

GROUP CONCEPTS, STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Work Group Inputs

- A. Work group inputs are those that are necessary for the group to operate.
- B. The composition of a work group has a strong bearing on the group's ultimate success, so careful consideration should be made in making group assignments.
 - 1. Characteristics of members that influence group effectiveness include task-relevant expertise, interpersonal skills, and diversity in the makeup of the group to include sufficient individual skills and interest.
 - 2. Individuals may be attracted to a group because of friendships, interest in the activities of the group, shared values, the need for affiliation, and the need to fulfill objectives outside those of the group.
- C. An input into the group is the members' assumption of **roles**, set of behaviors expected of individuals who occupy particular positions in a group.
 - 1. **Group task roles** are roles that help a group develop and accomplish its goals.
 - a. The initiator-contributor proposes goals, suggests way of approaching tasks, and recommends procedures for approaching a problem or task.
 - b. The information seeker asks for information, view points, and suggestions about the problem or task.
 - c. The information giver offers information, viewpoints, and suggestions about the problem or task.
 - d. The coordinator clarifies and synthesizes various ideas in an effort to tie together the work of the members.
 - e. The orienter summarizes, points to departures from goals, and raises questions about discussion direction.
 - f. The energizer stimulates the group to higher levels of work and better quality.
 - 2. Group leaders often assume task roles.
 - 3. An **informal leader** is an individual, other than the formal leader, who emerges from a group, has major influence, and is perceived by group members as a leader.
- D. **Group Size** is an important input into the functioning of groups.
 - 1. The number of individuals in a group influences how the members interact.
 - a. Very small groups have a number of disadvantages.
 - 1) In two-person groups, or dyads, members are either at odds frequently or are extremely polite to avoid differences.
 - 2) Three-person groups frequently lead to two-against-one situations
 - 3) Even-numbered groups often lead to deadlocks
 - b. Groups of five to seven are ideal because of enough input and the lack of deadlocks.
 - c. Large groups beyond seven, and more so beyond eleven, pose difficulties.
 - 1) Interactions tend to become centralized to a few members.
 - 2) Overall group satisfaction declines.
 - 3) Interactions become too lengthy when complex issues are considered

2. Group performance stops rising and even possibly declines as group size increases.
 - a. Social loafing is the tendency of individuals to expend less effort when working in groups than when working alone.
 - b. Free riders are individuals who engage in social loafing in a group
 - c. **Individualism**, a condition where by personal interests are stronger than the needs of the group, often leads to social loafing.
 - d. On the other hand, **collectivists** tend to put the good of the group before personal interest.
 - e. To reduce the likelihood of social loafing, managers, may
 - 1) Assign just enough people to do the work
 - 2) Have each group member of different tasks
 - 3) Make each individual's work visible in some way
 - 4) Provide for individual feedback
 - 5) Having individuals work with people they respect
 - 6) Provide standards against which to measure how the group is doing
 - 7) Make rewards contingent on individual, as well as group performance
 - 8) Design interesting, challenging tasks, or select members committed to particular tasks.

Work Group Processes

- A. Group processes are the dynamic, inner workings of groups as they operate over a period of time.
 1. Process loss is the energy diverted from the task to develop and operate the group itself.
 2. **Positive synergy** is the force that results when the combined gains from group interaction (as opposed to individuals operating alone) are greater than group process losses.
 3. **Negative synergy** is the force that results when group process losses are greater than any gains achieved from combining the forces of group members.
- B. **Norms** are expected behaviors sanctioned by a group that regulate and foster uniformity in member behaviors.
 1. Work groups tend to develop and enforce norms related to certain central issues.
 - a. Groups develop norms regarding production processes.
 - b. Groups develop norms regarding informal social relationships, e.g., where to have lunch.
 - c. Groups develop norms regarding allocation of resources, e.g., materials, equipment, etc.
 2. Norms typically develop through one of four mechanisms.
 - a. Explicit statements made by supervisors and coworkers can provide information about expectations.
 - b. Critical events set precedents for the future.
 - c. Primacy is the phenomenon that the first behavior pattern that emerges in a group tends to establish group expectations.
 - d. Carryover behaviors are those that arise among individuals who have worked together in other groups.
- C. **Group cohesiveness** is the degree to which members are attracted to a group, are motivated to remain in the group, and are mutually influenced by one another.

1. A high degree of cohesiveness in a group can have consequences on group performance.
 - a. Members tend to communicate more frequently and be more sensitive to one another, leading to greater job satisfaction.
 - b. Cohesiveness can also lead to giving more aid to other group member, a form of organizational citizenship.
 - c. Aggression among groups may arise.
 - 1) Within the same organization, competition may be helpful or detrimental.
 - 2) Competition with other organizations may have positive effects.
 - d. Performance levels may be either very high or very low, depending upon the group's norms and cohesiveness.
 - e. The group's openness to innovation may be very high or very low.
2. A number of factors have a positive effect on group cohesiveness; they include:
 - a. Similar attitudes and values.
 - b. External threats
 - c. Outstanding successes
 - d. Difficulties encountered in joining a group
 - e. Small group size

Stages of Groups Development

1. It has been proposed that groups progress through a series of five stages, but may regress with changes in membership.
 - a. Stage 1: **Forming** occurs as group members attempt to assess the ground rules that will apply to a task and to group interaction.
 - b. Stage 2: **Storming** occurs as group members experience conflict with one another as they locate and attempt to resolve differences of opinion regarding key issues.
 - c. Stage 3: **Norming** occurs as group members begin to build group cohesion, as well as develop a consensus about norms for performing a task and relating to one another.
 - d. Stage 4: **Performing** occurs as energy is channeled toward a task and as norms support teamwork.
 - e. Stage 5: **Adjourning** occurs as group members prepare for disengagement as the group nears successful completion of its goals.
2. Research indicates that these five stages apply primarily to newly formed, relatively unstructured groups.

Many organizational decisions are made by groups

1. Group decisions have certain advantages over individual decisions.
 - a. Provide more complete information.
 - b. Generate more alternatives.
 - c. Increase acceptance of a solution.
 - d. Increase legitimacy.
2. However, group decisions also have disadvantages.
 - a. Time consuming.
 - b. Minority domination.
 - c. Pressures to conform, which can lead to **groupthink**.
 - d. Ambiguous responsibility.

3. Effectiveness and Efficiency of Group Decision Making. Are group decisions more effective? It depends on the criteria used for defining effectiveness.
 - a. Group decisions tend to be more accurate.
 - b. Individual decisions are quicker in terms of speed.
 - c. Group decisions tend to have more acceptance.
 - d. The effectiveness of group decisions tends to be influenced by the size of the group. Groups should not be too large.
 - e. Groups also are not as efficient as individual decision makers.
4. Techniques for Improving Group Decision Making.
 - a. **Brainstorming** is an idea-generating process that encourages alternatives while withholding criticism.
 - b. **Nominal group technique** is a group decision-making technique in which group members are physically present but operate independently.
 - c. **Electronic meetings** are one way that decision-making groups can interact by way of linked computers.

TURNING GROUPS INTO EFFECTIVE TEAMS

Work teams are formal groups made up of interdependent individuals, responsible for attaining goals. Organizations are increasingly designing work around teams rather than individuals. Why?

Most of us are probably familiar with the concept of a team. However, we may not be as familiar with work teams. All work teams are groups, but only formal groups can be work teams.

There are different types of teams. Four characteristics can be used to distinguish different types of teams.

1. Teams can vary in their *purpose or goal*.
2. The *duration* of a team tends to be either permanent or temporary.
3. *Team membership* can be either functional or cross-functional.
4. Finally, teams can either be *supervised or self-managed*.
5. Given these four characteristics, some of the most popular types of teams used today include the following:
 - a. A **functional team** is a type of work team that is composed of a manager and his or her subordinates from a particular functional area.
 - b. A **self-directed or self-managed team** is one that operates without a manager and is responsible for a complete work process or segment that delivers a product or service to an external or internal customer.
 - c. A **virtual team** is one that uses computer technology to link physically dispersed members in order to achieve a common goal.
 - d. Finally, a **cross-functional team** is one in which individuals who are experts in various specialties (or functions) work together on various organizational tasks.

DEVELOPING AND MANAGING EFFECTIVE TEAMS

Teams aren't automatically going to magically perform at high levels. We need to look more closely at how managers can develop and manage effective teams.

There are eight characteristics associated with effective teams.

1. Clear goals
2. Relevant skills

3. Mutual trust
4. Unified commitment
5. Good communication
6. Negotiating skills
7. Appropriate leadership
8. Internal and external support

What's involved with managing teams?

1. In planning, it's important that teams have clear goals and that these goals be clear to and accepted by every member of the team.
2. Organizing tasks associated with managing a team include clarification of authority and structural issues.
3. Leading issues include such things as determining what role the leader will play, how conflict will be handled, and what the best communication process is.
4. Two important controlling issues include how to evaluate the team's performance and how to reward team members.

One popular approach to group incentive plans is **gain-sharing**, which is a program that shares the gains of the efforts of group members with those group members.

In conclusion, a **TEAM** is a temporary or ongoing task group whose members are charged with working together to identify problems, form a consensus about what should be done, and implement necessary actions in relation to a particular task or organizational area.

1. Teams differ from task forces in two ways.
 - a. Teams identify problems rather than merely reacting to problems identified by others.
 - b. Teams decide on a course of action and implement it, rather than leaving the implementation to others.
2. Teams are widely used today and are often, but not always, task groups from across command groups.
3. An **entrepreneurial team** is a group of individuals with diverse expertise and backgrounds who are brought together to develop and implement innovative ideas aimed at creating new products or services or significantly improving existing ones.
4. **Self-managed teams**, or autonomous work groups, are work groups given responsibility for a task area without day-to-day supervision and with authority to influence and control both group membership and behavior.
 - 1) Assessment of the situation is critical in that self-managing teams are not successful in all situations.
 - 2) Group makeup and proper allocation of needed resources is important.
 - 3) Team training and guidance in cultivating appropriate norms are important.
 - 4) Managers need to remove performance obstacles and assistance to help the group continue to learn.

Managing Conflict in Groups

- A. **Conflict** is a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or adversely affected by one or more other parties.
- B. Conflict can have constructive as well as destructive consequence.
 1. Conflict can delay projects, drive up costs, and cause valued employees to leave.

2. Conflict can highlight areas for improvement, promote constructive changes, enhance morale and cohesiveness, and encourage new ideas.
- C. There are a number of causes of conflict.
1. Two types of task interdependence can lead to conflict.
 - a. Sequential interdependence occurs when one individual or work unit is heavily dependent on another.
 - b. Reciprocal interdependence occurs when individuals or work units are mutually interdependent.
 2. Scarcity of resources can lead to conflict.
 3. Goals of different organizational members may be incompatible.
 4. Communication may fail due to distortions or lack of communication.
 5. Differences in personality, experience, and values may breed conflict.
 6. Poorly designed reward systems may foster competitions when cooperative behavior is necessary for organizational success.
- D. Managers may use a number of approaches to reduce and resolve conflict.
1. Conflict-producing factors in a situation can be changed.
 2. One of five interpersonal modes may be adopted to resolve conflicts.
 - a. **Avoidance** involves ignoring or suppressing a conflict in the hope that it will either go away or not become too disruptive.
 - b. **Accommodation** focuses on solving conflicts by allowing the desires of the other party to prevail.
 - c. **Competition** involves attempting to win a conflict at the other party's expense.
 - d. **Compromise** aims to solve conflict issues by having each party give up some desired outcomes in order to get other desired outcomes.
 - e. **Collaboration** involves devising solutions that allow both parties to achieve their desired outcomes.