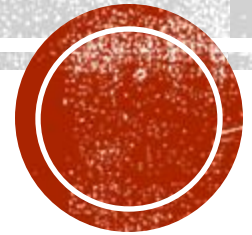


WORKING IN GROUPS

Phil Ershadi (Virtual Lead Tutor- ILC Math Center)

Emily Marshall (Virtual Lead Tutor- ILC Writing Center)



WORKSHOP OUTLINE



Benefits



Necessary factors for
effective group work



Challenges





DISCUSSION

What are the benefits of working in a group?

BENEFITS

- Builds on the skills of each member to achieve common goals
- Can accomplish more than individual members working solo
- Noticeable gains in productivity in the workplace
- Improves employee and/or corporate knowledge
- Enhances quality of life (professionally) among employees
- Leads to strategic advantage over the competition





DISCUSSION

What are the necessary factors for effective group work?

NECESSARY FACTORS

- Identification of compatible group members
- Establishment of clear expectations:
 - Who exactly will complete certain tasks?
 - When and how will members meet and communicate during the project term?
 - What are the group expectations for communication with each other?
 - How and when will members submit their part of the assignment to the group?
 - Who will be responsible for editing the final document?
 - Who will submit the final group assignment for the group?



NECESSARY FACTORS

- Communication:
 - Phone, email, discussion board updates
 - Asynchronous and synchronous methods
 - Can be limited when tasks are simple and each person knows his/her required roles/responsibilities
 - Relaxed and informal communication has been found to be more effective
 - Be receptive to others' ideas and information



NECESSARY FACTORS

- Accountability
 - Set deadlines
 - Report back to group regarding status of individual tasks
 - Are members' needs being met by the group?
 - Shared responsibilities, outcomes, and consequences
 - Individual and team accountabilities must MERGE
- Team success is achieved when members are committed to the overall purpose and fully comprehend the importance of each role in the group



NECESSARY FACTORS

- Purpose, interpersonal interaction, and a desired outcome
- An established "group culture"
- Motivation
- Members need to share both credit and blame collectively
- Decision-making
- Trust



NECESSARY FACTORS

- Leadership
 - The leader "assigns responsibilities, allocates resources, ingests and disseminates information, and maintains schedule accountability" (Reitmeier).
 - Groups require oversight and management from some type of leader (group leader, instructor)
 - Facilitates task accomplishment and communication towards achieving goals
 - Leaders are still seen as members!
 - Rotating the role of the leader can increase cooperation within the group





DISCUSSION

What are the challenges to group work?

CHALLENGES

- Time management (other life commitments; different time zones)
- Unequal contributions of individual group members
- Coordination of group work
- Communication
- Procrastination



CHALLENGES

- Lack of clarity in regards to expectations
- Some are not prepared or trained for the increased amount of responsibility that comes with teamwork
- Lack of support for working in teams/companies rewarding individual work over group work
- Conflict over: tasks, personal issues, and processes





How do we get the ball rolling?

BRAINSTORMING — FIRST PRINCIPLES

To answer the critical questions, give everyone a chance to contribute

- "Crazy" ideas are okay
- Don't evaluate until the end
- Quantity over quality – no need for perfection
- Try combining ideas (yes, AND rather than yes, BUT...)



BRAINSTORMING SUGGESTIONS

To help your members along:

- Try starting with a short idea session about something unrelated
- Keep the session to a manageable length (20-30 min.), and then, evaluate
- If people are afraid to speak, let them start by writing ideas down first
- If someone appears shy, try talking to them later one-on-one



AFTER THAT, IT'S DECISION TIME

Once you have enough ideas:

- Press for specifics and ask questions! (it's okay to admit you don't know)
- Piggy-back and combine ideas (highly encouraged)
- Have people rank their ideas (secret ballot)
- In case of disagreement, decide on a ruling method...



TYPES OF RULING METHODS

- Majority Rule – seems fair, but deadlocks are a problem
- Expert rule – has the weight of experience, but be sure to verify!
- Authority rule – Can use trust to get an agreement, but it's open to influence... Make sure it's someone the whole group can trust
- Consensus rule – Unanimous agreement takes a long time even in the best of circumstances



ACTION PLANNING INGREDIENTS

- Purpose
- Timeframe
- Who's working on it?
- Methods (be specific)
- Any more resources needed (outside help, info, money)
- Time commitment per day/week
- Any difficulties anticipated?
- How to deal with unexpected obstacles?
- Who do we ask for assistance?



OBSTACLES TO BRAINSTORMING

- Some group members may have an agenda
- Some people may divert the discussion (big ego)
- Some people may feel lost (inexperience)
- Some people may not feel seen/heard (shyness)

Any of these can lead to...



DISENGAGEMENT — HOW TO TELL

Disengagement = not using the group's strength

- Doesn't say much – detached
- Isn't invested in decisions (radio silent)
- Diverts group discussions (ego trips)
- Doesn't accomplish their goals/procrastinates (during work)



REASONS FOR DISENGAGEMENT

- May have "impostor syndrome"
- May not have the experience level (hard to admit)
- May not see the value in the work
- May be placed in the wrong role
- Might be overcommitted/burnt out



TRY THIS!

- Let them do straightforward tasks (needing less creativity)
- Listen to their situation (be willing to change your mind)
- Find out how much you can help (but have boundaries)
- Tell them what they did RIGHT, too
- Check in at consistent times (specific action plan)



BUT DON'T DO THIS!

- DON'T call them out publicly
- DON'T assume you know their situation
- DON'T try to micromanage (unless they ask specifically)
- DON'T force them to figure it out alone



SUMMARY

- Aim for optimal meeting times
- Let everyone talk
- Check egos at the door
- Praise each other
- Phrase alternatives as questions



THANK YOU!

<https://www.waketech.edu/student-services/individualized-learning-center>

ilctutoring@waketech.edu

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WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Look for common threads in these questions. Be as exact as possible!

- What is the problem SPECIFICALLY?
- Who is affected by the problem, and how affected are they?
- What might a solution look like?
- What needs to change?



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Be honest about these questions sooner, not later!

- Minimum viable solutions? (if everything goes wrong...)
- Can we change this on our own?
- Do we have the time/money?
- Do we need outside help/information?



IS THE SOLUTION REALLY A SOLUTION?

When it comes time to evaluate...

- Who stands to gain? Does anyone lose?
- Is there anyone in opposition? Can we convince them?
- Are there any long-term effects?
- Do we need EVERYONE'S agreement?



KNOW THIS BEFORE YOU ACTION PLAN

- Who has what duties? (based on expertise)
- What method(s) will each person use? (be specific!)
- WHEN might the plan need to be edited?
- When will the group meet again? (schedule this!)
- What additional decisions need to be made? How will you make them?

