



## **SOCIAL CONTRACT SAMPLES**

Inspiration for Creating a Powerful Social Contract

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# THE POWER OF UNREASONABLE LEADERS

## UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CONTRACTS

by Rohan Paul

*“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”*

- George Bernard Shaw

Deep inside, we all want to be great - we want to be a part of something extraordinary. Abraham Maslow argued that after basic needs like food and shelter, we need love and belonging. Belonging to what? A company? No, to each other - to a group that is extraordinary in its commitment to one another and the standard to which they hold themselves and each other.

A social contract is an artifact that captures a team's shared commitment and desire to strive toward and hold each other accountable to a standard.

As with all our transformative tools, the process we have pioneered and refined over the years that surrounds the social contract is far more important than the actual document or words on the page. Unlike most organizational documents, the social contract is so much more than a “framed whatever” that sits on the wall of a building.

The process starts with an intentional method for building the social contract, with a goal of generating honest dialogue and fostering shared ownership. The initial document goes through several edits and iterations until it is simple, elegant, and captures the essence of the team's intent.

At this point in the process, the only thing we can guarantee about the social contract is that it will be violated. Repeatedly. Often severely. Worse still, leaders are often the greatest offenders.

So why bother? Why set the team up to fail?

Because the contract does not represent a snapshot of who the team is, but who they want to be - a standard so high that it is virtually impossible to live out all the time. It is by its very nature, unreasonable. It represents a “behavioral true north” that refuses to change position, no matter which way you turn.

Over the years, we have refined a process of feedback and accountability to intentionally disrupt behavior that violates the contract. The successful outcome of a social contract that is well implemented is not artificial harmony or happy camp. Leaders do not use it punitively to impose compliance; it is not a list of rules to be followed.

Where a social contract is alive and well, you will find an environment in which colleagues can engage in rigorous professional debate over sharply differing viewpoints. They do so with the knowledge that if bounds are over-stepped either intentionally or unintentionally, there is enough safety and depth of relational capacity that it will ultimately result in a stronger personal and professional relationship. Everyone has the courage to say what they think and challenge anyone without fear of retribution. In this environment, leaders welcome and invite candid feedback from their direct reports and follow through with genuine humility and desire 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. ■



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# HOSPITALITY COMPANY

FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP TEAM | SOCIAL CONTRACT

**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

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# GLOBAL SERVICES COMPANY

LEADERSHIP TEAM | SOCIAL CONTRACT

**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!**

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# ENERGY RETAILER COMPANY

LEADERSHIP TEAM | SOCIAL CONTRACT

**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

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# WASTE MANAGEMENT COMPANY

## SOCIAL CONTRACT

**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.**





Flippen Group was founded in 1990 by internationally known educator, *New York Times* best-selling author, psychotherapist, executive coach, and leadership expert, Flip Flippen. We are one of the largest educator training companies and fastest-growing leadership development organizations in North America, with offices throughout the United States and in India.

Each year, thousands of educators and business leaders attend Flippen Group “hands-on” trainings and hundreds of thousands of people are challenged and inspired by our keynote presentations. On any given school day, Flippen education curricula and processes touch the lives of more than one million students in districts nationwide.

Clients include Fortune 100 companies, small businesses, professional athletes, major sports franchises, government agencies, non-profit groups, colleges, and school districts of every size and description.

Flippen Group employs professionals across the nation. All Flippen executive coaches and training personnel come from backgrounds that enhance the delivery and value of the training experience.

The education training staff are former educators, administrators, and teachers who implemented our processes firsthand in their own classroom or campus settings. The team understands the importance of a quality education, the value of a positive learning environment, and the significance of preparing the next generation for the world of work.

Our processes and trainings create a positive working environment and build cohesive team dynamics, resulting in increased productivity and retention.

Flippen Group has been highlighted on both local and national media outlets, including *The Today Show*, the *Super Bowl Pre-Game Show*, and Speed Channel’s 24/7, among others.

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