RESPONSIBILITY CHARTING

"Responsibility Charting" clarifies behavior that is required to implement important tasks, actions, or decisions. It helps reduce ambiguity, wasted energy, and adverse emotional reactions between team members or groups whose interrelationship is affected by change.

MAKING A RESPONSIBILITY CHART:

The basic process is as follows:

Two or more people whose roles are interrelated or who manage interdependent groups formulate a list of actions, decisions, or activities that affect their relationship (such as developing budgets, allocating resources, processing orders, etc.) and record the list on the vertical axis of the "*Responsibility Chart*" labeled "Tasks". They then identify the people involved in each action or decision and list the "Team members" on the horizontal axis of the form. For clarification purposes, "Team Members" may include:

- ♦ Individuals directly involved in a decision;
- ♦ Supervisors/managers or those involved;
- ♦ People outside of the department (either within or outside the organization).

Finally, the participants chart the required tasks/behaviors of each team member with regard to any particular action or decision, using the following classifications:

R - Has ***responsibility*** for a particular action, but not necessarily authority
A - Must ***approve*** **–**has power to veto the action
S - Must ***support*** **–**has to provide resources for the action (but not necessarily agree with it)
I - Must be ***informed*** or consulted before action, but cannot veto
– - Irrelevant to the particular action

APPLICATIONS:

The vertical and horizontal axis on the *"Responsibility Chart"* can be developed by the leadership and then given to others for discussion, or developed by the team members and checked out with their manager(s). In any case, the team members should develop the chart according to the work to be done, not according to the status or authority of the team members on the chart.

GROUND RULES:

1. No box may contain more than one letter.

2. No more than one **R** can exist for any activity. Agreement on where the **R** resides is the first step. If agreement can't be reached on who has the **R**, there are three options to follow:

   - Break the problem in to subparts
   - Move the **R** up one level in the organization
   - Move the *decision* about the location of the **R** up one level

3. Once the **R** is placed, other letters can be agreed upon, with the ground rule that no box contain more than one letter.

4. Avoid assigning too many **A**'s; it leads to great difficulty in obtaining a decision. Renegotiate to change some **A**'s to **S**'s or **I**'s.

If the chart is developed without all team members present, it should be tested out with any team members not present during its origination. Team members can also use the completed chart to check expected behavior and to call attention to others when the actual behavior falls out of line with the consensus noted on the *"Responsibility Chart"*.

SUMMARY:

The usefulness of the responsibility charting process lies not only in the end product of the agreed-upon chart, but also in the new understanding and appreciation of people's roles and required behavior that grows out of the charting process. Because this process allows participants in complex interfaces to sit down together and determine their optimal behavior in accomplishing various tasks, it tends to produce positive change and increase satisfaction. *"Responsibility Charting"* is one method that has had a number of effective applications in dealing with this issue.