



Compendium Spring 2020

Experts in Teamwork/ Ekspertter i team

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- d. What should the goals of the group be?
 - e. How should leadership be managed?
 - f. Who should have the most power in making decisions?
 - g. What decision-making procedure should be used?
 - h. How should conflicts be managed?
3. Each group decides whether its answers to the preceding questions are indicative of an effective or an ineffective group.
 4. Each group shares its answers with the rest of the class.

SINKING BOAT SITUATION

On a dark summer night seven persons cling to a swamped and slowly sinking boat on a black tropical sea. They are not alone. A large shark glides below them, and soon, perhaps, there will be more. With fear thick in their salt-swollen throats, the seven are faced with a difficult choice. If they kick in unison, they may be able to fight the fierce current and tides driving them away from the shore and all make it to safety; if they stick together they have an equal chance to survive or drown. If they split up, each going it alone, one or two of the stronger swimmers might make it to safety, but the majority will certainly drown or be devoured by sharks.



HOW TO CREATE AN EFFECTIVE GROUP

I will pay more for the ability to deal with people than for any other ability under the sun.

John D. Rockefeller

Having established that not all groups are effective and discussed some of the reasons why being a part of effective groups is so important, we now should dig a bit deeper into the specifics of how to create an effective group. To be effective overall, a group must do three things: achieve its goals; maintain good working relationships among members; and adapt to changing conditions in the surrounding organization, society, and world. To create such a group you should use the following set of guidelines. These guidelines provide direction for building an effective group, a framework for diagnosing how well a group is functioning, and a means for motivating group members to improve. For further clarification, Table 1.1 lists the guidelines and Table 1.2 offers a comparison between effective and ineffective groups.

Guideline 1: Establish Clear, Operational, and Relevant Group Goals that Create Positive Interdependence and Evoke a High Level of Commitment from Every Member. Groups exist for a reason: People want to achieve goals they are unable to achieve by themselves. In effective groups, goals must be stated clearly so that all members understand the nature of the goals. In addition, goals must be operational so that members understand how to achieve them. Goals also must be relevant to members' needs, so that they commit themselves to achieving the goals. Finally, the group's

TABLE 1.1 **Guidelines for Creating Effective Groups**

1. Establish clear, operational, relevant group goals that create positive interdependence and evoke a high level of commitment from every member.
2. Establish effective two-way communication within which group members communicate their ideas and feelings accurately and clearly.
3. Ensure that leadership and participation are distributed among all group members.
4. Ensure the use of power is distributed among group members and patterns of influence vary according to the needs of the group as members strive to achieve their mutual goals.
5. Match the method of decision making with the (a) availability of time and resources, (b) size and seriousness of the decision, and (c) amount of member commitment needed to implement decisions. The most effective way of making a decision is usually by consensus.
6. Encourage structured controversies in which group members advocate their views, disagree, and challenge each other's conclusions and reasoning to create high-quality, creative decisions.
7. Ensure that members face their conflicts of interests and use integrative negotiations and mediation to resolve them constructively.

goals must create positive interdependence among members. Group goals and social interdependence are discussed in Chapter 3.

Guideline 2: Establish Effective Two-Way Communication by Which Group Members Communicate Their Ideas and Feelings Accurately and Clearly. **Communication** is the basis for all human interaction and group functioning, and it is especially important when groups of people are working toward a common goal. Group members must send and receive messages effectively to exchange information and transmit meaning. Effective communication also can decrease misunderstandings and discord among group members. Effective communication depends on minimalizing competition among members and establishing two-way communication. Communication among group members is discussed in Chapter 4.

Guideline 3: Ensure that Leadership and Participation Are Distributed Among All Group Members. All members of a group are responsible for providing leadership. Equal participation and leadership ensure that all members are invested in the group's work, committed to implementing the group's decisions, and satisfied with their membership. Shared leadership and participation also enable the group as a whole to use the resources of every individual, thereby increasing the cohesiveness of the group. Leadership is discussed in Chapter 5.

Guideline 4: Ensure Power Is Distributed Among Group Members and Patterns of Influence Vary According to the Needs of the Group. In effective groups, members' power is based on expertise, ability, and access to information, not on authority or personality characteristics. Power struggles among group members can distract the group from its purpose and goals, ultimately making the group useless. To prevent power struggles, every member of the group must have some power of influence in

TABLE 1.2 **Comparison of Effective and Ineffective Groups**

| EFFECTIVE GROUPS | INEFFECTIVE GROUPS |
|---|--|
| Goals are clarified and modified so that the best possible match between individual goals and the group's goals is achieved; goals are structured cooperatively so all members are committed to achieving them. | Members accept imposed goals; goals are competitively structured so that each member strives to outperform the others. |
| Communication is two-way, and the open and accurate expression of both ideas and feelings is emphasized. | Communication is one-way, and only ideas are expressed; feelings are suppressed or ignored. |
| Participation and leadership are distributed among all group members; goal accomplishment, internal maintenance, and developmental change are underscored. | Leadership is delegated and based on authority; participation is unequal, with high-power members dominating; only goal accomplishment is emphasized. |
| Ability and information determine influence and power; contracts are built to make sure that individuals' goals and needs are fulfilled; power is equalized and shared. | Position determines power; power is concentrated in the authority system; obedience to authority is the rule. |
| Decision-making procedures are matched with the situation; different methods are used at different times; consensus is sought for important decisions; involvement and group discussions are encouraged. | Decisions are always made by the highest authority; there is little group discussion; members' involvement is minimal. |
| Structured controversy in which members advocate their views and challenge each other's information and reasoning is seen as the key to high-quality and creative decision making and problem solving. | Disagreement among members is suppressed and avoided; quick compromises are sought to eliminate arguing; groupthink is prevalent. |
| Conflicts of interest are resolved through integrative negotiations and mediation so agreements are reached that maximize joint outcomes and leave all members satisfied. | Conflicts of interest are resolved through distributive negotiations or avoidance; some members win and some members lose or else conflict is ignored and everyone is unhappy. |
| Interpersonal, group, and intergroup skills are stressed; cohesion is advanced through high levels of inclusion, affection, acceptance, support, and trust; individuality is endorsed. | The functions of group members are stressed; individuality is de-emphasized; cohesion is ignored; rigid conformity is promoted. |

some part of group work. As a group evolves and new goals are set, the distribution of power also needs to evolve. To this end, group members should form coalitions that help fulfill personal goals on the basis of mutual influence and interdependence. Power is discussed in Chapter 6.

Guideline 5: Match Decision-Making Procedures with the Needs of the Situation. Groups can make decisions in a variety of ways, but there must be a balance between the time and resources a group has available and the method of decision making it uses. A jury deciding a death penalty case, for example, would require a unanimous decision,

whereas a church group deciding when to hold its next meeting may not. Balance also is needed among the size and seriousness of the decision, the commitment needed to put it into practice, and the method used for making the decision. The most effective way of making a decision usually is by consensus (unanimous agreement). Consensus promotes distributed participation, the equalization of power, constructive controversy, cohesion, involvement, and commitment. Decision making is discussed in Chapter 7.

Guideline 6: Engage in Constructive Controversy by Disagreeing and Challenging One Another's Conclusions and Reasoning, thus Promoting Creative Decision Making and Problem Solving. To make effective decisions, members must present the best case possible for each major course of action and subject all other alternatives to critical analysis. Controversies over opposing ideas and conclusions are beneficial for groups because they promote involvement in the group's work, quality and creativity in decision making, and commitment to implementing the group's decisions. Controversies also help ensure that minority and dissenting opinions receive serious discussion and consideration. Controversy and creativity are discussed in Chapter 8.

Guideline 7: Face Your Conflicts and Resolve them in Constructive Ways. Conflicts of interest may result from incompatible needs or goals, scarce resources, and competitiveness. Five basic strategies can be used to manage conflicts of interest: **withdrawal**, forcing (win-lose negotiations), **smoothing**, **compromise**, and problem solving (integrative negotiations). Members of effective groups face their conflicts and engage in integrative problem-solving negotiations to resolve them. When problem-solving negotiations fail, mediation may occur. When they are resolved constructively, conflicts are an important and indispensable aspect of increasing **group effectiveness**. Conflicts of interest are discussed in Chapter 9.



THE DEVELOPMENT OF GROUPS OVER TIME

All groups change over time. The kinds of developmental changes seen in most groups have been described by well over one hundred theories. Most of these theories have taken one of two approaches (Hill & Gruner, 1973; Shambaugh, 1978). **Recurring-phase** theories focus on the issues that dominate group interaction again and again. Robert Freed Bales (1965), for example, stated that equilibrium has to exist between task-oriented work and emotional expressions to build better relationships among group members. The group tends to oscillate between these two concerns, sometimes striving for more solidarity and sometimes striving for a more work-oriented focus. Wilfred Bion's (1961) recurring-phase theory stated that groups focus on three basic themes of dependency on the leader, pairing among members for emotional support, and fight-flight reactions to a **threat** to the group. William Schultz (1966) proposed that group development occurs as members concern themselves with three issues: affection, inclusion, and control.

Sequential-stage theories discuss the typical order of the phases of group development. Richard Moreland and John Levine (1982, 1988) suggested that group members go through predictable, sequential stages of membership: prospective member, new member, full member, marginal member, and ex-member. At each stage, the member is