

Ten Top Challenges Working with Groups

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1. Ignorance of Group Dynamics basics – concepts and vocabulary

- Systems/process thinking – e.g., Deming 85/15 rule: 85% of organizational problems can be corrected by changing systems; 15% by changing individuals.
- Types of groups: (handout # 1)
 - Pseudo – nominal group; work exclusively as individuals; mostly competitive
 - Traditional – some collaboration; mostly individual work with talking
 - Effective – shared goals; more than sum of parts
 - High performing – outperforms expectations
- Groups structure: norms, roles (handout # 2)
- Social influence: conformity, obedience
- Group development
 - Sequential Stages:
 - Forming
 - Storming
 - Norming
 - Performing
 - Adjourning
 - Recurring Stages:
 - Task vs social
 - Dependence, pairing, fighting, flight
 - Inclusion (who is in/out), control (top/bottom), affection (near/far)
- Characteristics of effective groups (handout # 3)

2. Group cohesion issues

- Establishing cohesive, mature group
- Guarding against concurrence seeking and groupthink – downside of cohesion

3. Dysfunctional group norms

- Avoidance of controversy and conflict (see # 9 below)
- Low performance
- Defensive avoidance: denial, procrastination, rationalization, passive aggression

4. Poorly identified group mission and goals

- Balancing individual and group goals
- Dealing with hidden agendas (individual goals markedly different from group goals)

5. Poor group communication

- Making sure physical arrangements and technology facilitate communication
- Maintaining two-way communication
- Remembering basics of sending and receiving messages

6. Ineffective group leadership/facilitation skills

- Leader inflexibility – need to fit style with group stage
- Balance of task and social/emotional focus and consideration of group maturity

7. Ineffective use of power in groups

- Creating shared power
- High power vs low power group members
- Understanding sources of power (handout # 4)
 - Reward
 - Coercion
 - Legitimate
 - Expert
 - Informational
 - Referent

8. Ineffective problem-solving and decision-making skills

- Confusion about methods of decision-making, e.g., authority decision; consensus, majority vote
- Social loafing, free riding, sucker effect

9. Inability to engage in constructive controversy and finding creative solutions

- Avoidance of conflict in groups (handout # 5)

10. Inappropriate or poor conflict management and negotiation skills

- Inflexibility in conflict management style (handout # 6)
- Negotiating for win-lose rather than win-win