

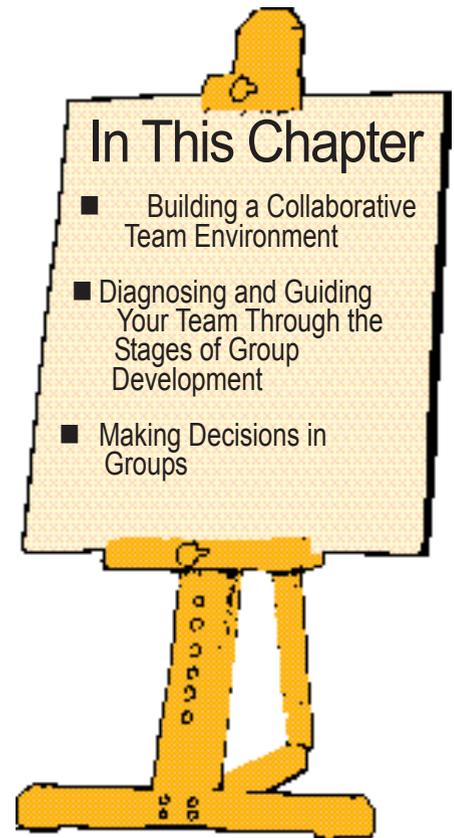
The Supervisor as Team Builder

Remember the old axiom, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts? When people work together effectively as a team, they draw on a full spectrum of ideas and diverse experiences to create innovative solutions—solutions that no one person may have discovered alone. As part of a team, members/volunteers can share and ask each other for job-related help. They can also find support from other members/volunteers to get through difficult times.

Whether you work with crews or with a group of members/volunteers assigned to individual sites, your ability to generate and sustain a sense of affiliation, peer support, and collaboration may be one of the most important things you do—not only for members/volunteers but for yourself. The more your members/volunteers learn to rely on each other and work together to solve

problems, the better their leadership skills become, and the less they depend on you to do things for them. In fact, an essential part of team building is helping your members/volunteers develop their own skills in these areas.

To be an effective team builder, you need to use all the skills we've discussed in earlier chapters—active listening, feedback, conflict resolution, problem solving, and coaching—but instead of applying them one-on-one, you use them with your team. As you might guess, when you're working with more than one individual, skills like problem solving and giving feedback become more complex. You need a greater knowledge of the dynamics behind member/volunteer interaction, and you need a fuller understanding of the leader's role as the group is developing. To help you gain expertise in these areas, we'll introduce the three skills listed above.



Supervisor's **TOOL KIT**

These tools begin on page **3** 27)



Building a Team Environment

Effective Teams and Team Problems

Characteristics of effective teams, team leaders, and members/volunteers with a table of common problems that affect group performance

A Few Things to Watch for

Factors to consider when observing group dynamics

A Dozen Tips for Team Building

Pointers for starting to form a cohesive team

Tips for Working with Diversity

Guidelines for building teams rich in diversity

Disruptive Group Situations

Scenarios that harm or inhibit teamwork and some suggestions for how to deal with each

Stages of Group Development

Stages of Group Development

The “Forming-Storming-Norming-Performing-Adjourning” model of group development

Facilitation Skills

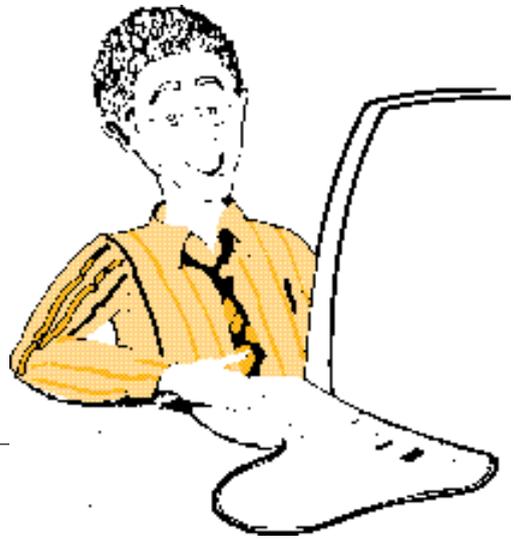
A summary of four essential skills for leading groups: asking questions, paraphrasing, summarizing, and encouraging

Making Decisions in Groups

Facilitating for Consensus

Background on building group consensus and handling disagreement during the process

A Day in the Life ...



Jamal and his crew are in their second month of the project cycle, and until about two weeks ago he was pleased with their progress. From the beginning, he set up regular meeting times every day so members could reflect on service learning and discuss issues that arose in the group. Members showed up on time and seemed enthusiastic about his ideas for starting their park restoration project.

Over the course of the last month, though, Jamal has noticed some disturbing changes. For example, a couple of members have started drifting in late. Several people have formed cliques and are productive only when they work with their “buddies.” Members aren’t communicating enough with the whole group so they sometimes duplicate work. At times they neglect tasks because they thought someone else was doing them. Jamal is also troubled by how the cliques are composed: Two are organized along racial lines, and a third includes only members with master’s degrees. The cliques are friendly with each other, but lately Jamal has noticed that they are more competitive.

His original idea was to give members as much choice as possible in forming their smaller task teams. Now he’s not so sure that was a good plan.

The last few meetings with the whole crew haven’t gone well. Anthony and Linda don’t like any of Jamal’s suggestions and challenge him in front of the other members. Jamal is particularly concerned about Linda because she puts him and nearly everybody in the group down. Anthony can’t admit when he’s wrong or when somebody else has a better idea. He argues with other members until they agree with him just to get on with the meeting. Alicia tries to make everyone feel good by smoothing over the personality clashes in the group. Her only shortcoming is that she is too talkative and tends to sidetrack the meeting agenda. Everybody enjoys this, but they don’t get their work done. Devon, a clock-watcher who gets visibly agitated when members start running over time on activities, often helps by reminding the group about what they’re supposed to be doing. Gwen is good at “taking the bull by the horns” and coming up with ideas for accomplishing the work. She even researches relevant topics to get the team going (e.g., she brought in several articles about low-cost playground equipment). The trouble is that some of the members “tune out” when Gwen starts in on one of her “plans.” And this is only half the group!

Jamal senses his members really want to do a good job on the park project. They are keeping to their deadlines. The day their uniforms arrived they seemed to forget about their cliques and, after working hard at the park, went around town together to show off their “new look.” Jamal knows they care about each other because of the way they all pitched in to help Linda when she got injured on site last week.

Jamal is thinking about all this because he has to be out of town twice next month, once for a training workshop and later for a conference. He’d feel much better if his team

showed more togetherness. His director suggested assigning members to serve as weekly crew leader on a rotating basis. The crew leader would act as Jamal’s assistant and would be in charge when he had to be away from the project, even for a couple of days. Jamal would like his team to participate in defining this position and creating a model for the director’s approval. He knows that he needs to help them get on the right track before he can fully trust them to assume leadership responsibilities. But how?



Building a Collaborative Team Environment

Why You Do It

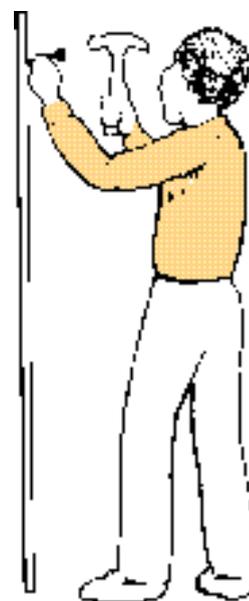
As Jamal has discovered, effective teams don't just happen; they take time and effort to develop. Many factors influence how members/volunteers of a group interact, including personality, cultural, or ethnic background, and professional motivation. By understanding the dynamics of teamwork, you will learn how to create a favorable environment in which group members/volunteers may work well together. The aim of team building is to help a group evolve into a cohesive unit whose members/volunteers not only share and work together toward the same goals but also trust and support one another and respect individual differences.

How You Do It

An effective team gets things done by identifying and removing obstacles that divert the group's attention and energy away from the task at hand. Hidden agendas, unclear roles, and confusion about how to give one another feedback are just a few of the obstacles that distract members/volunteers and keep them from accomplishing their work. As a team builder, you help members/volunteers improve their ability to get things done by enabling them to confront and deal with issues that hinder their functioning as a group.

For the purposes of this guide, we'll define a team as follows:

TEAM: a group of interdependent individuals who share a common goal and work together, often with different roles and functions, to complete the tasks necessary for achieving their goal.



“The path to greatness is along with others.”

Baltasar Gracián
Spanish Priest

A Team Has Three Basic Elements at All Times:

Structure

How the team is organized in terms of formal/informal authority and leadership; timing, location, and physical environment in which the team operates.

Task

Why the team exists; its work, purpose, and output.

Process

How the team works within the structure to accomplish its tasks.

In group process, team members have three basic needs, and everything they do during team interactions can be linked to one of these needs:

- The need to achieve tasks,
- The need to maintain group cohesion and well-being, and
- The need to express and satisfy individual interests or desires.

Sometimes a team is focused too heavily on achieving the task and may forget to pay attention to relationships among members/volunteers. When this happens, tensions may arise and simple problems may become “heavy.” At other times team members may emphasize maintaining relationships so much that they don’t have time to complete their tasks, and they may find the quality of their work slipping. As a result their motivation may decline, and they may begin to blame one another.

When a team has not developed properly and members/volunteers feel their needs are not being met, they sometimes engage in self-centered behavior to try to draw attention to, or divert attention from, themselves.

You can encourage your members/volunteers to play team roles that will promote a balance between functions of task (getting things done) and maintenance (developing members/volunteers). Task and maintenance roles may be played out by separate members/volunteers or shared by various members/volunteers at different points.

Task Roles

Initiator

Proposes tasks, goals, and/or actions; defines group problems and suggests procedures.

Informer

Offers facts and opinions, expresses feelings.

Clarifier

Interprets ideas; restates questions and suggestions; defines terms and clarifies issues for the group.

Reality Tester

Tests ideas against data to see if they will actually work.

Energizer

Causes the group to move forward; focuses on the quality of the group's decisions and the progress it's making toward its goals.

Summarizer

Pulls together related ideas; reframes suggestions; offers decisions and pulls together related ideas; reframes suggestions; offers decisions and conclusions for the group to consider.

Task Roles

directly aid in the accomplishment of the group's tasks and objectives.

Maintenance Roles

help the group get along and work together.

Maintenance Roles

Gate Keeper

Keeps the group on track; watches time; makes sure that members/volunteers participate; invites quiet people to contribute.

Harmonizer

Reduces tension; tries to resolve disagreements; tries to get group members/volunteers to explore their differences.

Encourager

Brings members/volunteers into the group's task; helps reluctant or shy members to participate; tries to get the group to see the positive aspects of ideas.

Consensus Tester

Presses the group to move toward decisions; tries to get total "buy-in" from all members/volunteers of the group on the group's decisions.

Compromiser

Lets go of ideas when the group is in conflict over a decision; admits errors and begins to search for alternatives for the sake of the group.

Unlike the task and maintenance roles described on the previous pages, the following roles can be detrimental to the group. Members/volunteers will inevitably play these roles from time to time. As a leader your job is to work with them to resolve the causes of the behavior and diminish its effects on the group. [See your tool kit for suggestions.]

Self-Interest Roles

Dominator

Asserts authority or superiority to manipulate the group; interrupts others; forces decisions or choices on the group; controls others by use of flattery or other forms of patronizing behavior; monopolizes the group's "air time" and controls who speaks.

Blocker

Keeps the group from moving forward by being unreasonably stubborn, uncooperative, or disagreeable; has hidden agendas; resists the group's progress toward the completion of its tasks.

Aggressor

Takes "pot shots" at group members/volunteers, their ideas, and their attempts to work within the group; attacks the ideas and motives of the group; uses humor as a weapon.

Avoider

Takes the group on "wild goose chases," bringing up issues not related to group tasks and insisting that these issues are relevant.

Comedian

Uses humor inappropriately to put down group members/volunteers and their ideas; keeps the group from focusing on its task.

Self-Interest Roles

meet individual objectives, usually at the expense of the group.

Ask Jamal

Remember Jamal's problems with some of his members during their team meetings? (see page 33 and 34)

Which roles (task, maintenance, or self-interest) would you say Linda, Anthony, Alicia, Devon, and Gwen are playing?

Task-Maintenance Balance

It may be useful for your team to determine which roles are played most often by which people in your group. If your group finds that some task or maintenance roles are not being played, you can help members/volunteers plan ways to fill in the gap. Role analysis also helps members/volunteers understand their value to the group. For example, members/volunteers who regularly summarize discussions may not be aware that they are making a valuable contribution. Here are other ways you can encourage the task-maintenance balance:

- Regularly review the effectiveness of team meetings; plan 5–10 minutes at the end of each meeting to evaluate how things are going.
- Celebrate when the team achieves results.
- Praise individual efforts (in addition to team celebrations).
- Design individual performance goals that emphasize both results and teamwork. Individual goals contribute directly to overall team goals.
- Assign certain team members to monitor task functions (e.g., keeping people informed about deadlines); ask others to monitor maintenance functions (e.g., making sure the “quiet” people in the group have a chance to contribute during meetings).

In addition to balancing task and maintenance roles, there are several other components critical to building a collaborative team environment. These include:

Common Purpose

Teams that succeed have a shared sense of purpose and clear goals. To establish a common purpose,

- Create a mission statement with your team.
- Allow every team member/volunteer to express his or her commitment to the team's purpose, priorities, and guidelines. Members/volunteers who do not share this commitment should be given an opportunity to express their concerns about the direction in which the team is headed.

- Create mottoes, symbols, awards, songs, T-shirts, or posters that remind team members/volunteers of their common purpose.
- Use this sense of common focus to stay on track and prioritize team tasks.

Trust

Although trust is crucial to team collaboration, it is often slow to develop and easy to lose. Trust requires the effort of all the team members/volunteers and the leader. To be trusted, you must be willing to trust others. Encourage yourself and your members/volunteers to

- Be honest.
- Follow through on commitments.
- Work to get rid of conflicts of interest. In other words, prevent situations where the good of any individual team member/volunteer is not consistent with that of the team and its other members/volunteers (over-rewarding one member/volunteer, for example, may undermine teamwork).
- Avoid talking about one another.
- Give team members/volunteers the benefit of the doubt. Part of trusting is realizing that people aren't perfect, and that we all make mistakes. In times of doubt, give members/volunteers your support and show them you are sincerely interested in seeing them succeed.

Clear Roles

Confusion over roles and expectations is a frequent cause of frustration and tension in team settings. Unclear roles can quickly lead to other problems such as distrust and hidden agendas. When people have false assumptions about who is doing what, important tasks can be left unattended. To maintain clear roles on your team,

- Review individual team member/volunteer responsibilities frequently.

Ask Jamal

How would you characterize the dynamics of Jamal's team so far?

People don't need to BE the same or THINK the same to be committed to common goals.

- Clarify responsibilities when you are formulating a plan of action. Every task in your plan should have a team member, or members/volunteers, assigned to it.
- Create a plan so that team members learn about each other's roles and responsibilities. Where feasible, rotate members/volunteers through all roles.
- Figure out ways for members/volunteers to help each other. This takes pressure off you and builds better understanding and flexibility among team members.

Open Communication

Effective communication is much more than being able to “make conversation.” It means ensuring that important information is constantly being shared and understood by everyone on the team. It also means that members/volunteers must be candid about their own wishes, needs, and concerns. To open and maintain the lines of communication, you and your team members should

- Err on the side of overcommunicating. Better to share too much information, at least in the beginning, than to have members/volunteers trying to work without enough to go on.
- Try to understand all points of view. This means soliciting input from team members and listening actively until you fully understand their intent.
- Try to clear up misunderstandings quickly and accurately. When left unresolved, misunderstandings fester among team members.
- Reinforce and recognize team members' efforts. Sharing information with the group and asking others for their ideas and opinions should be valued activities of the team.

Diversity

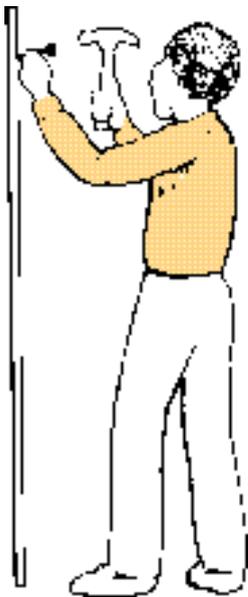
Diversity—a mix of backgrounds in terms of race, gender, culture, age, education, physical ability, and job function—can lead to a rich and rewarding team experience. People don't need to be the same or think the same to be unified. The key to success is to value team diversity and use that diversity to achieve the team's common purpose. Here are some suggestions for you and your members/volunteers:

- Remember that normal people disagree with each other. Fortunately, no two people are exactly alike. It's the diversity among members/volunteers that challenges the status quo and encourages innovation.
- Try to learn as much as possible from others. Learning about the background, ethnic heritage, and job experience of other people can enrich your own skills and knowledge. When members/volunteers express thoughts or opinions that are not shared widely in the group, give them support. This sets a precedent for other members/volunteers who want to contribute ideas they think may be "different."
- Encourage members/volunteers to "mix" their work teams from week to week or task to task. Provide a variety of ways for teams to avoid cliques.
- Evaluate new ideas based on merit rather than on who offered them or how closely they match your own preferences.
- Avoid comments that draw negative attention to a person's unique characteristics. Humor should never be used at the expense of others' identity and self-esteem.
- Don't ignore the differences among team members. Unkindly pointing out individual differences is always inappropriate, but recognizing and celebrating the diversity within the group is never a mistake!

In summary, creating a collaborative team environment requires considerable time and attention, especially early in the life of the group. But the payoff is remarkable!

Ask Jamal

Name three or four things you think Jamal could do to improve the collaborative environment for his team.



Diagnosing and Guiding Your Team through the Stages of Group Development

Why You Do It

As your members/volunteers grow from a collection of individuals into a smoothly operating team, they will go through several predictable stages. Each stage requires its own leadership approach, input, and activities. By learning to recognize what your group needs from you at each stage, you can thoughtfully and purposefully plan how to help them continue growing into a high performance team.

How You Do It

There are many models for studying group development. One widely accepted concept about group growth is that

Groups must move through several phases of development before they become high-performing teams.

While certain stages may be more pleasant for the group and some less, all are necessary if true teamwork is to be achieved. Some teams get stuck at one stage and never make it to their desired end. Other teams digress in response to changes in membership, mission, or leadership.

On the following pages, we outline the Forming-Storming-Norming-Performing-Adjourning model of group development—one model of many we hope you'll discover as you try to become a more knowledgeable supervisor and team leader.

Stages of Group Development

Forming

When a team first comes together, members/volunteers are primarily seeking structure, guidance, and a safe environment. They are usually polite and formal as they try to figure out who is similar to—or different from—them. The group issue at this stage is establishing common expectations. Members/volunteers ask themselves: “Do I wish to be included here, and with these people? Will they accept me as I am? What do I risk by working with this group, and is it worth it?” At this stage, members/volunteers look to the leader to satisfy their needs.

Storming

What quickly emerges from the forming stage is the reality that people have different needs, views, styles, and backgrounds. Individuals begin to challenge these differences, especially as they relate to power and decision making. The issue facing the team at this stage is how to manage the inevitable conflicts. Behavior in the group may be quite dramatic, including verbal attacks on the leader, on other members/volunteers, or on subgroups. Or it may be more covert, including things such as long, tedious discussions that go nowhere or a widespread lack of enthusiasm. The leadership issue at this point is “counter-dependency.” While members/volunteers felt dependent on the leader during the forming stage, they now try to pull away from any kind of leadership, formal or informal.

Norming

As group members/volunteers struggle to create an acceptable process for making decisions and dealing with conflict, they lead themselves into the norming stage. They develop rules or norms of behavior (e.g., one person speaks at a time; every member’s/volunteer’s opinion is valuable; will solicit and exchange honest feedback). Although the reasons for rules and norms are usually healthy, they are sometimes used in a nonproductive way. The expectation for members to play by the rules may be so powerful that it stifles individual creativity and expression. In crew-based programs, group cohesion may be so strong that members/volunteers feel they have to do everything—eat, drink, have fun—together and individual members/volunteers may be reluctant to express ideas that run counter to the will of the group.

Performing

Over time, members/volunteers begin to care more deeply about each other and about the group's purpose and task. They come to recognize and acknowledge individuality, and tasks are accomplished by using the talents, skills, and abilities of each person on the team. One sign that the group has reached the performing stage is that members/volunteers can disagree with the majority opinion of the group without being labeled as bad or disloyal. Leadership style at this stage is characterized by "interdependence." Members/volunteers feel free to develop their skills and learn from the actions and behavior of their peers, and the leader can rely on members/volunteers to perform—consistently.

Adjourning

The adjourning stage happens when the group has achieved its original purpose or when the time allotted for the group activity has run out. In National Service programs, this is usually at the end of the project year when members/volunteers are nearly finished with their service and will soon be moving on to new employment or to new educational and/or service opportunities. Not surprisingly, high-performing teams have a tough time saying goodbye. Members/volunteers who have learned how to make things happen out of the collective resources and skills of the group must now turn their attention to planning their individual future endeavors. Many feel disoriented and need the group leader's assistance as they begin their transition to life after National Service. More than anything, members/volunteers need opportunities to celebrate their accomplishments and personal growth, to reflect on and share their emotions concerning what the group has meant to them, and to express their hopes and fears about the future.

It is important to note that this group development model is not necessarily linear. A group may form and norm before moving into serious storming. Or a group may go back and forth between storming and norming for some time before they firmly arrive at the performing stage. Use the model as a general guide for understanding what members/volunteers may need from their leader and from each other at given points during the program cycle.

The chart on the following pages summarizes several typical actions a leader may take at each of the four stages.

Forming-Storming-Norming-Performing-Adjourning

What You Do As Team Leader

- Provide structure by holding regular meetings and clarifying roles and tasks
- Encourage participation by all, domination by none
- Share all relevant information
- Encourage members/volunteers to direct questions to you and to each other
- Help members/volunteers to learn about other members'/volunteers' areas of expertise and preferred ways of working

- Establish a norm that supports the expression of different viewpoints
- Engage in joint problem solving
- Encourage members/volunteers to state how they feel, as well as what they think, when they have an obvious concern about an issue
- Discuss the group's decision-making process and share decision-making responsibility appropriately
- Provide needed resources to the extent possible and when it is not possible, explain why.

- Talk openly about your issues and concerns
- Request and give both positive and (constructive) negative feedback in the group
- Rotate the management of meetings, using members/volunteers as facilitators, process observers, etc. (see Meeting Management in Chapter 4)

Forming

Storming

Norming

Performing

- Make consensus decisions on challenging problems
- Delegate as much as possible
- Jointly set challenging goals
- Look for new opportunities to increase the group's scope, and stretch members'/volunteers' talents
- Appreciate members'/volunteers' contributions
- Develop members/volunteers to their fullest potential through task assignments and feedback
- Help members/volunteers avoid stagnation and burnout
- Question assumptions and traditional ways of behaving
- Develop mechanisms for on-going self-assessment

Adjourning

- Provide opportunities for members/volunteers to reflect on and assess their achievements and positive personal change and growth
- Provide plenty of opportunities for celebrating success
- Help members/volunteers learn to say goodbye and feel comfortable offering long-distance (or across-town) support after they have said goodbye
- Assist members/volunteers in dealing with any unfinished business
- Help members/volunteers set goals and make timely plans for their post-National Service lives
- Ensure that members/volunteers have access to resources that will help them make the transition

Added Insights

In many (if not most) cases, your team “begins” when you come together for pre-service orientation or training. You and your members participate in structured activities that focus on role clarification, problem solving, and communication. It is important to integrate this training into daily tasks and continue meeting regularly once your project is in full swing.

During the forming stage, it's possible to overstructure your team to the point of dampening member/volunteer morale. If guidelines and rules are too strict, members/volunteers may think you don't trust them or may feel they're not capable.

As you might guess, the storming stage is difficult for the team and the leader. People have very different ideas about how much conflict is "okay"—and even desirable—in teamwork. Many feel a sense of risk when talking about sensitive issues. The leader's role is particularly important in setting a norm that says different viewpoints are not only acceptable but necessary in coming up with creative solutions.

In the norming stage, a team may be so cohesive that its members/volunteers have trouble relating to others outside the team. For example, your crew members/volunteers may become so "tight" with each other that they begin to compete against other crews or have trouble relating to community partners. Another tendency during the norming stage is for some members/volunteers to feel so comfortable in a particular role that they resist changes in assignments for the next project. Rotating members/volunteers in and out of leadership roles, as well as providing members/volunteers with cross-training, will help to address these issues.

When teams reach the performing stage, they can pretty much manage themselves. They are successful and proud of it. Sometimes though, high performing teams push too hard and overreach and may risk burnout. In such cases, your role is to help team members/volunteers keep their work in perspective and in balance with their personal lives.

In the final stage, adjourning, members/volunteers may need extra encouragement to reflect meaningfully on the group experience. Many people would prefer to ignore the fact that the end is coming in an attempt to avoid feelings of loss and sadness. This is not the time for the group leader to fade away! At this stage the leader needs to be more active than ever in helping members/volunteers embrace change.

Back to our friend, Jamal...

What stage of group development do you think Jamal's crew is in?

What are some specific actions Jamal can take to help his team develop further?

Just do it. (Then be sure to talk about it.)

Facilitating Team-Building Activities

Sometimes, during the course of team building, you may want to use structured games and other activities to help your group address a particular issue. For example, if group members/volunteers are having trouble giving each other constructive feedback, role playing may give them a better understanding of how to do it. (See the section on team building in the Suggested Reading List, Appendix A, for types of structured activities.) When using structured exercises like role playing (or case studies, etc.), keep in mind that “processing” the activity afterwards can be as important a learning opportunity as the activity itself.

No team-building activity can be successful until it has been “processed” by the group. Team members must have a chance to discuss what happened and what they learned.

A Few Processing Questions to Get You Started

What are your observations about...?

Where did you have difficulties?

What surprised you?

What worked?

What strategies were used?

What were turning points?

How does what you said relate to...or differ from...?

What would have been a different way of looking at...?

What are some similarities you notice in what people have said?

What were your reactions?

How did you feel about...?

Making Decisions in Groups

Why You Do It

In many small groups, the decision-making process is never defined. The result is that the person with the most formal authority (i.e., the supervisor) makes the decisions after considering the opinions and politics of the group. In cases where the decision does not require a high level of commitment from members/volunteers, this autocratic approach will probably work. If, on the other hand, the issue is important to the group, you need their support in order to move forward. In these cases, voting or consensus building are more appropriate options. In general, the more commitment or agreement an issue requires, the more difficult the process is to achieve it. When less commitment is required, and less thorough analysis, the group naturally assumes less responsibility for the outcome. As leader, you will avoid conflict and confusion if you clarify with your group exactly how decisions will be made during a meeting or work project. Your members/volunteers will also acquire a valuable life skill if you help them learn how to reach consensus on important and/or difficult problems.

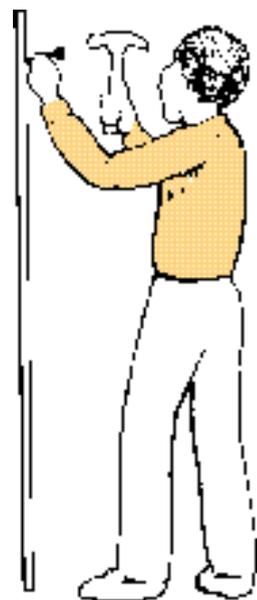
How You Do It

The four most common types of decisions are autocratic, democratic, consensual, and unanimous.

Autocratic—The decision is made by one individual (usually the supervisor or person in charge) or by a small group.

Democratic—Every one gets a vote, and the option with the most votes wins. Some groups use a simple majority (51%); others require a two-thirds majority. Many group decisions are made by voting.

Consensual—All team members commit to support the decision at hand, though some may not fully agree with it. Those with reservations at least feel they are not compromising



“Courage happens
when people unite.”

Anonymous

their ethics, values, or interests by joining in the consensus.

Unanimous—Everyone agrees that the best possible solution has been reached. You will probably encounter few problems that are worth the time required to achieve unanimity.

Consensus is more common.

Decision Making— A Final Note on Consensus

When you are choosing which decision-making approach to use in a particular situation, keep in mind that consensus requires considerable effort and time on the part of the leader and the group members/volunteers. It is most appropriate in situations where

- the group has clear authority to make and implement the decision and
- there is a need for total commitment on the part of the entire group.

For example, a crew working on a highly visible and controversial park restoration project may need to reach agreement by consensus on how they will handle hostile remarks from passers-by.

You and your team will need to make consensus decisions and, at least in the beginning, it probably won't be easy.

In your tool kit, the article “Facilitating for Consensus” explains in depth how to facilitate reaching consensus in a group. Use it as a resource and guide when you are preparing to work through an important decision with your members/volunteers.

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Pages 10–14 adapted from: *Tips for Teens*, by William Belgard, Kimball Fisher, and Steven Rayner, 1995.

Pages 18–20 adapted from: “Developing High Performing Teams,” by Jane Moosbrucker, in *Managing in the Age of Change*, pp. 46–55, New York: NTL/Irwin Professional Publishing, 1995.

It's a Wrap

Jamal Takes Action with His Team



Jamal calls Betty for some counsel on working with his crew. After listening for a while, Betty says it sounds to her as though Jamal's group is in the "storming" stage of their development process. She tells Jamal he is probably the best one to determine specific actions, but she offers this general suggestion: that Jamal try to spend as much time as possible with the crew — not do everything for them, but with them. Jamal thinks Betty is probably right, and he begins making specific plans of his own for addressing some of the crew's most pressing problems.

First Jamal realizes he has a tendency to praise individuals (and even individual cliques) more often than the group as a whole. He decides to make a conscious effort to balance the two and notices an immediate positive effect on the team. One of the first things he does is praise the total group's performance in handling Linda's accident.

Next, Jamal decides to address the issue of conduct during meetings. Using an activity he found in a team-building book, he has the group review and modify their original working norms. The norms are posted in the main meeting room, and Jamal has given every member an individual copy. He sets aside the last 15 minutes on the weekly meeting agenda for the group to discuss how well they are respecting the norms. He continues to use this time to get members to

talk about their group process (e.g., Did everyone participate during the meeting? Did anyone dominate the floor too long? Did the group finish the agenda? and so on). Jamal decides to keep the issue of punctuality separate from group norms. He formalizes a rule for it and enforces it consistently and fairly. Once he's done this, the crew seems almost relieved.

The third issue Jamal decides to tackle is cliques. He thinks it would be best for the members to address this as a team. He and the crew jointly agree to criteria for selecting and rotating the small work teams each week. Members agree to let Jamal decide how many people should be assigned to each work team. Jamal pushes for this because he wants to break the team of its habit of always dividing into groups of three, no matter what the task required. The work groups are now selected every Friday. Before members disperse for the weekend, they discuss their specific responsibilities and goals for the upcoming week. If the project activities are complicated or require a lot of coordination, the members write out their responsibilities in the form of an action plan.

Jamal wants to build on the enthusiasm and sense of common purpose the crew felt when they got their uniforms, so he asks the project director to lead the team in a structured activity for creating a mission

statement. Jamal doesn't feel confident enough in his facilitation skills to do this alone. Unfortunately, the project director isn't "in touch" with the group, and the activity falls flat. Both Jamal and the director realize they didn't work together enough beforehand. Jamal knows he needs to do something else to follow up, but he'll wait awhile.

Jamal attends a one-day workshop in managing diversity. When he returns, he shares his learning and materials with the crew. The crew members are so impressed with Jamal's enthusiasm and concern for the issues, they ask him to repeat the workshop with them, or to get the trainers to work with them directly. Jamal opts for the latter, and the training is scheduled for the end of the month.

The final issue Jamal decides to address is getting team members to the point where they can work without his constant direction. He is still thinking about the conference he wants to attend. Maybe he can use this opportunity to address the larger issue of moving his team more fully into the norming stage, hoping for high performance as an eventual outcome. He carefully presents the weekly crew leader idea to the group to test their interest in it.

Most of the members think it's "just the thing they need." Predictably, a couple of people are skeptical (though still

curious). Jamal uses both the project director and Betty as resources to work out a process for addressing the issue. He wants members to have direct input on developing the team leader model, and he hopes to be able to build consensus around a few issues (e.g., what guidelines the crew leader will follow, how the crew leader will interface with Jamal and the project director, what the parameters of the position will be, etc.).

Both Jamal and the project director make it clear to the members what their overall goals and expectations are, but they let the group implement their own ideas. Jamal sets aside an afternoon for the group to work on the crew leader model. It takes that much time and then some. The group creates the position, decides on an implementation date, and makes assignments for the first three weeks. Ironically, the group chooses Linda as their first weekly leader. Linda is surprised and flattered and takes the assignment seriously. This gives her a chance to demonstrate her best skills, which in turn generates praise from the group. Linda's whole attitude seems to be changing. The crew will be able to test out the model over the next couple of weeks before Jamal's travel dates come up. He is hopeful that by then he will feel comfortable leaving.



Lessons from Geese

Fact 1:

As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an “uplift” for the birds that follow. By flying in “V” formation, the whole flock adds 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson:

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the strength—i.e., the “uplift”—of the group.

Fact 2:

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

Lesson:

If we have as much sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help, and give our help to others.

Fact 3:

When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation, and another goose flies to the point position.

Lesson:

It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. Like geese, people are

dependent on each other’s skills, capabilities, and unique gifts, talents, and resources.

Fact 4:

Geese flying in formation honk to encourage those in front to keep up their speed.

Lesson:

We need to make sure our “honking” is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement—where members stand by their heart or core values and encourage the heart and core of others—the production is greater.

Fact 5:

When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help or protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

Lesson:

If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times.

The next time you see a formation of geese, remember that it is a reward, a challenge, and a privilege to be a contributing member of a team.

[Source: A speech given by Angeles Arrien at the 1991 Organizational Development Network, based on the work of Milton Olson.]

Characteristics of an Effective Team



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Effective Team Members

1. The team members share a sense of purpose or common goals, and each team member is willing to work toward achieving these goals.
2. The team is aware of, and interested in, its own processes and norms.
3. The team identifies its own resources and uses them, depending on its needs. The team willingly accepts the influence and leadership of the members whose resources are relevant to the immediate task.
4. The team members continually try to listen to and clarify what is being said and show interest in what others say and feel.
5. Differences of opinion are encouraged and freely expressed. The team does not demand narrow conformity or adherence to formats that inhibit freedom of movement and expression.
6. The team is willing to acknowledge conflict and focus on it until it is resolved or managed in a way that does not reduce the effectiveness of those involved.
7. The team puts its energy into problem solving rather than allowing its energy to be drained by interpersonal issues or competitive struggles.
8. Roles are balanced and shared to accomplish tasks and improve team cohesion and morale.
9. To encourage risk taking and creativity, mistakes are treated as opportunities to learn rather than reasons for punishment.
10. The team is responsive to the changing needs of its members and to its external environment.
11. Team members are committed to periodically evaluating the team's performance.
12. The team is attractive to its members, who identify with it and consider it a source of both professional and personal growth.
13. Developing a climate of trust is recognized as crucial in the development of all of the above characteristics.

[Adapted from: *Team Building as Group Development*, by Philip G. Hanson and Bernard Lubin, *Organizational Development Journal*, Spring, 1986.]

Characteristics of an Effective Team

CONTINUED 2 OF 4

Effective Team Leaders

1. Communicate
2. Are open, honest, and fair
3. Make decisions with input from others
4. Act consistently
5. Give the team members the information they need to do their jobs
6. Set goals and emphasize them
7. Keep focused through follow up
8. Listen to feedback and ask questions
9. Show loyalty to the company and to the team members
10. Create an atmosphere of growth
11. Are visible
12. Give praise and recognition
13. Criticize constructively and address problems
14. Develop plans
15. Share their mission and goals
16. Display tolerance and flexibility
17. Demonstrate assertiveness
18. Exhibit a willingness to change
19. Treat team members with respect
20. Make themselves available and accessible
21. Want to take charge
22. Accept ownership for team decisions
23. Set guidelines for how team members are to treat one another
24. Recognize, celebrate, and effectively utilize the uniqueness of each team member

[Adapted from: *Teamwork: We Have Met the Enemy and They Are Us*, by M.M. Starcewich and S.J. Stowell, Bartlesville, OK: The Center for Management and Organization Effectiveness, 1990.]

Characteristics of an Effective Team

CONTINUED 3 OF 4

Effective Team Members/Volunteers

1. Support the team leader
2. Help the team leader to succeed
3. Ensure that all viewpoints are explored
4. Express opinions, both for and against
5. Compliment the team leader on team efforts
6. Provide open, honest, and accurate information
7. Support, protect, and defend both the team and the team leader
8. Act in a positive and constructive manner
9. Provide appropriate feedback
10. Understand personal and team roles
11. Accept ownership for team decisions
12. Recognize that each member serves as a team leader
13. Balance appropriate levels of participation
14. Participate voluntarily
15. Maintain confidentiality
16. Show loyalty to the company, the team leader, and the team
17. View criticism as an opportunity to learn
18. State problems, along with alternative solutions and options
19. Give praise and recognition when warranted
20. Operate within the parameters of team rules
21. Privately confront the team leader when his or her behavior is not helping the team
22. Share ideas freely and enthusiastically
23. Encourage others to express their ideas fully
24. Ask one another for opinions and listen to them
25. Criticize ideas, not people
26. Avoid disruptive behavior, such as side conversations and inside jokes
27. Avoid defensiveness when fellow team members disagree with their ideas
28. Attend meetings regularly and promptly

[Items 1 through 20 adapted from *Teamwork: We Have Met the Enemy and They Are Us* (pp. 118–119), by M.M. Starcevic and S.J. Stowell, 1990; items 21 through 28 adapted from *How to Train and Lead a Quality Circle*, by R.G. James and A.J. Elkins, 1983, San Diego, CA: University Associates.]

Characteristics of an Effective Team

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Symptoms of Team Problems

SYMPTOM	DESCRIPTION	RESULT
Backbiting and complaining	Members of the team openly complain about and find fault with one another	Control over team members is lost because members are not clear about standards
Suspecting a “spy”	Members of the team suspect and distrust new members	New members have difficulty breaking into the established team
Two coalitions	The team has two factions, one of which has very little influence or power	The team is not cohesive
Personal stress	Stress shows in the team members in the form of “blowing up” and physical symptoms	Team members feel threatened and become less efficient and more dissatisfied
Combative behavior	Team members resort to yelling and combative behavior, playing the devil’s advocate	Team members express conflict through the use of threats, attacks, and so on
Too much detail	Team members scrutinize every detail and check on all aspects of minor and major decisions	Team members distrust one another and fear being penalized for errors
Too much time	Too much time is spent on decisions on minor issues brought to the leadership	Team members feel a lack of trust directly related to team problem solving
Shifting and changing decisions	Decisions are often changed shortly after being made	Team members are not willing to commit the team to a unified course of action

[Adapted from: *Building Productive Teams* (p. 101), by G.H. Varney, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.]

A Few Things to Watch for (when observing a team's process)



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Communication

Who talks to whom?
Who is dominant?
Who is quiet?
How concise and clear is the communication?

Leadership

How does the leadership emerge?
Who are the formal leaders?
Who are the informal leaders?

Decision making

Dictatorial?
Voting?
Consensus?
What kind of “games” are being played?

Group style

Aggressive?
Passive?
Assertive?

Conflict management

How does the team handle differences in
Age?
Sex?
Sexual preference?
Race?
Experience?
Expertise?
Education?
Opinion?

A Dozen Tips for Team Building



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Tip 1 Be patient and caring with your team.

Teams are like families. They are composed of individuals who have their own special skills, perspectives, and challenges. Remember to be patient and caring with each other as you work through your problems together. Be supportive. Reduce status markers that make some team members seem more important than others. Eliminate inappropriate titles, special treatments, or privileges. Treat everyone fairly. You'll measure your accomplishments in a series of small improvements, often feeling as though you take three steps forward and then two steps back, seemingly losing hard-won ground. More often than not, it is simple perseverance that determines the difference between the winners and the losers. No one ever said teams are easy. But they are usually better than the alternatives.

Tip 2 Assume the best about people.

You will find that very few problems are caused intentionally by carelessness or deviousness. Sometimes, in our frustration, we assume that others we work with are lazy, mean, or stupid. This is counterproductive. Comments about how one group always causes problems, or how only project

coordinators are supposed to make decisions, or how the community partners are trying to make things difficult are not likely to improve things and get in the way of teamwork. They cause people to defend their points of view and fight to win for "their side." They make it hard to sit down and work things out together. Good problem solving has to start from a foundation of mutual trust and a common desire to improve. Even though you may encounter a few malicious people, the vast majority share the common goal of wanting their teams to succeed. Effective teams rise above their differences and focus instead on common ground. Assume that the problems you see were caused by good people doing the best they could with the information, systems, and skills they had at the time. Then work to improve their information, systems, and skills.

Tip 3 Fix the problem, don't fix the blame.

Experience shows that placing blame doesn't solve problems; it just causes them to go underground. When people believe that discussing problems will cause them embarrassment or have a negative effect on their job status, they will not discuss the problem. Steady improvement requires open and honest communication. The key is to avoid blaming and focus instead on solving the problem.

A Dozen Tips for Team Building

CONTINUED 2 OF 4

Tip 4 Focus on behavior, not attitude.

You can't change other people's personalities and attitudes. But together, you can help each other demonstrate effective behaviors. Remember this when working with others and giving them feedback. Be specific and focus on the real things people say and do. Don't say, "You make me mad," or "You're lazy." There is nothing people can do in response to such comments. Instead say, "When you talk to people about my work performance without speaking to me about it first it makes me angry," or "When you leave without cleaning up your project area, that means I have to do the work you left and my work too." These comments help people know what they can do to make an improvement and set the stage for working through the issue.

Tip 5 Establish regular, effective team meetings.

Most team problems come from miscommunication. Establish a regular time and place for team meetings. Use these meeting times to pass along information, clarify who is supposed to do what, update each other on your assignments, check progress toward

your goals, and take some time to talk with each other. Use information systems that provide you with up-to-date job information. Create a team climate that fosters frequent, open, and honest discussion where people can share their feelings and experiences without fear.

Tip 6 Focus on the goal, not the obstacles.

Although your team must learn how to resolve problems successfully, avoid getting caught in an endless downward spiral of problem solving. Just as there are obstacles on the track in a high-hurdle race, there are problems in the way of effective team-based operations. Staying too focused on an individual hurdle can make you lose the race. Too much focus on problems can be discouraging, depressing, and distracting. Teams keep motivation high by focusing on the goal, not by draining their enthusiasm in an endless series of difficulties. Effective teams are purpose oriented rather than problem oriented. They renew their energy and commitment by focusing on their mission and not allowing their normal day-to-day frustrations slow them down. They celebrate their victories, encourage each other, and maintain their team spirit by reminding themselves about the overall race,

A Dozen Tips for Team Building

CONTINUED 3 OF 4

even when all they can see ahead is a seemingly endless series of hurdles.

Tip 7 Involve the right people in problem solving.

People are most committed to implementing ideas that they participate in developing. Remember this when you decide who should be involved in solving team problems. Does this mean that every problem needs to be solved by the whole team? No. Many can and should be delegated to a subgroup, individual, or team leader.

Tip 8 Don't use up all your energy on unsolvable problems.

Serious problems should be resolved immediately before they grow into monumental issues requiring extreme measures. Some problems, however, can't be resolved at all, and continual discussion will aggravate them and distract your team from "running the race" the best they can. Some problems are best ignored and will resolve themselves over time. Only a skillful and well-trained team will know the best course of action. A good team leader coaches the team through these issues successfully.

Tip 9

Develop the skills and discipline of effective problem solving.

Team problem solving is a skill. The tips in this ready reference will not be much help to your team if you haven't properly diagnosed the problem or if you ignore other elements of effective problem solving. Don't worry if you find, as most teams do, that these methods seem a little awkward at first. As your team matures and you regularly practice using these methods, you will find that they feel more natural. Just keep at it.

Tip 10 Know your roles, purpose, boundaries, and resources.

Many problems result from a lack of clarity about what you are supposed to do and how much help you will get to do it. Strive to understand your task as a team and as a team member or team leader. Understand your new roles and responsibilities. Team-based organizations have fundamentally different assignments. If you don't understand these roles, get some help from your team leader or project coordinator.

Understanding these things will keep you focused on results and customers, not on activities and busy work. And once that is clear in your mind, get agreements from the

A Dozen Tips for Team Building

CONTINUED 4 OF 4

appropriate people about your purpose. Don't assume that, if other people don't say anything, they agree with you. Verbalize agreements to ensure mutual understanding. Good questions to ask when you are developing these performance agreements are: How will we know if we have successfully completed this work? and What time, money, and other constraints are we working with?"

Tip 11 Focus on results.

Remember to stay focused on results. Don't get off track. Avoid the temptation to get swept up in urgent day-to-day demands. It is easy to get carried away by activities or bound up in programs, red tape, and bureaucracy that don't actually produce results. Keep thinking about your goals. Create a solid information system that will tell you regularly how you are achieving results. Post this information where people can see it and use it to make better team decisions. Measure key result areas and make

sure you are getting good results in quality, cost, responsiveness, timeliness, or whatever your team and team leader agree are the overarching purposes of your organization.

Tip 12 Remember that the team is not an end in itself.

Teams are a means to accomplishing something, not an end in themselves. Instead of measuring how many teams you have, measure your results. Instead of asking how to make things more comfortable for the team, ask how to deliver better service to the customer. If your team becomes too inwardly focused, it will not survive. It doesn't matter how good your team is if you don't have products and services that customers value and meet their needs. Team members will be happier and many team problems will dissolve if your operation is successful. People like to be on a winning team.

[Adapted from: *Tips for Teams*, by William Belgard, Kimball Fisher, and Steven Rayner, 1995.]

Working With a Diverse Team—A Few Tips



PAGE 1 OF 2

Tip 1 Create Diversity.

Create diversity in your team (i.e., work to ensure a mix of backgrounds in terms of race, gender, culture, age, education, physical ability, job function, etc.). It is natural that we are most comfortable around people who are like us—they validate our point of view. We know how to act and what to expect, and we usually avoid offensive behavior. But teams composed of people with the same background are usually not effective over time. They look at problems the same way and usually come up with the same ideas over and over again. Diversity in a team creates fresh perspectives and fosters creativity and innovation. But this requires that we respect people who are different from us.

Tip 2 Encourage Different Ideas.

Respect ideas that are different from yours. Make a personal commitment not to judge new ideas immediately but to try to understand and build on those ideas. You can make a conscious decision to hold back from immediately evaluating ideas and can change your responses to new concepts. You will not only be more open and receptive to new thoughts and perspectives but will also

be a wonderful example to other members of the team.

Tip 3 Raise Awareness.

Do some diversity awareness-raising activities. Appreciating diversity is sometimes difficult when people have never experienced different backgrounds, traditions, values, and approaches—for example, if they have never had a friend of another faith or cultural background.

Tip 4 Confront Issues—NOW.

Confront diversity problems immediately. Even though allowing an occasional comment may seem like the best approach (we don't want to make a mountain out of a molehill), any tolerance of closed thinking will send a strong signal to the team that it is acceptable to shut out others based on bias and prejudice. It is never inappropriate to speak out in support of new and different ideas or to confront subtle biases. Race, gender, age, religious, or cultural jokes are never appropriate in a team setting, even when they have nothing to do with anyone on the team. In confronting these biases you might say something like:

Working With a Diverse Team—A Few Tips

CONTINUED 2 OF 2

Simon, I know your comment about Dana not working on her Sabbath wasn't intended to hurt her, but her religious commitments are as important to her as yours are to you. Let's try to respect each other's cultures and values—it's what makes our team strong and successful.

Tip 5 Develop Commonalities.

Create common ground. Have diversity in team composition, but share common team values as a way to resolve conflicts and focus on the same overall goals. Each team member must be able to support and commit to the

values of the work and the team. These are the fundamentals behind all the decisions and actions that occur throughout the course of doing projects. Use the following guidelines to develop positive team values:

- Do what is right.
- Do it together.
- Do what helps others.
- Do what makes sense.

[Adapted from: *Tips for Teams*, by William Belgard, Kimball Fisher, and Steven Rayner, 1995.]

Disruptive Group Situations



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In a group environment, members/volunteers may exhibit certain common types of behavior that can be disruptive or harmful to the group. Not all of them will occur in your group—in fact, maybe none of them. However, you should be prepared to handle any situation. Below are some examples of such behavior and suggested ways of dealing with them.

1. Can't get group started

There is a lot of fooling around and people are wandering. Remind them it's their group, and they are wasting time. Ask, "Can we get started?"

2. Group is quiet or unresponsive

A quiet period in the group is not always something negative; however, if it lasts for an extensive period of time and becomes uncomfortable, then it may be a good idea to directly address the situation by saying something like, "The group seems quiet now." Wait for a response; if there is none, ask, "Why do you think we are being so quiet?"

3. Group lacks seriousness

Lack of seriousness can be a problem if it occurs at the wrong time. Try pointing out the problem and getting feedback from the group by saying, "Some of us don't appear to

be taking this seriously. What seems to be the problem?"

4. Everyone talks at once

Everyone is talking at the same time. Simply remind the group of the ground rules by saying something like, "Let's remember our ground rules and listen while others are talking. We all have something important to say, but if we all talk at once we may miss something."

5. Side conversations

Side conversations disrupt the group and cause members to lose focus. To handle this situation, you can say, "There are some side conversations going on and we're losing focus. Let's stay on target." If the conversations continue, it may be a good idea to confront the members/volunteers directly during the group. If at all possible, however, try talking to them outside the group and sitting between them for the next meeting.

6. Group is off the subject

If the discussion has veered off the subject but is serving a purpose, you may want to let it go or "go with the flow," so to speak. However, if the group is totally off track and the discussion is not serving a worthwhile purpose, try saying, "This is interesting, but we've gotten off the subject. Can we get back on track?"

Disruptive Group Situations

CONTINUED 2 OF 3

7. Cliques

When cliques form, it's best to talk individually to the group members/volunteers involved, outside the group. Let them know it's great they are getting to know that person or those persons and encourage them to get to know others. Do more activities in the group that will help them to mingle and get to know others better.

8. Tension

If tension arises in the group and you can't figure out any reason for it, and there are no particular members/volunteers involved, you may want to address the group directly by saying, "There seems to be some tension in the group. Why do you think that is?" If the tension can be traced to a few particular members/volunteers, however, it's best to talk to them about it outside the group.

9. Hot debate

When discussion gets too heated, it's best to remind the group of the ground rules. Try saying, "We aren't communicating right now. This seems to be a very controversial subject, and I'm sure everyone has something important to say, so let's give everyone a chance. Remember—listen to others and no negative statements. We should also support each other. That does not mean you have to agree, but let's at least respect each other's opinions."

10. War between two or more members/volunteers of the group

When two or more members/volunteers of the group don't seem to be getting along, it should be handled as soon as possible outside the group. If this situation is not checked, it will tear the group apart. If it feels right, and you choose to broach the subject in group, you might say, "I'm sensing some tension between some of us. Can we talk about this?"

11. The quiet person

Remember that each group member has the right to pass; however, if one person is being unusually quiet you may try addressing a question directly to them, such as, "How about you, Jane?"

12. The constant talker

When it becomes obvious that one group member/volunteer is always dominating the conversation, you should say to that person, "We'd like to hear what you have to say, but let's give everyone a chance."

13. Members/volunteers interrupting each other

When group members/volunteers interrupt each other, remind them of the ground rules and say, "John was sharing, let's let him finish." Remember to go back and address the issue of the person who interrupted.

Disruptive Group Situations

CONTINUED 3 OF 3

14. The reluctant member/volunteer

A group member/volunteer who doesn't want to be there is a problem, especially if the person is open or even hostile about it. Try involving that person in a friendly and supportive way. Most of the behavior resulting from the problem can be dealt with through the ground rules. If the behavior continues, however, you may need to talk with the person outside the group. Usually,

the group itself will take care of the problem as they realize that, if they don't, it may tear the group apart.

15. Other issues

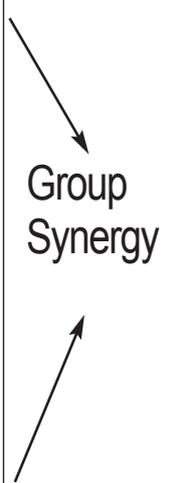
Other member issues may crop up, such as an incessant comic, a member/volunteer with a crush on you, etc. These issues are best dealt with outside the group. The person involved often needs special attention or extra time.

Stages of Group Development



PAGE 1 OF 1

GROUP STAGES	INTER-PERSONAL ISSUES	GROUP BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS	GROUP TASKS/ ISSUES	LEADERSHIP ISSUES
Forming	Inclusion	Awareness of similarities; anger and frustration; superficiality and politeness; ambiguity and confusion	Membership definition; similarities and differences; orientation and introductions	Dependence
Storming	Control	Establishment of operating rules; attempt to create order; attacks on leader; emotional response to task demands	Decision-making process; power and influence	Counter-dependence
Norming	Affection	Cohesion; negotiation	Functional relationships	Inter-dependence
Performing		Growth, insight, and collaboration	Productivity	
Adjourning	Grieving and farewells	Sadness and closure	Conclusion and celebration	Parting



[Adapted from: "The Group: A Cycle from Birth to Death," by Richard C. Weber in *Reading Book for Human Relations Training*, NTL Institute, 1982.]

Facilitation Skills



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Facilitation skills are critical for trainers and group facilitators. They are essential tools to ensure active participation both during training sessions and with work groups. Facilitation skills include the following:

Asking Questions

The facilitator asks open-ended, clarifying, and, occasionally, closed questions to guide the discussion and to expand both the facilitator's and the participants' understanding of the subject being discussed. Open-ended questions usually begin with what, how, when, where and are posed in such a way that the participants cannot answer yes or no, but must expand the base of information. Clarifying questions are posed to help the facilitator clarify the situation and often begin with which, why, do you mean to say..., etc. Closed questions can be answered with a yes or no and are asked to get specific information.

Paraphrasing

The facilitator, using her or his own words, interprets what the participant is saying and how the participant is feeling. The purpose

of paraphrasing is to determine if the facilitator understands what the speaker is trying to get across as well as the affective (emotional) aspect of what is being shared. This gives the speaker the opportunity to acknowledge the listener's understanding or to correct it. It also clarifies what has been said for other participants.

Summarizing

The facilitator, at key moments during the course of the training session or meeting, identifies the principal elements or details of the discussion up to that point. The purpose of summarizing is to end one phase of the discussion and either terminate the session or move on to the next phase. Summarizing is valuable in controlling the pace of a session or meeting and keeping the discussion on track.

Encouraging

The facilitator—aware that certain types of behaviors can be interpreted as encouraging and certain others as discouraging—encourages the speaker to say more about the situation through facial expressions, body language, and comments.

[Excerpted from: "Facilitating for Consensus," by James A. McCaffery, in *Facilitation Skills for Trainers, Facilitators, and Group Leaders*, Volume II, Training Resources Group, Inc., Alexandria, VA.]

Facilitating for Consensus



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Problem-solving work groups are composed of people who are close to the problem. In general, these groups have two purposes. First, they attempt to analyze problems and generate creative solutions. Second, they try to build understanding on the issues and secure agreement to carry out the solutions that the group develops.

Facilitating groups to achieve these two purposes may seem like a simple process. Unfortunately, it's not. To facilitate problem-solving work groups well involves some fairly refined skills. In this chapter, we'll discuss some pre-event issues you should consider, and offer guidelines and specific techniques you can use to help groups reach sound decisions.

Considerations Before the Event

As a facilitator, you should begin with a very clear understanding of the goals of the problem-solving group. Identify the outcomes that would make the situation better. This does not mean that you must determine exact solutions or agreements in advance. But, you need to be clear about problems the group needs to analyze and the kinds of solutions that should be developed.

A clear understanding of the issues will help you determine what key decisions must be made. It will also enable you to determine, during the meeting or event, whether the group's discussion is generally on target or whether it is focused too much on less important issues. When you think something is important, it's critical to push the group to make certain they have examined all aspects of the issue or to test rigorously for agreement. When you think something is less important, you need to help the group move on. Your ability to make these facilitation decisions rests on how well you understand the issues under consideration.

On the other hand, you can also know "too much" about the problem area, and you can get in the way of group progress or stop it altogether. To be effective, you need to be honestly aware of your own biases about the issues. Beware of the facilitator who says, "Oh, I'm neutral on this issue" or "I'm an objective party here." There is no such thing. Be aware of your own biases about issues or people so you can adjust for them. As the facilitator, you have power during a meeting because you know both the process and the content. You can negate the group's effectiveness or ensure that solutions will not work.

Facilitating Decisions During a Meeting

Keeping Focused

When moving a group toward a decision, the first requirement is to keep the group's attention focused on common purposes. There are several ways to do this.

- Start the meeting by sharing or reaffirming common purposes, making sure everyone is clear about them and getting agreement.
- When you see the group drift off target, bring them back to the central purpose. (For example, say, "What we are talking about now is [x] and our purpose here today is [y]; let's make sure [x] is related to [y], or move back to the main topic.")
- Relate key points and summaries to the purpose. (For example, you could say, "We have explored these two aspects of the problem. If we can agree on an approach to dealing with these aspects, we'll achieve one of the purposes here today—[x].")
- Restate the purpose to help group members who are having a prolonged disagreement. (For example, you could say, "Let me interrupt here for a second. We all need to remember that we are here to address {the purpose}, which is affecting all of us.")

How much you call attention to the common purpose will depend on the length of the meeting, how many people are involved, the working style of the group, and the complexity of the purpose.

Limiting Discussion

To be an effective facilitator you need a second key characteristic: the ability to gauge when the group has talked about something "just enough." Too much discussion causes the group to lose interest and feel that they are not using their time productively. Too little may result in an unsatisfactory solution—or not enough group commitment to carry out the solution successfully.

Determining when a group has reached the "just enough" point is not an exact science. However, there are some behavioral signs that it's time to push the group toward a decision.

- Points or arguments begin to get repeated, and no new information or ideas are developed. You get the sense that people are trying to convince each other by talking louder or being repetitive.
- Individuals in the group have all had a reasonable opportunity to participate in the discussion. If you have any doubts, ask someone who has been silent if they have anything to add.

Facilitating for Consensus

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- n You notice that while there was participation by everyone at the outset of the discussion only two or three people still appear to be interested. The best way to find out what's happening is to ask, "Have we finished examining this issue?" or "It seems like most of us are ready to move on. Does anyone have a concluding point before we do?"

Any of these actions will work well, no matter what happens. If the group is ready to move on, the members/volunteers will breathe a sigh of relief and plunge ahead. If they aren't, they will recognize it and make a conscious decision to continue deliberating about an issue.

Then there are time constraints to consider. It is the facilitator's job to note the amount of time remaining for the meeting and assess this against progress made toward achieving goals and making appropriate decisions. Even if things are not finished to a satisfactory degree, even if you could use more time, it may sometimes be necessary to move on in order to accomplish the overall purpose.

In either case, you have carried out an appropriate part of your role—keeping the group conscious of process and time and continuing to make progress toward achieving the group purpose.

Achieving Consensus

At certain key times during the meeting, you'll help the group reach decisions through consensus. These decisions should be directly related to the purpose of the meeting and should come after the group has had a reasonable amount of time to discuss the issue. At that point, you can take the following actions.

- Ask the group, "Are we at a point where we can make a decision about this issue (or recommendation, or action item)?" If so, record a clear statement of that decision. If not, ask, "Keeping aware of our time limits, what do we have to do to arrive at a decision?"
- Summarize the decision. "Here is the decision I hear us moving toward. Correct me if I've misstated it or left something out." Ask the group members/volunteers if they all agree with this decision. Look around to see if every person has nodded or said yes.
- When reaching consensus is getting a little tougher, take action to help people modify their position enough to achieve what might be called a "real world" consensus. Here are some examples of what you might say in these instances.

"Do you agree that this is a decision or solution that you can support or carry out?" Better yet...

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“Do you agree that this is the best solution that we can develop collectively?” Or...

“Based on this discussion and our need to take action, can you agree to this as a practical solution—perhaps one that is not ideal and not exactly what you want, but nonetheless achievable.” Or...

“Remembering that we all have to keep our common purposes in mind, do you agree that this is the best action we can jointly take?”

These steps may help the group achieve consensus, however grudgingly. If you get agreement, acknowledge it, summarize key points, identify actions, record the results, and move on. If you do not get consensus, what happens? If people simply disagree, what can you do?

Facilitating Disagreement

As a facilitator, you need to manage disagreement openly and positively. Out of disagreement will often emerge creative solutions and agreements that people will carry out with energy. However, this creativity and energy cannot happen if disagreements are pushed under the table or if they get out of hand and dominate the group proceedings. Here are some things you can do to be a positive force in facilitating disagreements:

- Summarize major points of disagreement or key alternatives. Ask if all have been able to contribute their views and query the group to see if all major points have been discussed.
- Go around and ask each person to recommend a decision. If five of eight people agree, ask the three who did not the following questions:

“What would it take to change your mind?”

“Now that we have clearly heard each of our positions, what would it take to get consensus on this problem?”

“What are the areas of disagreement and are they resolvable?”

Whatever questions you use, you may then need to facilitate a discussion to sort out the answer.

- Another approach is to ask group members/volunteers to think about what is keeping them from reaching agreement. Allow some discussion and then ask these participants what can be done. Then test for consensus again.
- At a certain point, you may decide for a vote. If the vote is not clear-cut, you can simply go with the majority or table the issue and agree not to decide.

Facilitating for Consensus

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When do you decide to push for consensus as opposed to going with a simple (and quick) vote? This is a judgment call, and it is made based on three factors:

- The importance of the issue,
- The degree to which each person's or each unit's support is really needed for success, and
- Whether a decision has to be made about a particular issue during the meeting.

When making this kind of judgement, you are trying to strike a balance between

1. Pushing participants to make a decision by voting, which doesn't ensure everyone's commitment to the action, and
2. Taking too much time to reach consensus, which may result in a sense of wasted time, heightened disagreement, and failure to achieve results.

[Excerpted from: "Facilitating for Consensus," by James A. McCaffery, in *Facilitation Skills for Trainers, Facilitators, and Group Leaders*, Volume II, Training Resources Group, Inc., Alexandria, VA.]

