



8 Group Communication

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Activity 1: Group Characteristics and Goals

Purpose

1. To identify characteristics of groups you belong to
2. To analyze goals for groups you have membership in

Instructions

1. Choose three groups of which you are a part. Try to choose groups that fit in different categories (problem solving, learning, growth, and social).
2. Analyze each by filling in the information below.

Group 1 – Name of group:

Describe the group's interaction over time. (Nature and amount of interaction? Over what period of time?) How are the members interdependent?

Describe the size of the group.

Describe your goals in the group by describing:

- a) What are your individual task-oriented goals?
- b) What are your individual social-oriented goals?

Describe the group goals and how you know these are the group goals.

Do you or others have hidden agendas that you are aware of? If so, how do they affect the group?

Do your individual goal and the group goal harmonize or is there conflict between the two sets of goals?

Into what category (learning, growth, problem-solving, or social) would you characterize this group? Explain why.

Group 2 – Name of group:

Describe the group's interaction over time. (Nature and amount of interaction? Over what period of time?) How are the members interdependent?

Describe the size of the group.

Describe your goals in the group by describing:

- a) What are your individual task-oriented goals?
- b) What are your individual social-oriented goals?

Describe the group goals and how you know these are the group goals.

Do you or others have hidden agendas that you are aware of? If so, how do they affect the group?

Do your individual goal and the group goal harmonize or is there conflict between the two sets of goals?

Into what category (learning, growth, problem-solving, or social) would you characterize this group? Explain why.

Group 3 – Name of group:

Describe the group's interaction over time. (Nature and amount of interaction? Over what period of time?) How are the members interdependent?

Describe the size of the group.

Describe your goals in the group by describing:

- a) What are your individual task-oriented goals?
- b) What are your individual social-oriented goals?

Describe the group goals and how you know these are the group goals.

Do you or others have hidden agendas that you are aware of? If so, how do they affect the group?

Do your individual goal and the group goal harmonize or is there conflict between the two sets of goals?

Into what category (learning, growth, problem-solving, or social) would you characterize this group? Explain why.

Discussion/Conclusions

What do you think is the correlation between the type of group (learning, growth, problem-solving, social) and the presence or absence of hidden agendas? Do you think hidden agendas are more or less likely in certain groups?

Are your social goals different depending on the type of group you belong to?

Are there some groups you don't currently belong to but would like to? What groups would you join if you could?

Why?

Are there any groups that you belong to but would like to be out of? Why? Are those groups failing to meet your needs? Which ones?

What was the most productive group you were ever part of? What made it so? Try to identify the factors that contributed to its productivity. Was it at all related to group and individual goals?

What was the most ineffective group you were ever part of? Why was it so bad? Can you identify factors that made it ineffective? Was it related to group and individual goals?

Activity 2: Group Norms and Rules

Purpose

1. To distinguish between rules and norm
2. To identify norms through observing behaviour

Instructions

Choose three groups to which you belong. For each, focus on the rules and norms of the group. Try to describe behaviours. How are the members interdependent?

Example: Work group at a fast-food restaurant

List several explicit (written) rules of the group.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show up on time or be docked pay. 2. Wear the uniform given to you. 3. Don't leave until clean-up is done, even if your shift is over.
Describe a social norm.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone says "hi" to everyone else when starting a shift. 2. Another strong social norm is if a new female starts working, the guys see who she talks to the most. The others are not to try to date her or get close to her. They are not to flirt, etc. if she shows interest in someone else.
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If someone doesn't say "hi" to someone else, they usually shout to him/her, "Hey, what's the matter? You gonna say 'hi' today or not?" 2. Everyone will talk about you, "Hey, John's making his move" or tease you if you violate the norm.
Describe a procedural norm.	The procedural norm is pretty much by seniority. For jobs we're supposed to share, those who've been there longest say whether they'll do grill or window or drive-up, the rest take what's left by pecking order.
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	Everyone just follows this. If a new person says what they'd like before a "senior" speaks, everyone pretty much ignores them and listens to the next senior person.
Describe a task norm.	Problems among employees are handled one-on-one. Don't go to the manager for "minor" concerns.
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	If someone goes to the manager with a "minor" problem (they don't like their hours, they want a different shift) the others ostracize him/her. It's understood that you take what you get.

Group 1	Name of group:
List several explicit (written) rules of the group.	1) 2) 3)
Describe a social norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	
Describe a procedural norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	
Describe a task norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	

Group 2	Name of group:
List several explicit (written) rules of the group.	1) 2) 3)
Describe a social norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	
Describe a procedural norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	
Describe a task norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	

Group 3	Name of group:
List several explicit (written) rules of the group.	1) 2) 3)
Describe a social norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	
Describe a procedural norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	
Describe a task norm.	
What behaviours in the group reinforce following the norm or punish violations of the norm?	

Activity 3: Group Roles

Purpose

1. To identify roles in groups
2. To be able to describe behaviours characteristic of various roles

Instructions

1. Form groups of eight to ten. Half of the members should designate themselves as *As* and half as *Bs*. For the first discussion, *As* will be group participants; *Bs* will be observers. One *B* should take on the additional role of timekeeper. For the second discussion, roles will be switched.
2. Sit in “fish bowl” style, with the *As* seated in a small circle as close to each other as possible, while *Bs* surround that group so they can observe.
3. *As* should choose one of the “Group Exercises” below. After ten minutes, one of the *Bs* will inform them that their time is up.
4. During the discussion *Bs* should use the observation forms and watch for evidence of different roles being performed by various group members. Jot down behaviours that seem to characterize various roles. Your job is to report **observations, not evaluations**, of group members and activities.
5. After the discussion, *Bs* should report their observations to the whole group (*As* and *Bs*).
6. Discuss the questions at the bottom of this page as a whole group.

Group Exercises

1. Hypothetical situation: The instructor is willing to add between 1 and 50 points (out of 1,000) to students’ grades for notable class participation this semester. Devise a plan to determine the number of participation points each student should receive. Your job is to come up with a plan to assign points, not actually assign them. The plan should be a workable, fair plan that you can present to the instructor.
2. Money has been allocated for five new student support positions at your college. These are not instructor positions, but may be any type of support services. What student support services are most needed? Provide a plan for use of these funds.
3. Assume that this group is a student liaison committee to facilitate communication between students and administration. There is no additional money. Create a directive to the administration citing the three most significant things the administration could do to benefit students at no additional cost.

Post-Observation Discussion Questions for the Whole Group

1. Which roles did each person fill?
2. Which roles were not filled?
3. Which roles were competed for?
4. Why might group members see their own behaviours differently from each other?
5. Why might observers and group members “see” behaviours differently?
6. Was there any role fixation?
7. For participants: Which roles were you comfortable in? Did you have to stretch yourself to fulfill any roles that aren’t part of your usual repertoire? Which ones?
8. What decision-making method(s) was used by the group?

Observation of Group Roles

TASK ROLES IN GROUPS	DESCRIBE BEHAVIOURS (verbal/non-verbal) (Include names of participants displaying behaviours)
1. Initiator/contributor (proposes ideas, solutions, suggestions)	
2. Information seeker (asks others for relevant information)	
3. Information giver (offers facts, relevant evidence)	
4. Opinion giver (states opinions and beliefs)	
5. Opinion seeker (asks others for opinions/beliefs)	
6. Elaborator/clarifier (expands ideas, shows how idea would work for group)	
7. Coordinator (clarifies relationships among contributions)	
8. Diagnostician (assesses group behaviour, "We spend a lot of time . . .")	
9. Orienter/Summarizer (reviews and identifies themes in what's been said)	
10. Energizer (invigorates, enthuses group for task)	
11. Procedure developer (attends to seating, equipment)	
12. Secretary (keeps notes)	
13. Evaluator/critic (constructive analysis of accomplishment)	
Other comments	

SOCIAL/MAINTENANCE ROLES IN GROUPS	DESCRIBE BEHAVIOURS (verbal/non-verbal) (Include names of participants displaying behaviours)
1. Supporter/encourager (praises, accepts others, warmth and recognition freely given)	
2. Harmonizer (mediates interpersonal conflicts and reduces tensions among group members)	
3. Tension reliever (helps relieve anxiety and pressures in group)	
4. Conciliator (offers options if his/her ideas are creating conflict, maintains cohesion)	
5. Gatekeeper (keeps channels open; encourages interaction.)	
6. Feeling expresser (makes feelings/moods of group and self-explicit)	
7. Follower (passive acceptance of group movement)	

DYSFUNCTIONAL ROLES	
1. Blocker (prevents progress by raising objections constantly)	
2. Aggressor (aggressively questions others' motives or competence)	
3. Deserter (refuses to participate, take stand, or respond to others)	
4. Dominator (interrupts, monopolizes)	
5. Recognition-seeker (boasts, brags, and calls attention to self and accomplishments inappropriately)	
6. Joker (shows lack of involvement by clowning or joking in excess)	
7. Cynic (shoots down ideas, discounts chances for success)	

Source: “Functional Roles of Group Members” and “Dysfunctional Roles of Group Members” adapted from *Groups in Context: Leadership and Participation in Decision-Making Groups* by Gerald Wilson and Michael Hanna, pp. 144–46. © 1986. Reprinted by permission of McGraw-Hill.

Individual Summary

Roles that I am most comfortable with in most groups:

Why are these roles comfortable for you?

Roles that I am least comfortable with:

Why are these roles uncomfortable for you?

What would it take for me to feel comfortable with some of these roles?

Roles I may compete for:

In what circumstances?

Decision-making method that I tend to gravitate toward:

Why?

Decision-making method I’m most comfortable with:

Decision-making method I’m least comfortable with:

Activity 4: Group Decision-Making

Purpose

To apply group decision-making skills

Instructions: Part I

Read each scenario. For each, decide which decision-making method you would recommend and why.

Decision-making methods:

consensus

majority

expert

minority

authority

1. The budget for the (Speech) Communication Department has been increased. You are on a student committee to report to the department. Your task is to create and prioritize a list of items that, if funded, would best satisfy student needs.

Decision-making method recommended:

Reasons:

2. You are asked to serve on an ad hoc committee of the student government. Money has been allocated for grounds and physical plant improvements at your college. The committee is to decide what improvements in the physical environment would be most beneficial for students' academic, social, and safety needs. You are to prepare a concrete list of ideas and prioritize them for the student government.

Decision-making method recommended:

Reasons:

3. You are part of a campus organization that is going to sponsor a fundraiser. The decision needs to be made about what type of fundraiser to have.

Decision-making method recommended:

Reasons:

4. Your family is trying to decide what kind of party to throw for your grandparent's fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Decision-making method recommended:

Reasons:

5. Most class members want to have lunch together after the 9–11 a.m. final exam.

Decision-making method recommended:

Reasons:

6. You work for a small company and they want to purchase a word processing/database software program that all employees will be using.

Decision-making method recommended:

Reasons:

7. You and your spouse are accepted into excellent, but different, graduate schools in different cities. You have two pre-schoolers and you both want to be together, but you also want to participate in these programs (2–3 year commitment).

Decision-making method recommended:

Reasons:

Instructions: Part II

Can you think of times or situations when you have used each of the types of decision-making described in the text? Write at least one example of each.

consensus
majority
expert
minority
authority

In what situations are you most comfortable with each type of decision-making?

consensus
majority
expert
minority
authority

Name _____

Activity 5: Examining Life Roles

Purpose

To examine the types of roles we inhabit in our life situations, and how we deal with them

Instructions: Part I

Choose a group activity in which you have participated. Look over Table 8.3 (pages 333–334) and determine which role(s) you filled in that situation. Would you change your role in hindsight? Why or why not?

Instructions: Part II

Describe a situation in a group where one member occupied a dysfunctional role. How did it affect the group and what was done about this person's negative impact?

Activity 6: Analyzing Dysfunctional Roles

Purpose

To reflect on and analyze others performing dysfunctional group roles

Instructions

1. Reflect on your history of working in groups or teams. Perhaps you were on a sports team, were a member of the debate club, or took part in student leadership in high school, or perhaps you have worked on a committee in your academic or professional life.
2. Look at Table 8.4, Dysfunctional Roles of Group Members, on page 336. Consider each of the roles identified in the table and your personal experience with groups and teams. Have you seen examples of these dysfunctional roles and their typical behaviours? What were the outcomes for the individuals playing these roles? What were the outcomes for the group? Did you observe group rules and norms used in response to the dysfunctional behaviours? What do you now know that might have changed the dysfunction into positive contributions?
3. Talk or write about your reflections and observations. Post your writing on your class blog, or organize your study group to discuss dysfunctional behaviours.

Activity 7: Leadership and Collaboration

Purpose

1. To reflect on groups and leadership
2. To explain differences in group outcomes

Instructions

This chapter discusses issues of leadership, working collaboratively, and the outcomes of group processes. In the box “U of T Assignment Raises Questions over the Collaborative Nature of Wikipedia” (pages 342–343), one of the speakers says that “collaborative power can’t survive without leadership”—but why is this so?

Have you had experiences in your life history that show a vital connection between leadership and collaboration? Have you experienced situations where a lack of leadership led to a failure in collaboration? Can you imagine situations where a particular leadership style could conflict with productive collaboration? Write a short reflection, roughly 150 to 200 words, about what you know or anticipate about the interplay between leadership and effective collaboration. Whenever possible, draw in your own experiences as examples of your claims.

Name _____

Activity 8: The Key to Group Success

Purpose

1. To identify elements of group process
2. To practise written communication skills for a specific audience

Instructions

One frequent experience of college- and university-level study is group work: study groups, group projects, sports teams, club leadership, student government, and more. Write a short, informative article aimed at Grade 11 and 12 students to teach them some key ideas about group process (gleaned from your reading of this chapter and, perhaps, your own and other people's experiences) to make younger students' future on-campus experiences more successful. Share your article with a local high school or your home school board.

Name _____

Activity 9: Passing along the Recognition

Purpose

1. To examine the culture of a group
2. To communicate with a professional about an aspect of group process

Instructions

Do you belong to an organization that depends on its members and volunteers? Does the organization have an executive director or a volunteer coordinator? If so, show that person the memo on page 348 and ask her/him for a response. How does that person think members/volunteers would respond to the recognition given in this memo? Would it suit the organization's style? Perhaps that person—or perhaps you—could distribute the memo to members/volunteers to recognize what they contribute to the organization and to let them know their contributions are valuable.

Activity 10: Group Cohesion Case Study

Purpose

To apply information about group cohesion

Instructions

Read the case study below and answer the questions.

A group of business students decides to form an investment club to learn more about the stock market and investments, and to contribute small amounts of money (\$10–\$25) each month to be invested as a group. Mark and Maria came up with the idea and recruit some other students—Dan, Jana, and Jin-Sook. They realize the optimal number for an investment group is 12–15, so each agrees to recruit two or three more persons. A meeting time is set, and the group discusses ways to get started. There are other organizations in town they can learn from. There are national organizations that you can affiliate with and use their materials, get their newsletters, etc.

1. What factors are already at work to promote cohesion?
2. At this point, if you were an advisor to the club, and you wanted to promote cohesiveness among group members, what four specific things would you recommend?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)

Your turn: If you want more cohesiveness in a group to which you belong, what can you do? Choose one group and describe what you could do to promote cohesiveness.

Activity 11: Cohesion in Groups

Purpose

To recognize ways of building cohesiveness in groups

Instructions

1. Read each of the items below. For each, decide which of the ways of building cohesion it most closely resembles. Some may be combinations of one or more.
2. Justify your answer.

Ways of building cohesion:

shared/compatible goals
progress toward goals
shared norms and values
interdependence
outside threat

lack of perceived internal threats
shared group experiences
mutual perceived attractiveness and
friendship

1. A husband and wife are planning a budget so they can purchase a home

Greater cohesion could result from this because it is

However, cohesion wouldn't necessarily result because

2. A group of students are banding together to prevent tuition hikes threatened by the Board of Regents

Greater cohesion could result from this because it is

However, cohesion wouldn't necessarily result because

3. A group of cousins decides to go camping together

Greater cohesion could result from this because it is

However, cohesion wouldn't necessarily result because

4. A team went from all losses last year to 4–4 this year

Greater cohesion could result from this because it is

However, cohesion wouldn't necessarily result because

5. A group of students must work together and they will all get only one grade on their project

Greater cohesion could result from this because it is

However, cohesion wouldn't necessarily result because

6. A family goes on a vacation

Greater cohesion could result from this because it is

However, cohesion wouldn't necessarily result because

7. A group of families in a neighbourhood decides to clear a vacant lot to create a place for their children to play sports

Greater cohesion could result from this because it is

However, cohesion wouldn't necessarily result because

Name _____

Activity 12: Developing Your Team

Purpose

To comprehend and envision the stages of team development

Instructions

In a team, think up a skit and act out the four stages of team development. It can be any situation, a famous team moment or an anonymous corporate one.

Name _____

Activity 13: Embracing Group Dynamism

Purpose

To think about team and group dynamics

Instructions

Recall a famous team (sports team, development team) and how they performed in a moment of crisis, or perhaps the event that made them famous. Act out or discuss how their process can be explained with your new knowledge of group dynamics

Activity 14: The Effectiveness of Crowdfunding

Purpose

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of campaign communication
2. To practise providing constructive feedback

Instructions

Review the sidebar “10 Tips for Running a Successful Crowdfunding Campaign” on pages 358–359. Then find a recent crowdfunding campaign that has realized its project and reported on its achievements (that is, not just funded its project but completed it). Evaluate what the organizers did by measuring the original crowdfunding appeal against the ten tips provided in the textbook. In your opinion, could the campaign have been more successful or more efficient? If so, how so? Write a letter to the campaign organizers in which you present your evaluation; but rather than sending the letter, submit it to your instructor or post it on your class blog.

Activity 15: Listening to Margaret Mead

Purpose

To discover how real-life groups function

Instructions

Margaret Mead famously said that thoughtful, committed citizens are the people who change the world. In this activity, you will explore Mead's proposition and learn about citizens who are trying to make change.

1. Find a local non-profit or charitable organization that is doing work you believe is worthwhile. Ensure the group is led by a volunteer board (be aware that a volunteer board may need paid staff to do the day-to-day work of the organization). Contact the organization to arrange a meeting to interview key figures in the organization and to learn about its leadership and board processes. How did the organization get its start? How does it maintain its focus? How does it sustain its energies? How does it deal with problems? (Ensure you visit the organization's website before the meeting so you have a thorough background and can ask more specific and pertinent questions when you meet with the leaders.) If possible, follow up by interviewing one or two people who have been positively affected by the work of the organization.
2. Write a profile of the organization and its work. Your profile should be roughly 250 to 400 words in length. Post your profile to your class blog or submit it to your instructor.