GROUPS AND TEAM BUILDING

Unit Overview

Read and study the following unit. Answer the questions at the end of the unit based on the information that you have learned from the unit.

Key Terms

Consensus	Delegate

Group Decision Making

You as a leader make decisions in the group all the time. The decision making process can be stressful because some members see it as a form of power struggle, some people cannot bear the idea of losing an argument, and some people simply do not like to make decisions.

Decisions are an important part of group life, and you may wonder how your group could improve in this area. All groups, clubs, executive boards, and committees go through a development process. This cycle is most likely repeated every year when new members join.
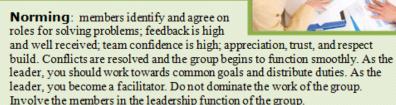
There are four stages of group development. If you understand these stages, you can combine your energies and reach a group decision.

- **Forming**: finding and establishing a place in a new organization, determining goals and purpose, getting to know each other. This stage occurs when members first come together as individuals unfamiliar with other group members. All members are looking for their place in the group. This stage does not allow for risk. Most members just sit and observe. As the leader, you need to get the group acquainted and interacting. You may need to be directive and task oriented. You will need to work on reducing member anxiety and fears. You will need to provide positive feedback and facilitate open discussions.

- **Storming**: communication problems occur, members compete with each other, splinter groups form, hidden agendas surface, and the team begins to set boundaries. Once members become acquainted, conflicts arise over such issues as goals, power, attention, and leadership. Tension can build and frustration becomes evident. These potential problems can be minimized by setting standards and modeling desired behavior. As the leader, you should list goals, timelines, and job responsibilities. The group will assume more responsibility for running itself.

- **Norming**: members identify and agree on roles for solving problems; feedback is high and well received; team confidence is high; appreciation, trust, and respect build. Conflicts are resolved and the group begins to function smoothly. As the leader, you should work towards common goals and distribute duties. As the leader, you become a facilitator. Do not dominate the work of the group. Involve the members in the leadership function of the group.

- **Performing**: team is collaborative and interdependent, high confidence and task accomplishment, high motivation and morale, members find solutions to problems, support levels are high, members care about each other. The group has developed a sense of working together toward a common goal. As the leader, you now cannot attempt to make any major changes to the group goals. This would disrupt the team spirit that has been accomplished. You should function continue to monitor the group's progress.

The goal is to get your organization to the level of performing. Once your organization is at that level, group decision-making is an easy process. Since members possess essential ingredients for the solution of all disagreements, group decisions should be based on input from all members. Certainly, if there are decisions that only take a few people, it may not be necessary to involve the entire group.

Group Consensus Guidelines
Effectiveness in communication is of paramount importance in the consensus decision-making process. You can enhance group communication by paying attention to the following "DO's and DON'Ts."

DO:

- **LISTEN,** not only to the words, but to the rationale being offered.
- **PURSUE** your point and be persistent if you have good information.
- **MANAGE** your time effectively, relative to the number of decisions that are being made.
- **INVOLVE** all team members to ensure use of their knowledge and experience.
- **STRIVE** for the best answer. Thinking in cause-and-effect terms avoids dealing only with symptoms.

DON'T:

- Argue for the sake of winning your point. You may learn something by being open minded.
- Give up on your conclusion simply to avoid conflict. Let objective reasons or sound information prevail.
- Allow the group to get hung up on a specific item – move on and come back later.
- Compete by assuming that someone must win and someone must lose. Look for the best alternative.
- Resort to voting. This tends to split the group into winners and losers.

The Leader's Role

This approach to group decision-making places the leader in a particular role where you must cease to contribute, avoid evaluation, and refrain from thinking about solution or group products. Instead you must concentrate on the group process by assuming responsibility for accurate communication between members. The way decisions are made testify to the degree of effectiveness of a group. Here is a list of facts about effective and ineffective groups.

Effective Groups	Ineffective Groups
generate more ideas than individuals	pool ignorance and misinformation
have a high level of participation	eject non-conforming members
develop a climate where members can be relaxed, open and direct	force members to comply or compromise
are task-oriented	engage in "groupthink"
	take action because they cannot think of any reason not to

Effective Group Members	Ineffective Group Members
defer to members who they are certain have the facts	give in on items they are sure of
form loyalties to their own group	oppose or block decisions without cause
encourage and support other group members	encourage and support other group members
mediate differences in the group	dominate discussions

By following these tips concerning group work and achieving consensus, your group can avoid the negative aspects and enjoy the reward of knowing your group has done its best to achieve a true consensus.

QUOTE: "When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion."

- **Ethiopian Proverb**

Building Team Morale, Pride, and Spirit

Troubleshooting: How to Handle Opposition

Trouble comes in many packages. It may be wrapped in the disinterest and detachment of one or two team members. Or trouble may pose as a willing participant, whose true agenda is to undermine others. Problems also come from outside the team. In the effort to expand morale, spirit, and pride, a wise leader keeps watch for the first

signs of difficulty. Here are some trouble spots to look for and ways to minimize damage.

1. **Holding Back.** Some team members may not be open to activities and initiatives that build team camaraderie and relationships. They may prefer to remain detached and disinterested. Some may think morale-building processes are impractical, unsophisticated, a invasion of privacy, or waste of time. As a Leader, you'll want to be tolerant and patient with these people. Building team spirit is an evolving process that cannot be implemented overnight. Once reluctant members understand and see the process in action, the majority of them will come around.

2. **Negative History.** With an existing team, negative team dynamics may have to be dealt with first. Because of their history with one another, team members may not feel safe opening up to each other. This can be overcome by time, improved communication, changes in personnel, and the positive example of the leader. As the leader, your job is to create a secure environment where individual risk and vulnerability are reduced.

3. **Superstar vs. Team Player.** Individual agendas, competitiveness, and ambition may also make open communication uncomfortable. Set ground rules that discourage such behavior, give direct feedback when the behavior does occur, and reward supportive behavior.

4. **Team Envy.** Other teams within the organization may become envious of your team's new and improved morale, pride, and spirit. Some of their members may want to join your team. This may result in criticism, manipulation, or even hostility directed toward you and the team. One way to resolve this is to have a heart-to-heart talk with the source. Or you might choose to ignore it, knowing that your success is what is driving their envy.

5. **Toxic Organizations.** Some organizations have cultures or politics that are essentially toxic and will inhibit or undermine your morale-building efforts. These are difficult to deal with and may not be totally overcome. Don't let it discourage you from trying. Do what you can.

Finally, remember all members carry personal history, experience, and perspective to work. The way member respond to you and to others is tied to that personal story. Know this is the case and don't expect everyone to react the same way to your team-building efforts.

What are Your Barriers?

Every team faces challenges to building morale, pride, and spirit. The key is to figure out what seems to be getting in your way. Common factors may include:

1. Poor communication
2. Competition/individual ambition that overrides teamwork
3. Unclear mission, vision and goals
4. Inconsistent standards, rules, boundaries, and expectations
5. Larger department or organizational culture
6. Not enough time
7. Lack of interest
8. Difficult team history
9. No budget

Once you've decided what is limiting you, make a plan to overcome one or two obstacles at a time. With creative thinking, patience and effort, you'll find those barriers starting to fall.

Delegation - Why Is It Difficult?

Any human will tend to repeat behavior that is followed by positive reinforcement and reward. The more successful people are, the more positive reinforcement they tend to get. If you find during a group project in grade five that you have to do all the work for the group to be successful, you are reinforced when all of your hard work on the project is recognized with a good mark. This behavior is further reinforced with each time that you are successful at doing all of the group's work. This means you will develop a great fear of letting other people do some of the work because if you change your behavior these good results may disappear. In fact, you can be convinced to let go of control at least once; however, if the group is not successful that time, your original behavior is doubly reinforced.

Don't expect leaders to like delegating. Most of them have spent many years learning through reinforcement that they do the best job and that others usually fail them when asked to help. It takes a while for both sides to learn what their job really is. Leaders must trust that the followers will complete the tasks assigned, and the followers must believe that they will be allowed to complete the job on their own. Many followers have learned that if they falter, the leader will take over for them. This is reinforcement for a successful follower. Both leaders and followers must find a new paradigm of positive reinforcement for activity groups to be successful.

Many leaders find it difficult to delegate. There are a number of reasons for this including: preferring to do the job themselves and see it is done right; not wanting to impose large responsibilities on other members of the group; some of the spotlight is moved away from the leader. While doing it all yourself may get the job done, it can create apathy among non-involved members of the group.

Sometimes, leaders make the mistake of delegating only menial work, while keeping appealing tasks for themselves. This can give members a feeling of being used, rather than being important. The following are some simple guidelines to determine delegating responsibilities.

When to Delegate

~When there is a lot of work to be done in a limited amount of time.

~When you feel someone else has particular qualifications that would suit the task.

~When you think that a particular person might benefit from the responsibility.

Don't Delegate

~Things that are usually your specified responsibilities, except in emergencies

~Something that you yourself would not be willing to do

~ A task to someone who may not possess the capabilities necessary to complete the job (Never guarantee failure for members of your group.)

~The leftovers

Methods of Delegating

~ Ask for volunteers. Explain the task and see who is interested.

~ Match talents. Don't take over tasks yourself when your request for volunteers is met with silence. Select people with talents for the task and express confidence in their abilities.

~ Spread the good tasks around. Avoid favoritism amongst members of your group.

Guidelines for Delegating

~Co-ordinate and keep communication open with various people in the group.

~Ensure that the task has been clearly defined and has a set deadline.

~Facilitate the accomplishment of getting those tasks done, but don't take over.

~Remember the importance of tact and concern.

~If things aren't getting done, find out why and act on it.

[Obstacles to Delegation...and Solutions PDF](#)

Why Group Members may not Accept Delegation

1. They find it easier to ask the person in charge than to make a decision by themselves.

2. They do not understand their own authority level; therefore, they are indecisive.

3. They fear criticism of their mistakes and may lack self-confidence.

4. They lack resources and necessary information to do a job.

5. They feel the incentives are inadequate to motivate them.

Creating Effective Teams

Teams function better in a culture that

* supports innovation

* expects success

* values superior quality

* pays attention to detail

* sets clear expectations

* rewards teamwork rather than   individual performance.

As the leader of the team, you need understand group development. You need to be patient. Take responsibility for what is happening. Be supportive of the other members. Make sure tasks are completed in a timely manner.

Highly performing team members must pay attention to the following to ensure productivity from their team.

Goals

Members have to be clear about the team goals. Members must think the goals are reasonable and attainable.

Roles

Members must agree on what needs to be done and who should do it. Information needs to be collected, discussions held, and decisions made. They must be clear about the roles they are being asked to play. They must have the ability and skills necessary to accomplish the task. They must accept the roles assigned.

Interdependence

Members must be able to work together as a unit.

Leadership

Your leadership style must change when necessary to meet the needs
of the team.

Communication and Feedback

High performance teams have open communication that allows all members to participate. All members give and get constructive feedback. The feedback is intended to help the team reach its goal. The team then makes changes for improvement.

Discussion, Decision Making, and Planning

Members of the team spend time planning how they will solve problems and make decisions. They spend time defining and discussing the problems they must solve.

Implementation and Evaluation

The team implements solutions and decisions made by members. They develop methods to evaluate their solutions and make changes as needed.

Norms and Individual Differences

Successful teams establish norms that encourage high performance, quality and success. Team members are encouraged to be creative and innovative. Members who behave differently are accepted as long that behavior is perceived as helpful to task accomplishment.

Structure

Successful teams contain the smallest number of members necessary to accomplish the goals. Team members are able to form subgroups to get the work done. Successful teams are organized.

Cooperation and Conflict Management

High performance teams are highly cohesive and contain cooperative team members. When conflict occurs, the team has strategies to resolve the conflict.