worse as they realise that they aren't coping with the workload and, despite hours of overtime, are still falling behind. **ChARM**, by enforcing best practice in planning and estimating, makes clear what is and isn't possible, and allows sensible decisions to be made at the planning stage. The People who have a clear idea of what is expected of them, and by when, tend to suffer less stress, especially when they have been able to contribute to the planning process for their own work.

4. Many projects fail because, at the planning stage, it isn't clear who is responsible for all the work.

Accountability and transparency are common 'buzzwords' in today's management speak, but 'more honoured in the breach than the observance'. The **ChARM** method teaches that someone in the team must be responsible for each activity, and must report at each weekly review on whether the activity is 'done' or 'not done'. It also teaches that activities should, wherever possible, begin and finish in the same week; this eliminates the '99% complete' syndrome, where activities can never end but continue to soak up resources. Because the **ChARM** plan is visible to everyone in the team, and to the responsible manager, progress, or lack of it, is also visible to all.

5. Poor communication is often cited as a major problem in projects.

The focus tends to be initially on project proposals to management, and then shifts to reporting progress, or lack of it, and all the reasons for failure.

ChARM enforces good communication right from the start. Objectives, measures and benefits must be defined. The plan is visible to all, so each team member can see what they have to do, and also what everyone else needs to do. This enforced communication allows everyone in the team to consult advice and help each other to make sure that the whole plan is sensible and achievable. As the project progresses, everyone can see where problems arise, view the risks and issues arising, and contribute to solutions. It is this 'real' teamwork, arising from open communication that breeds success.

6. Team meetings are expensive, time-consuming and difficult to organise.

Team meetings incur cost in three main ways; the cost of travel to and from the meetings, the cost of staff time on travel and attendance, and the opportunity cost of the time lost on other productive work that the staff could do if they weren't at the meeting.