



UNIVERSITY OF
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AEC 321

EXTENSION

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Group Development¹

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Introduction

If groups are more than just an important part of our lives (they are our lives), then how do we learn to work and live in groups? The only way to learn about groups is to understand how they come to be groups and how they stay groups. Everyone has had the experience of being in a group that was effective and satisfying; however, everyone has also had the experience of being in a group that just didn't work. WHY? Why are some groups effective and others a failure? It has to do with the group development process. What kinds of groups fail? Groups that don't fulfill the group development process. The following is an overview of how a collection of individuals coalesce into a group. It's very much like the way that fiberglass forms. Initially fiberglass is just a chemical, but when the catalyst is added, it quickly changes form completely. Groups that are successful change form to.

The Group Development Process

Groups have two components: teamwork and taskwork.

1. Teamwork

- Group maintenance

- satisfaction

- harmony

- cohesiveness

2. Taskwork

- goals

- accomplishments

Leaders help the group balance the two by adding information, coordinating performance, and deleting divisive elements

To do this leaders have to help the group move through the stages that groups always follow.

Stage One: Forming--the 'Polite' Stage

Group members get acquainted, work at being liked.

In this stage, things that make everyone the same are useful. Things like name tags or similar shirts help people to see themselves as part of a 'new' group.

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The role of this stage is to introduce members and start information sharing. During this phase, leadership is most important because people don't know each other, members rely on stereotypes too much. Leadership is important too because membership during this period is active but uneven. In other words, some people are showing too much group control while others are resisting participation. The leader takes advantage of the lack of conflict in this stage and tries to get everyone to participate just enough. Because new members haven't gravitated toward their group roles, patterns of leadership haven't established themselves, so whomever is trying to form the group will temporarily enforce the order.

During this phase people usually play the following roles:

Idea person

--creative suggestions

Quality controller

--asks questions, spots problems

Doer

--knows how things work

Team builder

--supports group members, builds morale

External contact

--provides access to resources outside the group

Synthesizer

--blends the best ideas into a compatible whole

Chairperson/leader

--takes charge

Facilitator

--helps build the group

Recorder/secretary

--serves as a group memory and group intelligence facilitator

During this phase, teamwork and taskwork become:

TEAMWORK:

Someone needs to play each role and each member of the group needs to be able to identify these roles.

Roles may rotate from one person to the other, BUT too many playing the same role can be a problem.

After the polite stage is over, the group is ready to enter the "why are we here?" stage.

- Goals and objectives can be established and agreed on by the group during the questioning phase.
- Must have agreement
- This is where you watch for hidden agendas

TASKWORK:

- Orient the group members to their roles and responsibilities
- Questioning is common at this stage:
 - Why are we here?
 - What are we to do? How are we to get it done?
 - What are our goals (long term) or objectives (short term)?

Stage Two: Storming

Issues of power and control come forward and stormy (conflict) behavior begins. During this stage people agree on the goals of the group and people decide whether this is their group.

- Teamwork: help people get along without sacrificing their views

- Taskwork: make sure this meaningful dialogue continues a 'healthy' and useful amount of time.

Conflict is NORMAL in groups. It makes them creative and dynamic. Without analyzing alternatives (conflict) the group will not progress.

- Leaders can USE it by developing a strategy for encouraging dialogue between those who don't want to and those who must be controlled.

Because conflict causes confusion, an effective leader will have a plan that is easy to remember and teach to the group. Leaders in the Job Corps found the AEIOU method useful.

Attack

Evade

Inform

Open

Unite

Because they use a phoneme created by the letters of the vowels, they can be remembered even in the heat of 'animated' discussion. Teach group members that "A" and "E" are bad and "I", "O" and "U" are useful and productive social strategies.

During the 'storming' phase:

- subgroups form
 - encourage the good ones
 - discourage the bad ones

In this phase, the group emerges and answers to the following create a 'good' group:

- Who is responsible for what?
- Who is the leader of the group?
- What are the work rules?
- What are the limits?
- What are the rewards?

- What are the criteria for success?
- What is the structure of the group?

Storming is controlled by:

- voting, compromise
- electing officers
- appointing persons

To move FROM storming the group must TALK and LISTEN.

Group leaders should anticipate this stage and:

- Keep the group moving by explaining that it many views are O.K.
- Use it to get ideas!

Some groups never move from stage two.

This is where the group gets dropouts.

People who drop out because they are in the wrong group will feel less frustration. Also, as people drop out the group members become more philosophically similar, so the group gets stronger and people feel stronger loyalty to it. As people agree more about the role and responsibilities of the group, storming decreases.

During this process the leader should do two things: (1) go back and look at the roles and help people to find new roles to make the group mature, and (2) keep the 'conflict' going by showing the group how to use product conflict strategies.

Groups that fail to accomplish the storming stage fall back into the forming stage.

Stage Three: Norming

- A collection of people becomes a group.

- They establish rules (norms).

NAME ANY GROUP, whether it be social, political or self(the ELKS club, the Republican party or Weight Watchers International). No matter what group you are thing of, they had a formingstage that led to group norms that include how people will dress, how they will act and how they will treat each other.

During this phase:

- Cliques disappear
- People listen and talk with each other
- The group develops loyalty

TEAMWORK

- Use rules to form the group the way members want.
- During this stage people might briefly abandon the task and enjoy themselves playing... get them back on track.

TASKWORK

- Information and ideas are shared freely
- Progress is obvious
- Leadership is shared by several.

Conflict is still possible but AEIOU can turn it into progress.

Group leaders need to:

- Ask constructive questions
- Summarize and clarify the group's thinking.

Stage Four: Performing

Occurs when:

- Resources are fully mobilized to achieve GOALS
- Group members work independently

- Leader delegates responsibilities

During the performing stage the group works harmoniously and needs little management. Management specialists report that when a company is new it responds best to a strong leader. Then, after everyone knows their role the company responds best to a more democratic leadership with power shared among vice presidents or subFinally, when the company and its procedures are known by everyone, a more Laissez faire type of leadership allows more creativity and ingenuity. The same is true of groups that are forming.

Stage Five: Transforming

This stage occurs when the need for the group diminishes. Groups take different amounts of time to form. Political parties take several hundred years to form, but neighborhood crime groups can spring up in weeks. However, once the group does its job change is inevitable. If high crime rates demand a neighborhood watch group, the need for that group will go down as crime goes down.

In this stage:

Change is caused by the changes the group has been through.

When this happens the group has two options:

- Establish new goals
- Dissolve the group and move on to other issues and possibly to new groups.

Summary

Like the change that occurs when a catalyst is added to fiberglass resin, groups can change from a collection of people to an actual group capable of accomplishing almost anything. Communication, like the cloth used in fiberglassing, adds strength and holds the group together. When fiberglass is handled correctly, it can be fashioned into many useful forms. Groups are the same.

References

Bolton, Elizabeth, Developing Your leadership Skills In Working With Groups, adapted from Darden, C., "Community Leadership," and Wells, B. "Working With Our Publics".