

Big Results From Small Groups



West Virginia Department of Transportation

Big Results from Small Groups



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Course Overview

Researchers report that, regardless of the subject/ work matter; people working in small groups tend to learn more, retain it longer than working on the same goal alone. During this course you will understand the importance of small groups and the benefits from them. The course will enlighten you on the advantages and disadvantages, the different roles, problem solving, and importance of cohesion within a group.

Party of Five

Complete the following statements.

Five positive things (i.e., traits, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors) I bring to the group:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Five negative things (i.e., traits, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors) I bring to the group:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Five things I like or dislike about group work:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Five things I would like our group to accomplish:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Word Tangle:

Directions: *Unscramble the words listed below. All words are associated with teamwork.*

GISBMTONIANR

TACNUNIMOMC

NOTPACTIIRRAPI

GEMTENCOURANE

LETORANEC

PESTREC

CYREVITATI

TOMVATIONI

GINPIRSIN

PRATCONOEO

Group This!

For each example, identify the group type(s).

Habitat For Humanity	Group types(s):
Roommates	Group types(s):
4-H	Group types(s):
Fellowship of Christian Athletes	Group types(s):
City Council	Group types(s):
New York Yankees	Group types(s):
Rugby Club	Group types(s):
Police Department	Group types(s):
Linkin Park	Group types(s):
National Honor Society	Group types(s):
Karate Class	Group types(s):
History class study group	Group types(s):

NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST: WHO SHOULD SURVIVE?

Scenario:

World War 3 has just occurred and you and 9 other people find yourselves to be the only people left on the earth. You manage to all make it to a bunker; however, you all realize that if 3 of you wish to survive for many years, 7 of you will have to leave soon because there are not enough resources for all of you to survive.

If all of you stay, then you will all live only for a maximum of 2 years.

In your bunker, you have the following facilities:

- sewage system
- water
- seeds
- some clothes
- a few books
- some medical facilities but no operating material
- a greenhouse

You have ten to fifteen minutes as a group, to:

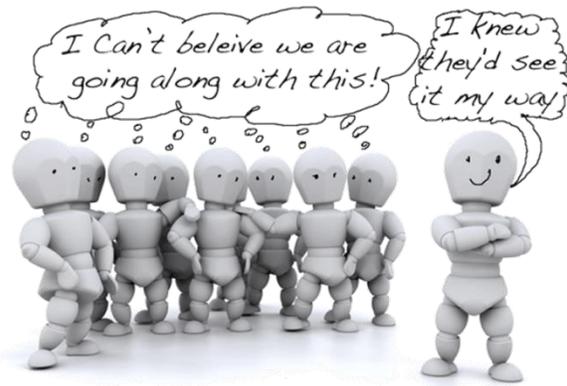
- allow each person to speak
- decide whether some will leave and the others stay
- decide who will leave and who will stay

When that is complete, you are to answer the following question in your journal.

REASONS FOR YOUR GROUP'S DECISION

CHARACTER	REASONS TO KEEP ALIVE	REASONS TO SACRIFICE THEM
DOCTOR		
SCIENTIST		
PRIEST		
HIPPIE MARRIED COUPLE ADDICTED TO DRUGS		
SINGLE WOMAN, PREGNANT, WITH A CHILD		
ARMY GENERAL WITH PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS		
ELDERLY WOMAN		
DISABLED PERSON		
LAWYER		
DOLE BLUDGER		

Groupthink Checkup



Directions:

For each question answer yes or no.

Questions:

- Yes No My group examines only a few alternatives rather than thinking broadly.
- Yes No My group seems reluctant to seek expert opinion from the instructor or other knowledgeable persons.
- Yes No My group seems highly selective and biased in gathering information.
- Yes No My group exhibits extreme optimism and willingness to take excessive risks.
- Yes No My group feels that it is always right and others are always wrong.
- Yes No My group rationalizes poor decisions rather than accepting when decisions are made.
- Yes No My group places pressure on members to conform and not "make waves."
- Yes No My group avoids conflict, even when differences of opinion exist.
- Yes No My group has self-appointed members who protect the group from information that might shatter its illusion that everything is "okay."
- Yes No My group has members who are reluctant to express their opinion for fear of being embarrassed, ridiculed, or ignored.

Scoring:

- If you have 0-2 yes answers, groupthink is not operating in your group.
- If you have 3-5 yes answers, groupthink is beginning to emerge in your group.
- If you have 6-10 yes answers, groupthink is operating in your group.

References:

DuFrene, D.D., & Lehman, C.M. (2005). Building high-performance teams (2nd Edition), Mason, OH: Thompson

Small Groups



Objective:

This course will discuss how to effectively work in small groups and what groupthink is and how to incorporate good decision making procedures so you can avoid groupthink in the workplace.

Glossary:

Small Groups

A small group is defined as three or more people working interdependently for the main purpose of accomplishing a goal/task.

Group Socialization

The process when newcomers become a part of the group's patterns of activities; or a two way process of influence and change where members use verbal and non-verbal messages to create a new unique group culture.

Groupthink

A mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive group, when the member's strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action"

Brainstorming

Creating ideas freely without any criticism

Six Thinking Hats

Decision making procedure that has each group member focus solely one aspect at a time.

Nominal Group Techniques (NGT)

Decision making procedure that has each group member working individually on ideas and then discuss them one at a time.

Delphi Technique

Or "Group Decision Support System" – decision making procedure that allows team members to contribute individually and anonymously with no fear of rejection or penalty.

Main Points:

- Three reasons why we join a group: we are attracted to the members or what the group stands for, the need to feel included, and the lack of violation or because we have no choice.
- Groupthink can seriously lessens a group's value and the final decision can jeopardize people's safety.
- It can take away a person's value and block true teamwork from taking place.
- In order to have an effective group, you must use good decision making procedures such as: Brainstorming, Six Thinking Hats, NGT, or the Delphi Technique.
- If your group is steering toward groupthink get an outsider's opinion before making a decision.
- Don't blame others for group problems. Make sure you focus on the problem itself and not the people within a group.

References:

Website: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_82.htm, Avoiding Groupthink: Avoiding Fatal Flaws in Group Decision Making

McGraw-Hill, *A First Look at Communication Theory, Groupthink of Irving Janis* – Chapter 18, Pages 235-245.

Scott A Myers & Carolyn M. Anderson (2006), *The Basics of Small Group Communication*, Chapter 5 – pages 99-124.