

Master's Core Team Project (15.328, linked to OP 15.311)  
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### Background

Teamwork is a critical business competency, regardless of industry or organization. Start-up companies are basically small teams of highly motivated people, often with little prior business experience. Team skills are essential to coordinate individuals and adapt the organization to the unpredictable demands of the new economy. Even huge established companies are restructuring into teams around projects, product lines, customers, new kinds of partnerships, etc. New technologies and competitive pressures are breaking up hierarchies; lower levels of the organization have more responsibility, act more flexibly. Command-and-control has given way to network-and-negotiate.

For all the above reasons and many more, the Sloan Master's Core contains significant team experiences. We know from practical experience that teams are meaningful only if there is something riding on the team performance, such as a common goal with real consequences. In the Team Project, which is part of the OP course, everyone on the team matters, every relationship influences the team performance, and every conflict is a potential learning opportunity. "In the modern organization we manage as if everyone is a volunteer." You have to learn to work together, to maintain purpose and commitment, and to develop as team members and leaders.

### Goals

The Team Project has the goals of (1) developing teamwork and leadership skills and (2) learning from the analysis of a change initiative in a real-world company using concepts from 15.311 Organizational Processes (OP) and other Core courses.

### Structure

The Team Project has no regular class schedule or weekly readings. Almost everything is oriented around your team and your project, with only a few deadlines. You design your own structure for accomplishing the task and meeting your personal and team goals. ***Each team is responsible for analyzing a recent, ongoing, or anticipated initiative at a real company.*** Examples might be a strategic reorientation, organizational restructuring, introduction of a new technology, or worker participation program. ***The initiative should be important to the company, represent a change, and have organizational implications.***

Your team will have met during Orientation and begun to work on various Core courses. The Team Project is introduced in the second OP class on September 15. A brief update report is required during Team Day, September 23 (Friday). Although Team Day is primarily about helping you understand your own team better, it is also an opportunity to begin setting goals and planning the Team Project.

Each team has a faculty advisor/coach who will be the main contact person for the teams and responsible for grading the written team reports. Prof. Carroll is the advisor for some of the teams and is coordinating the overall team project course; the OP instructors and other OP faculty act as advisors for the other teams. Daniel Cook is the TA for all the teams regarding the Team Projects (there are separate OP TAs for each section). Teams are required to meet at least twice with their faculty advisor (for approximately one hour in late September/early October and again in November), but they may request additional meetings. One day prior to each of these required meetings, the teams must send to their faculty advisor a 2-page team self-reflection reporting on how the project is going and how the team is functioning as a project team.

Teams will present what they have learned in an oral presentation in their Communication section near the end of the semester (see Communication syllabus). These presentations will be aimed at the company as audience, not the OP professor or faculty advisor. See the Communication assignment for further detail. The written team report is due to the advisor on December 9. It is aimed at the OP professor and faculty advisor as audience.

### Readings

All readings are assigned through OP (15.311). See the OP syllabus. Readings in Communications (and other courses) may also be of use in the Team Project.

### Schedule

The Team Project consists of three phases: entry, data collection, and report.

First, teams identify and negotiate entry to an organization and determine the initiative they will study and the scope of their project in terms of the unit(s) of the organization, deliverables, etc.

Teams must draft a Letter of Agreement to the organization describing the expectations around the Team Project. The assignment is due Oct. 7 and must be sent to both your Team Project faculty advisor and your Communication faculty. The Communication faculty will grade it for 15.280. The Letter of Agreement should include a statement to the effect that the company liaison will be asked to fill out a brief evaluation form at the end of the project to be sent to the Faculty Advisor (the form is on SloanSpace).

The teams must have a meeting (usually 30 minutes) with the Team Project faculty advisor by October 7. This means the last week of September, or first week of October. One day prior to this meeting, each team must submit a 2-page team self-reflection reporting on how the project is going and how the team is functioning as a project team.

Each team must submit a brief statement by October 7 describing the organization they are working with and the initiative they will be analyzing. This statement

should also be given to the Communication faculty, for their reference but not for a grade. A standard form for this statement is on SloanSpace.

Second, teams collect data from the organization. This typically involves obtaining documents, searching the internet and other public information, interviewing organization members, directly observing meetings or other aspects of the organization, etc.

There is a required second team meeting (usually one hour) with the Team Project faculty advisor in November. At this point, the teams should have collected much of their data and be thinking about what they have found. It is a good moment to discuss with the advisor what the report should contain, what additional data you may need, and any other questions. One day prior to this meeting, each team must submit a 2-page team self-reflection reporting on how the project is going and how the team is functioning as a project team.

Third, teams analyze their observations and prepare their oral presentation for Communication and their written report for the faculty advisor.

During the week of November 28, the teams present an oral report in the Communication course. These presentations will be aimed at the company as audience, and will be a good opportunity for the team to practice for an actual oral report-back to the company. The Communication faculty will grade the presentations as part of the Communication course. When possible, the Team Project faculty advisor will also listen to the reports, but because the OP sections are divided into smaller groups for the Communication course, it will not be physically possible for the advisors to hear all reports.

The teams present a written report aimed at the faculty advisor, due December 9. The Team Project faculty advisor grades the report.

There is usually a deliverable to the organization, such as a written report or oral presentation. This is negotiated with the organization, but the advisor and the Communication faculty can help create a practical and useful product. Remember, the company liaison will be asked to return an evaluation form to the Faculty Advisor at the end of the project. This must be returned by December 16. If there is further contact with the company, such as an additional report or presentation in January, the company liaison can always send an updated evaluation form if they wish.

### Grading

The Team Project is graded as part of the OP course. The 6 units of OP and 3 units of Team Project are treated as a single 9-unit course, with the two grades “locked” together. The grade on the written team project report (content only) counts as 50% of the grade for both OP (15.311) and Team Project (15.328). Team members receive the same team grade for the written team project report but receive individual grades for the OP assignments.

### Support

The Team Project is a relatively unstructured assignment that is challenging for some teams. However, there are many sources of help:

1. The Team Project faculty advisor
2. The Team Project TA (Daniel Cook: [Daniel.cook@sloan.mit.edu](mailto:Daniel.cook@sloan.mit.edu))
3. The OP faculty and TAs
4. The Communication faculty and TAs
5. The Cohort advisors
6. The Master's office
7. The Career Development Office (which sometimes helps find organizations)
8. Second year students (Pilots, etc.) who have been through the Team Project
9. The Team Project website in SloanSpace (15.328) which has FAQs, etc.
10. The Team Project handbook, currently being revised, but due by Team Day
11. In case of conflict within teams or outside the team, the MIT Ombuds Office