Chapter 9

Teams in the Workplace

Teams in the Workplace

In your college experience, one of your professors will most likely assign you to work on a group project. Sometimes, your professor will allow you to pick the other members of your group and sometimes you are not allowed to pick your group members. Unless you are very fortunate, you probably did not have a very good experience working on the group project. This is because most people do not know how to work in groups. To be more specific, most people do not know how to interact or communicate in groups and teams. Often times, there might be what Andy Hargreaves and Ruth Dawe identify as "contrived collegiality", in which everyone works on similar jobs as quickly as possible, they don't discuss anything, make poor judgment decisions, and are more concern with completion than quality.Hargreaves, A. & Dawe, R. (1990). Paths of professional development: Contrived collegiality, collaborative culture, and the case of peer coaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 6*(3), 227–241.

Many people work together in teams in organizations. Think about all the teams and groups that you belong, such as family, friends, work, church, etc. We are involved with a variety of groups for different reasons. You are probably involved with certain groups and teams based on your abilities, experiences, and/or talents. Your participation and the degree to which you contribute will often depend on the communication interactions in that group. In this chapter, we will discuss the importance of teams. We will discuss the characteristics of teams, types of teams and downside to teams.

Is this a group or a team?

9.1 Group

Looking at the picture above, can you tell if it is a group or a team? How do you know it is a group? Many organizations have several different kinds of groups. These groups can be informal or formal. Formal groups are usually assigned by a supervisor or higher administrator. Formal groups can include: sales teams, work teams, problem-solving groups, management teams, and unions. Informal groups usually occur due to common interests and/or social compatibility. Informal groups can include: Christmas office parties, coffee breaks, poker night, car pooling, and complaining sessions. Informal groups do not have specific rules about membership or the types of communication in that group. Every group is essential for people to accomplish their tasks and seek social support.

John Baird defined **group**[1] as "a collection of more than two persons who perceive themselves as a group, possess a common fate, have organizational structire, and communicate over time to achieve personal and group goals."Baird, J. E., Jr. (1977). *The dynamics of organizational communication*. New York: Harper and Row, pg. 9. In essence, a group is two or more individuals who communicate with each other to attain their goal. Because this is a book on organizational communication, a group in this context will have specific goals, influence, and interactions. These specific goals might be to have an advertising campaign completed, financial portfolios on all the organization's clientes completed, and/or updating new technology programs on all the computers in the organization. Influences that groups might have may be to help management understand the importance of having a day care facility onsite or assist managers in acquiring potential resources for employees. Interactions might include co-workers being informed about specific changes in the organization and/or warnings that employees should be aware of. Notice that the key importance in these definitions is the word communication. For instance, five people waiting for the bus is not a group. They all have the same goal: to get on the bus. However, each person is not influencing the other and they do not have to communicate with each other. Group members need to be able to communicate with each other. Often times, organizations will use groups to accomplish organizational gorals. Work groups are created to perform tasks in an efficient and

1. Two or more people that think they are a group, have a common goals, structure, and interactions to achieve their desired goals.

effective manner. Problem solving groups are used to discuss organizational dilemmas. These groups will convene to examine, analyze, and dissimenate information.

Group vs. Team

You have probably heard the old saying that there is no "I" in "TEAM". And it's true! However, do you know what the differences are between a group and a team? Most people might say that a team has a common goal or purpose. In addition, they might say that each person on a team is interdependent. In other words, each person on the team recognizes that every person is valuable and knows what needs to be done to accomplish their goal.Lee, G. V. (2009). From group to team: Skilled facilitation moves a group from a collection of individuals to an effective team. *Journal of Staff Development, 30*(5), 48–49.

On the other hand, groups might include people that have similar roles or tasks, such as all medical nurses. Groups can eventually become teams. The main difference is that teams need to support each team member. It takes a lot of characteristics for a group to become a team. The main difference is that in a team each individual is not only responsible for their efforts and contributions to the group, but also for the collective outcome of the group. Moreover, the emphasis is not on the individual but the team. Hence, the communication is different, because in teams, people want to discuss and come to a conclusion about how to solve the problem. In groups, the main reason why people communicate is to share information without much discussion. These differences are displayed in <u>Table 9.1 "Differences between Groups and Teams"</u>.

Table 9.1 Differences between Groups and Teams

Groups	Teams
Every person is accountable.	Everyone is accountable for their work to the group & others' work.
The focus is to share information and opinions.	The focus is to discuss, make decisions, solve problems, and strategize.
Emphasis on individual goals.	Emphasis on team goals.
Outcome is on each individual's contribution.	Outcome is on the entire group's contribution.

Groups	Teams
Identify every person's roles & tasks.	Indentify every person's roles & tasks in regards to help the collective effort. Each person can often switch and/ allocate parts of their tasks to others.
The focus is each person's outcome and struggles.	The focus is on the team's outcome and struggles.
The objectives and goals of the group are placed by a manager or leader.	The objectives and goals of the group are placed by team leader with team members.

Tuckman's Model of Groups

Bruce Tuckman's model of groups is well known for explaining how teams develop. He noted that these stages are forming, storming, norming, and performing (Figure 9.1 "Tuckman's Model of Groups").Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequences in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin, 63*(6), 384–399. Tuckman realizes that groups will have many differences in assumptions, values, and goals. This model addresses the groups' need to examine and resolve certain questions before the group can work together effectively. This model is important for any team member to recognize that before the team can move forward from one stage to another they need to make sure that the core issues are being met before they can advance. If the team does not move forward, then it means that certain issues are not being satisfactorily met. This model also helps team leaders identify signs that issues need to be address appropriately before the team can actually perform their task effectively.

Stage 1: Forming

The group is in its beginning stages. Individuals are trying to figure out the climate and the types of communication that would be appropriate. Members heavily rely on the team leader for direction and information. Members are still trying to develop their relationships and associations with others. For instance, one of the authors of this book was involved on a job search committee. The organization picked the members and expected the group to pick a leader. It was pretty chaotic because everyone was still trying to figure out everyone else.

Stage 2: Storming

In this phase, conflict is present. Members communicate to obtain influence and acknowledgment. Members may become polarized or take stand on certain issues. Conflict can arise out of personal or task related issues. If the group can confront and solve the problems, then they can move towards the next stage. After the group

leader was selected, conflict arose in who we thought we should hire and why. Everyone had their own opinion on the matter.
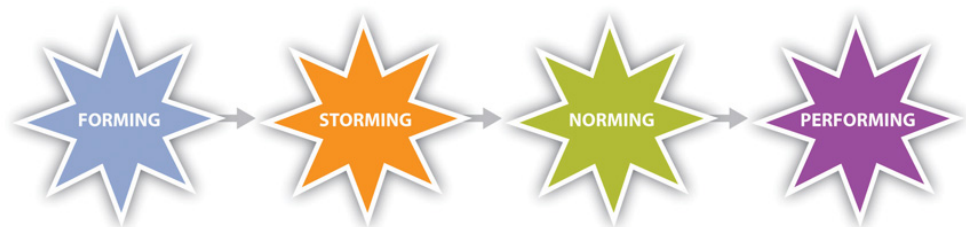
Stage 3: Norming

Unlike the previous group where conflict was present, the group moves toward more open and accepting styles of communication. The group wants to work in an effective and harmonious manner. More team members feel better due to the fact that the communication has changed from a confrontational style to a non-confrontational style. Members have shared values and attitudes. There is a difference between behaviors and feelings. In the previous example, after the members understood their roles and their agendas, then the group was more cohesive in terms of determining what to do next.

Stage 4: Performing

In this stage, members can concentrate on accomplishing the group's task. Because they have been able to solve the groups' problems, they can direct their energy towards the completion of the task. Group members feel a better sense of shared responsibility and a sense of personal accountability. After everyone was able to communicate and share their opinions, they were able to really produce quality results for finding the right candidate for the job.

We are sure that you can think back on group projects that you have worked on and recognize the storming and forming phases are real. If you are involved with groups where forming and storming are preventing you from accomplishing the task at hand, you need to address your group and their concerns before you can move forward.

Figure 9.1 *Tuckman's Model of Groups*

Team Performance Model

Many times, team leaders will try to form groups using ice breakers, enforcing the idea of professionalism, assuming that norms will counteract the group's differences, and relying solely on agendas, and activities to compensate for the group negativity or dissatisfaction.Lee, G. V. (2009). From group to team: Skilled facilitation moves a group from a collection of individuals to an effective team. *Journal of Staff Development, 30*(5), 48–49. One new model that illustrates a better way of developing teams is Allan Dexler, David Sibbet, and Russ Forrester (2009)'s Team Performance Model.Drexler, A., Sibbet, D., & Forrester, R. (2009). *The team performance model*. San Francisco: The Grove Consultants. The model consists of seven stages that illustrate how a team can be formed and then complete their task: orientation, trust building, goal clarification, commitment, implementation, high performance, and renewal (Figure 9.2 "Team Performance Model").

Stage 1: Orientation

In this beginning phase, group members come together and ascertain the about the task or directive at hand. Most of the time, these individuals do not have a work history with the other people on the team. Hence, group members may question their purpose with the group. For that reason, team members must be informed about how the group was formed and the reason why each person was selected for that task. Drexler et al. noted that if a certain individual feels unsatisfied for being on this team, then they will experience puzzlement, indecision, and possibly fear. Moreover, if certain members feel a disconnect from the group, then they will focus on this disconnection and possible make the other group members feel uncomfortable. The disconnected group member may become more reserved and detached from the group. In some conditions, the disconnected group member might provide some uncalled-for comments and possibly never attain much value in the team's mission. For instance, one of the writers of this book was asked to be on a group analyzing other graduate programs. It was very nerve-wrecking because none of the group members knew each other or why they were put together. The team leader explained that we were selected based on our experiences and we could provide the best input.

Once the orientation stage is settled, then group members are in the process of becoming a team. Everyone in the group has a new perception of the group as a team, they use terms like "us," feel a connection with the group's purpose, and think about the team's possibilities for achievement.

Stage 2: Trust building

Most everyone will agree that trust is an essential element for team performance. A team is interdependent. Thus, group members have to be able to give up control and reliance on others so that they can execute their task. Think about all the people you trust and how over time this trust has allowed us to know the other person even more. In the previous example about the group analyzing graduate programs, each person in the group had a specific task and a deadline. Each member had to trust the other members to complete their task otherwise the group would fail and not be able to accomplish their goal. The same holds true in teams. The development of trust allows teams the ability to create more efficiency. If teams lack trust, then they will be more guarded of others, and not be willing to communicate the truth. Teams that lack trust will also lack integrity because group members are not expressing their true feelings and opinions. The result of these behaviors hinder the legitimacy and genuineness of the work. At the same time, lack of trust will prevent cooperation and collaboration among the group members.

Stage 3: Goal Clarification

In this stage, team members are trying to figure out the team's ultimate goal(s) and their agenda. Team members create a shared vision with clear and concise goals. They have explicit assumptions with each other about the goal. In the previous example, it was at this stage that certain group members were wary about their comments and were worried that their comments would not be taken seriously. The team leader had to meet with the group again to reassure them that their comments were valuable for the success of the organization. At this stage, some members become apathetic or skeptical about the goal. In addition, there may be some extraneous competition among group members. The key factor in this stage is to make sure all group members know the goal or expected outcome for the group.

Stage 4: Commitment

After the group is clear in their goal, there needs to be some communication about certain roles. Group members need to collectively decide how resources, such as time and effort will be allocated and utilized for maximum efficiency. Each member realized that their comments were important so they worked harder to accomplish the goal.There will be group members who will become dependent on others to complete their task, which will delay the outcome. There will also be some resistance from group members who may have different perceptions in how their time and effort could be used best.

Stage 5: Implementation

Once the decision is made on how each person will contribute to the group's goal, then there will be a better sense of the execution of that goal. Teams are informed with all the basic information of who, what, when, where, and why. Teams can move forward and implement the task. They can put all their resources, comments, input together and finalize their task. In any event, there may be conflicts at this stage. There may be team members that will miss deadlines and may feel non-allied in the team's main object. If group members can figure out what works best, then work can be completed.

Stage 6: High Performance

When all group members know when and who is doing what towards their team's goals, a group reaches a state of high performance. They may realize that the methods have been performed well, then they can be more flexible. They are more likely to say "Wow!" at their progress and possibly surpass expectations. In this stage, there is more interaction and synergy. Disgruntled team members may feel disharmony or overburdened, so it is important that the team be able to adapt and accommodate all group members to be able to perform effectively. After the group gets into a groove, and is completed to finishing the task, the group will be amazed at the ending results.

Stage 7: Renewal

After the team has completed their task, they may ask whether it is worth it to continue or add new members. The team needs time to reflect on whether they should continue, stop, or form a new team. Often team members will feel burnout or boredom after the task has been completed. The team needs to take time to celebrate the completion of their goals and recognize key team members. In the previous example, the team leader took everyone out to dinner to celebrate on a job well done!

The benefit of this model is that it allows us to understand the communication situations that can occur during each phase. The model illustrates the importance of having such conversations at each stage.

Figure 9.2 *Team Performance Model*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Groups can be informal or formal.
- There are many differences between groups and teams. Group stresses individual outcomes, whereas team stresses individual and collective outcomes. The individual is a key element in the group. Teams share responsibility. Moreover, the communication is very different.
- Team development takes place in phase: forming, storming, norming, and performing.
- The team developmental model showcases seven stages that groups go through before they can work efficiently and effectively as a team.

EXERCISES

1. Think about a group you are currently working in at work, home, church, etc. Fill out the survey on: http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/ leader/teamsuv.html. After completing the measure, what did you learn about your group? What can you do to improved your group communication?

2. Looking at the Team Performance Model, what do you think is the hardest stage? Why? What do you think is the easiest stage? Do you think this model is accurate? Why or why not?

3. Create a list of at least two groups and two teams that you belong to? What differences do you see between these two lists and the types of organizational accomplishments they've had?

9.2 Types of Teams

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define work team.
2. Explain parallel team.
3. Describe project team.
4. Explain management team.
5. Differentiate among the different types of teams and their importance.

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Work Team

When you think of work teams, you might think back to <u>Chapter 3 "Classical Theories of Organizational Communication"</u> when we talked about workers who were shoveling coal or on assembly lines trying to complete a task. A **work team**[2] is a group that individuals are usually appointed in an organization. Richard Wellins, William Byham, and Jeanne Wilson defined work teams as "an intact group of employees who responsible for a 'whole work process or segment that delivers a product or service to an internal or external customer."Wellins, R., Byham, W., Wilson, J. (1991). *Empowered teams*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, pg. 3. When we work for an organization, our supervisors and/or managers will usually assign work teams for us. These teams can differ in regards to type and size. These groups are vital to the organization's longevity and overall success. Wellins et al. noted that several of the major corporations such as General Mills and AT&T, had significant results in productivity with the use of work teams. In order to have effective work teams, organizations must allow for empowerment.Einsenberg, E. M., & Goodall, H. L., Jr. (1993). *Organizational communication: Balancing creativity and constraint*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press. As you can imagine, if a group is given a task to solve an organizational dilemma, but not allowed to execute it, then it does nothing but frustrate the group. Wellins et al. explained there is a relationship with the amount of group empowerment and the group responsibility.

Susan Cohen and Diane Bailey analyzed work teams and discovered that are many elements to their organizational performanceCohen, S. G., & Bailey, D. E. (1997) What makes teams work: Group effectiveness research from the shopfloor to the executive suite. *Journal of management, 23*, 239–290.:

2. A group whose members are appointed in the organization.

1. *Group composition.* How does the size, diversity, and experience of the group members influence the team?

2. *Task design.* How does the constitution and difficulty of the team's task impact their performance?
3. *Organizational context* includes reward/punishment procedures and the type of supervision that the team experiences.
4. *Internal processes* is the amount of teamwork and/or conflicts that occur.
5. *Group psychological traits* include group norms that influence the team's performance. Is the group cohesive and cooperative?
6. *Effectiveness* is not just the outcome of the task, but also the perceptions of satisfaction, commitment, retention, and absenteeism.

Cohen and Bailey noted that work teams are viewed as the most ideal way to make decisions in organizations. This is because work teams have more flexibility, originality, and adaptability. There are many advantages to work teams. This includes:

1. Empowerment of members to have a more straightforward part in the decision making process
2. The development of a more multi-skilled workforce rather than deskilled
3. The advancement of stronger team synergies that produce more creativity in decision making
4. The subordination of individual's agenda to the task
5. Better decisions by grouping talented team members together
6. Better autonomy due to direct supervision
7. More commitment to the organization and its goals
8. Overall higher productivity levels.Mumby, D. K. (2013). *Organization communication: A critical approach.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Parallel Team

Collateral organizations are also called **parallel teams**[3].Fisher, D. (2000). *Communication in organizations* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Jaico. These are groups that are usually created "outside regular authority and communication structures to identify and work on problems that the formal organization is unwilling or unable to deal with."Fisher, D. (2000). Communication in organizations (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Jaico, pg. 322. For instance, an organization like a university can hire a parallel team to create better advertising and marketing campaigns and let them focus on educating students. Parallel teams can be very beneficial because it usually happens outside the organization itself.

3. These teams are created externally from the main organization to work on specific objectives.

Project Team

Another type of team is called **project teams**[4]. These are work groups that are created for a particular task.Keller, R. (1994). Technology-information processing fit of contingency theory. *Academy of Management, 37*(1), 167–179. Project teams often use individuals with specialized skills to achieve a goal in a set predetermined amount of time. Some examples of project teams might include creating a new model or determining the best application for technology. Usually, project team members are selected for their experience and/or expertise in a specific area. Robert Keller discovered that teams with challenging tasks were more likely to process information more resourcefully, in turn creating a better quality outcome. These teams are usually created very quickly with a detailed objective. Often times, these group members do not have time to spend on getting to know the other members.

Management Team

Another type of team is called **management teams**[5].Menz, M. 2012. Functional top management team members: A review, synthesis, and research agenda. *Journal of Management, 38*(1), 45–80. These teams consist of employees who have the highest organizational management levels and have the duty of maintaining the organization. These members possess leadership and authoritative powers that are given to them by shareholders and/or board of directors. You'll notice that all of the organizational positions below start with the word "chief." Because the word "chief" is listed in all of these positions, the group of executives who embody these different roles are often referred to as the "C-suite" in organizational literature. Some of the positions that are part of a management team include:

Project Teams have to work quickly to complete their task.

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Chief Executive Officer (CEO)—this person is usually responsible to the entire organization and communicates with the board of directors and/or chairman of the organization. The CEO has to execute the board of directors' decisions and to preserve the organization's functions and goals. Sometimes that CEO is president of the organization.

Chief Operations Officer (COO)—this person primarily focuses on sales and production. They typically are more involved that the CEO. Yet, they are in constant communication with the CEO. The COO is sometimes recognized as a vice president of the organization.

4. Specific and/or specialized individuals are selected to accomplish a goal in a fixed amount of time.

5. This group is in charge of the daily responsibility of directing the organization.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)—this person focuses on the financial aspects of the organization. The CFO reviews and evaluates all financial data, budgets, and costs associate with the organization. The CFO often explores the financial stability and uprightness of the organization. The CFO presents this information to the board of directors and governmental regulatory affiliates such as the Securities and Exchange Commission. The CFO is also known as a senior vice present.

Chief Technology Officer (CTO)—this person reports to the CEO. This person is mainly accountable for the technological advances and matters in the organization. This can also include any scientific innovations or discoveries.

Chief Learning Officer (CLO)—this person reports to the CEO. This person is accountable for all of the workplace learning and human performance improvement activities within the organization. This individual usually has a background in education, instructional design, and adult learning.

Chief Diversity Officer (CDO)—this person reports to the CEO. This person's duties include assessing, cultivating, defining, and nurturing cultural diversity as an organizational resource. Other common duties include affirmative action/equal employment opportunity and ensuring the creation of an inclusive climate within the organization itself.

Overall, the organization management team has many key individuals that maintain the organization's mission and goals. These individuals must communicate with each other so that the organization can run effectively and efficiently. Moreover, they must be able to handle crises and resolve problems successfully for the organization's prosperity and future success.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Work teams are integral for an organization because they have the have the objective of completing certain outcomes.
- Parallel teams are formed externally. Parallel teams look at specific items that the organization might overlook or not perceive accurately.
- Project teams are composed of specific/specialized members that need to obtain a goal in a set amount of time.
- Management teams have the responsibility of running and maintaining the organization. There are many different people with specific tasks to keep the organization running in an efficient and effective manner.

EXERCISES

1. Thinking back to your most recent job, what types of groups did you have and what did you do?
2. Thinking back to your most recent job, what type of communication happens in these groups?
3. What management team members did you see at the organization that you worked for in the past? If no one, then what management team position do you think is most important at your current organization? Why?

9.3 The Downside to Teams

Not only are there different types of groups and teams, there are also different types of outcomes and challenges that groups can encounter. In this section, we will look at some of the negative challenges to teams. In this section, you will learn about the downside to teams and ways to prevent them from happening.

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Groupthink

Irving Janis (1983) brought attention to the idea of "Groupthink."Janis, I. (1983). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes.* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. Irving described **groupthink**[6] as a group's inclination to defer critical thinking and accept solutions without much consideration. Groups that encounter groupthink misjudge their own resources, find supporting evidence, and evade analyzing opposing ideas. Groupthink usually occurs when a crisis is discovered. Think back to an organization that you were involved with and how the crisis was dealt with. Was it handled in a responsible and ethical manner? Why or why not?

Take a few minutes to complete the crisis knowledge index. Compare your answers with others in your class. How can identifying a crisis help you prevent groupthink? How can identifying a crisis allow for groupthink to happen?

6. The group's inclination to defer critical thinking and accept solutions without much consideration.

Crisis Knowledge Scale

Crisis Knowledge Index

Instructions: Below are several descriptions dealing with the extent to which you are now aware of the crisis that occurred. Please use the scale below to rate the degree to which each statement applies to your perceptions about your knowledge of the crisis:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. _____I know the details of the crisis.
2. _____I do not feel knowledgeable about the crisis that occurred.
3. _____The details of the crisis that occurred are very clear to me.
4. _____I do not know enough about the crisis that occurred.
5. _____I do not comprehend the details of the crisis that occurred.
6. _____My knowledge of the crisis that occurred is limited.
7. _____I completely understand the details of the crisis that occurred.
8. _____I feel knowledgeable about the details of the crisis that occurred.
9. _____I comprehend the details of the crisis that occurred.
10. _____The details of the crisis that occurred are not clear to me.

Recode = 2, 4, 5, and 10. Add all items together.

Source: Wrench, J. S., Fiore, A., & Charbonnette-Jordan, C. (2007). The impact of crisis communication on levels of acute-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. *Journal of the Wisconsin Communication Association, 26*, 30–45.

Janis noted that groupthink as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members' striving for unanimity overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternative course of action."Janis, I. (1983). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes.* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, pg. 9. Groupthink happens quite often.

Think about a group meeting that you have been involved with. Perhaps, one person in the group will offer a suggestion and/or idea, then everyone in the group agrees with it without thinking about the negative or positive consequences of the idea. People do this all the time because the person who offered the idea might be a highly powerful member, others don't want to disagree, or there is not a huge stake in the decision. At times people will not offer resisting ideas or be a devil's advocate on an idea because there may be consequences or the person is fearful of what others may think. Groupthink can cause frustration to individuals who feel that their voices are not heard and their time was not valued. Hence, it is important to provide opportunities for all group members to speak so that groupthink does not occur.

Risky Shift

Groupthink is not the only thing that happens in groups. Sometimes groups will make "risky" or precarious decisions.Isenberg, D. J. (1986). Group polarization: A critical review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*(6): 1141–1151. This results in what is known as **risky shift**[7]. Isenburg found that individuals are more likely to make riskier group decisions than individual decisions. For instance, in a group discussion, there are members that may advocate for an extreme position more than they would in other circumstance, because they are part of a group. Daniel Isenburg illustrated that risky shift has occurred in jury decision making processes.Isenberg, D. J. (1986). Group polarization: A critical review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*(6): 1141–1151. Mock jury members were more likely to choose punitive damages that varied significantly from individual juror members. The findings revealed that when individuals would support a low award, group discussion would influence the juror to a more compassionate result. At the same time, if the juror wanted a harsh penalty, after group discussion, the juror would be more likely to give a harsher punishment. Risky shift maintains that a group's decision tends to be more risky than the individual group member's decision before the group convened. Risky shift is an important concept, because it not only illustrates how one group member cannot affect the entire group, but also how it impacts the individual's own decision. Thus, communication between and among group members cannot be overstated.

Team Conflict

Conflict[8] is inevitable and will most likely occur in groups and teams. Roy Berko, Andrew Wolvin, and Darlyn Wolvin categorized two types of tensions that group will encounter: primary and secondary.Berko, R., Wolvin, A., & Wolvin, D. (2012). Communicating: A social and career focus (12th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. The first is primary tension, which happens initially when groups are formed. The second is

7. The result that happens when individuals are more likely to make riskier group decisions than individual decisions.

8. The discord among group members. This can be primary or secondary.

called secondary tension, which happens after group has been developed. In other words, primary tensions are ones that often happen before the group meets and secondary tensions often happen after the group meets.

Primary Tension

Individuals might feel tension before a meeting begins due to the following reasons:Zaremba, A. J. (2010). *Organizational communication* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford.

- A fear that the each member in the group will not have similar tasks and responsibilities.
- An uncertainty about the topic of the meeting and the possibility for uncomfortable topics.
- The topic is uneasy and/or distressing.
- The task might involve written or speaking skills and they do not feel competent in those skills.
- They have communication apprehension, which means they are nervous about communicating in that context.
- They meeting will cause more work or work that is beyond their capabilities.
- They do not feel properly prepared.
- Previous negative group experiences.
- Negative working relationship with the team leader.
- Time constraints
- Other personal issues that might interfere with their involvement with the group.

As you can see, each of these tensions can make work conditions rather uncomfortable. Think about a group meeting that you had to prepare for, did you have any of these primary tensions? How did you react to them?

Secondary Tensions

As stated earlier, secondary tensions occur after the meeting begins. These tensions can be classified into four types: procedural, equity, affective, and substantive. Zaremba, A. J. (2010). *Organizational communication* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford, pg. 184.

- *Procedural* tensions originate from group members' perceptions that the group is not productive. Group members believe that the agenda is ineffective and/or that the team leader is not adhering to the agenda.

- *Equity* tensions happen when group members do not feel equal. They may feel that certain things are not fair, such as work load and/or responsibility. On the other hand, equity issues may stem from feel that there are more controlling members that dominate and their opinions are worth more than others.
- *Affective* tensions happen when team members do not like each other. Team members will find it more difficult to communicate. There may be huge rivalry and competitiveness in the group.
- *Substantive* happen when there are legitimate concerns about the task. Conflict here can turn into problem solving moments, creativity, increased information sharing, and provide a better perspective of the opposition. Substantive conflict is beneficial because everyone gets a different perspective of the same topic. It can result in a better outcome because all voices are heard.

Social Loafing

Another downside to teams is **social loafing**[9].Karau, S. J., & Williams, K. D. (1993). Social loafing: A meta-analytic review and theoretical integration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*, 681–706. Social loading happens when certain group members do not put forth as much effort in the group compared to when they are working independently. Sometimes groups are not productive because group members do not fully contribute. Sometimes you will get the best work when group members work by themselves because they don't have to report or communicate with anyone else. Think about a group that you were involved in, did someone "ride your coat tails" or became a "free-rider"? Take a few minutes to complete Note 9.18 "Workplace Input Scale" on Workplace Input Scale. Do you think you engage in social loafing? Why or why not?

There is research that discusses how social loafing can be avoided. Dan Rothwell argued that social loafing can be prevented by collaboration, content, and choice.Rothwell, J. D. (2012). *In the company of others: An introduction to communication* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford. He noted that competitive situations will not get group members motivated and motivation can impede social loafing. First, collaboration is the key to get everyone involved. If everyone feels like they are special and are given meaningful tasks, then they are more likely to contribute. Second, content provides each group member with their importance to the task. People are more likely to contribute if they are informed with the knowledge about their task and other group members are informed about that group members contribution. Third, choice is helpful for social loafing because it provides group members to pick the task that they are better apt or skilled to complete.

9. This happens when certain group members do not put forth as much effort in the group compared to when they are working independently.

Workplace Input Scale

Workplace Input Scale

Instructions: This survey includes a number of statements about how you may feel about your current working condition. You will probably find that you agree with some of the statements and disagree with others, to varying extents. Please indicate your reaction to each of the statements by marking your opinion to the left of each statement according to the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. _____I have no input at work at all.
2. _____Nobody cares about what I say at work.
3. _____People at work do not listen to my input at all.
4. _____When I have a good idea at work, it's like I'm talking to a wall.
5. _____People always listen to my suggestions at work.
6. _____No one wants to hear my ideas at work.
7. _____My co-workers pay attention to my input.
8. _____People in my workplace always heed my suggestions.
9. _____People take my ideas seriously at work.
10. _____I have no problem having my ideas heard at work.
11. _____I have a lot of input on the job.
12. _____My input plays an important part on my job.
13. _____People listen to what I have to say at work.
14. _____No one pays attention to my ideas at work.
15. _____Nobody listens to my suggestions at work.
16. _____People care about my ideas at work.
17. _____When I have a good idea at work, people listen.
18. _____No one takes my ideas seriously at work.
19. _____No one in my workplace heeds my suggestions.
20. _____I have a problem getting my ideas heard at work.

Recode: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 14, 15, 18, 19, & 20

Source: Wrench, J. S., McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P., & Brogan, S. M. (2005). *The development, reliability, and validity testing of new measures in organizational communication.* Manuscript in preparation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Groupthink occurs when there is a crisis and none of the group members stop to analyze the pros and cons of the solution.
- Conflict occurs in teams. There are two types of tensions: primary and secondary. Primary occurs before the meeting starts and secondary occurs after the meeting begins.
- Risky shift occurs when group members are more likely to make a riskier decision as a group rather than individually.
- Social loafing happens when group members do not work as hard in a group context compared to when they work by themselves.

EXERCISES

1. Think of a time when you've been in a group, what are the advantages and disadvantages with working in a group?
2. Apply the different downsides to teamwork to one of your group experiences. If you had the ability to change it, what could you have done or do differently to prevent these downsides?
3. Complete the Workplace Input Scale. Based on the results from your analysis of your group experience(s), what areas do you think you could improve upon? Why do you think your other group members communicate to you in the way he or she does?

9.4 Group Communication Roles

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain Task Roles.
2. Explain Maintenance Roles.
3. Describe Self-centered roles.

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Kenneth Benne and Paul Sheats created a scheme for understand the functional roles of group members. It was created by the First National Training Laboratory in Group Development in 1947. They classified three types:

(1) *Group task roles.* Participant roles here are related to the task which the group is deciding to undertake or has undertaken. Their purpose is to facilitate and coordinate group effort in the selection and definition of a common problem and in the solution of that problem.

(2) *Group building and maintenance roles.* The roles in this category are oriented toward the functioning of the group as a group. They are designed to alter or maintain the group way of working, to strengthen, regulate and perpetuate the group as a group.

(3) *Individual roles.* This category does not classify member-roles as such, since the participations denoted here are directed toward the satisfaction of the participants individual needs. Their purpose is some individual goal which is not relevant either to the group task or to the functioning of the group as a group. Such participations are, of course, highly relevant to the problem of group training, insofar as such training is directed toward improving group maturity or group task efficiency. Benne, K., & Sheats, P. (2007). Functional roles of group members. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications, 8*, 30–35. (Reprinted from 1948 *Journal of Social Issues, 4*(2), 41–49), pg. 31.

Task Roles

10. Roles that individual group or team members embody that help a group accomplish its basic task(s).

The first type of roles that individuals can take-on within a group are all centered around the tasks that the group needs to accomplish. These roles are all pro-social and help the group strive towards achieving the group or team's goal. Benne and Sheats identified twelve different **task roles**[10] that group members could take on.

Remember, in smaller groups or teams individuals could take on multiple roles and it's entirely possible that multiple group members take on the same roles as well.

Initiator-Contributor

The initiator-contributor is all about providing new and keen insight and ideas to the group. This person may help the group brainstorm new and novel ways to go about understanding or looking at a particular problem.

Information Seeker

The information seeker focuses on ensuring that the group has accurate and relevant information as it goes about problem solving. This person asks to see relevant data to ensure the accuracy of the information the group uses while attempting to problem solve.

Opinion Seeker

The opinion seeker is not concerned with the accuracy of information, but is more interested in understanding the group's values. What are the group's values and how are the used to solve problems? When a potential solution to a problem is solved, the opinion seeker will ask for clarification of whether the solution is in sync with the group's purported values.

Information Giver

The information giver is someone within a group that has some kind of authoritative understanding or specific expertise that can help inform a group's decision making process. This person can often use her or his own knowledge or personal experiences to help inform a group's decision making process.

Opinion Giver

The opinion giver, like the opinion seeker, is concerned less with the facts surrounding a specific problem, but is more concerned with ensuring the group sticks to its values. This person will offer suggestions and insight on how the group can employ its values while making specific decisions.

Elaborator

The elaborator takes the ideas that other people have had within a group and tries to flesh out the ideas in a meaningful way. The evaluator can also help a group

understand specific rationales for the decisions it has made, or think through how the implementation of a specific decision would practically work.

Coordinator

The coordinator tries to find the common links between the various ideas that group members have and combine them in some kind of succinct package. Furthermore, the coordinator tries to coordinate the various activities that the group or team must accomplish along the way.

Orienter

The orienter is akin to a group or team's mapmaker. This person's role is to show where the group has been in an effort to understand where the group is right now. Furthermore, this person will point out when the group has gotten completely off topic and try to refocus the group back to the decision at hand.

Evaluator-Critic

The evaluator-critic's job is to help assess the actual functionality of the group and the decisions that it makes. This individual ensures that the group is meeting predetermined standard levels and not just "getting by" with quick and easy solutions to complex problems. This person really seeks out to hold the group to a clear standard of excellence by evaluating or questioning "practicality," the "logic," the "facts" or the "procedure" of a suggestion or of some unit of group discussion." Benne, K., & Sheats, P. (2007). Functional roles of group members. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications, 8*, 30–35. (Reprinted from 1948 *Journal of Social Issues, 4*(2), 41–49), pg. 32.

Energizer

Often groups get worn down by the decision making process because some decisions may take months or years to come to fruition. The energizer's primary role is to help pull groups out of a rut and encourage them to make decisions or take action. Like the evaluator-critic, the energizer also attempts to help groups reach a higher quality of decision making.

Procedural-Technician

All groups have simple tasks that someone needs to take care of. Whether it's rearranging a room into a circle or photocopying the agenda and minutes from the

previous meeting, the procedural-technician ensures that the routine tasks of the group get accomplished.

Recorder

The recorder, often called a group or team's secretary, is the individual who takes copious amounts of notes in an effort to help a group or team understand its own decision making process. These notes ultimately become the group's memory of where they have been and where they are going, so the recorder is a very important role in any group or team. At the same time, you want to make sure that the recorder is skilled in taking notes and can quickly transcribe those notes into some kind of formalized minutes.

Group/Team Building or Maintenance Roles

The second type of roles discussed by Benne and Sheats are referred to as group/team building or maintenance roles. **Group/team building roles**[11] are roles that help build a group-centered identity for the members, while **maintenance roles**[12] are roles that help keep that group-centered identity over the lifecycle of the group or team. Benne and Sheats identified seven specific group/team building or maintenance roles.

Encourager

The encourager is functionally the group or team's cheerleader. This person encourages people to come up with new ideas and then praises group or team members for the ideas they generate. This person also encourages the group to seek out alternative ways of seeing a problem and fosters an environment where alternative ideas and suggestions are welcomed.

Harmonizer

The harmonizer's job is to ensure that the group effectively handles conflict. All groups will eventually have conflict. In fact, conflict can actually be very important for groups to survive and thrive. However, when conflict becomes person-focused instead of task-focused, the harmonizer will help alleviate the tension of the group and help conflict parties solve their conflicts pro-socially.

Compromiser

The compromiser is someone who realizes that her or his ideas are in conflict with another person or faction of the group or team. Instead of holding her or his

11. Roles that individual group or team members embody that help build a group-centered identity for the members.

12. Roles that individual group or team members embody that help keep that group-centered identity over the lifecycle of the group or team.

ground refusing to budge one inch in her or his ideas, the compromiser tries to seek out a compromise between her or himself and the conflict parties. Compromising does not mean this individual is a doormat, but rather compromising is a strategy to help groups build better, more informed decisions.

Gatekeeper

In a group or team setting, the gatekeeper's job is to ensure that all participants are freely and openly involved in the group's decision-making. The gatekeeper will encourage people who are on tangents to bring it back to the decision at hand while encouraging those who are more reticent in their communication to actively participate in the decision-making.

Standard Setter

The standard setter or ego sets out to ensure that the group or team's decision making processes meet a certain quality level. This role is similar to the opinion giver under the task roles, but this roles is specifically focused on how the group goes about making decisions and then holds the groups to those standards.

Group-Observer and Commentator

The group-observer and commentator watches how the group goes about completing its purpose. This individual will take notes about the group's functioning and then periodically inform the group about how well it is working as a group or team. This person's focuses on ensuring the group or teams' processes for decision making do not leave out minority voices, prevent poor brainstorming, or jump to decisions too quickly.

Follower

The follower is an individual who attempts to not rock the boat for the group. This person is often passive and just observes the group's decision processes. Instead of being an active participant in the group's decision-making, he or she will serve as an audience for the decision making process during group discussions.

Self-Centered Roles

13. Roles that individual group or team members embody that focus on the individual desires of group members and not necessarily on what is best for the group or its decisions.

The final category of group roles identified by Benne and Sheats are generally very destructive and can harm the group decision-making process. Benne and Sheats called these roles **self-centered**[13] because the roles focus on the individual desires of group members and not necessarily on what is best for the group or its decisions.

According to Benne and Sheats, when self-centered roles are noticed by group members, it's very important to quickly diagnose why these roles are appearing within the group. The researchers offered a number of reasons why these self-centered roles may start to surface:

The diagnosis may reveal one or several of a number of conditions—low level of skill-training among members, including the group leader; the prevalence of 'authoritarian' and 'laissez faire' points of view toward group functioning in the group; a low level of group maturity, discipline and morale; an inappropriately chosen and inadequately defined group task, etc. (2007). Functional roles of group members. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications, 8*, 30–35. (Reprinted from 1948 *Journal of Social Issues, 4*(2), 41–49), pg. 32.

The authors recommend that when groups face these self-centered roles, it becomes very important to ascertain why they are occuring and take steps to prevent their reoccurance. However, Benne and Sheats cautions against the outright suppression of self-centered roles because the suppression can prevent groups or teams from going through the self-diagnosis necessary to fix the group or team. Ultimately, the researchers identified eight types of self-centered roles.

Aggressor

The aggressor tends to be an individual who feels the need to improve her or his own standing within the group by taking others down. Aggressors can enact a number of behaviors that ultimately impact group morale and the basic functioning of the gorup itself. Some of the behaviors identified by Benne and Sheats are, "deflating the status of others, expressing disapproval of the values, acts or feelings of others, attacking the group or the problem it is working on, joking aggressively, showing envy toward another's contribution by trying to take credit for it, etc." (2007). Functional roles of group members. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications, 8*, 30–35. (Reprinted from 1948 *Journal of Social Issues, 4*(2), 41–49), pg. 32.

Blocker

The blocker is someone who simply either hates everything the group is doing and rejects everything the group recommends or he or she keeps rehashing group or team decisions that have been long since decided. This person may simply say "no" to anything the group likes and is often a giant stumbling block for groups.

Recognition-Seeker

The recognition-seeker seeker is all about showing how he or she is such a vital person in the group by trumpeting her or his achievements (whether relevant or not). Often this person acts in this fashion for fear that the group or team will see her or him as irrelevant. So instead of becoming a relic of the group, he or she feels it is necessary to show how vitale he or she is to the group by wasting the group's time while seeking recognition.

Self-Confessor

The self-confessor sees the group or team as the setting to air her or his own feelings, ideology, insight, or values. This person sees the group or team as her or his own therapy session and has no problem self-disclosing inappropriate information to group or team members during meetings.

Playboy/Playgirl

The playboy or playgirl clearly could care less about the group or team and its goals. In fact, this person is generally quite vocal in her or his lack of caring. He or she may simply become overly cycnical of the group/team and it's decision-making or actively disrupt the decision-making process through horseplay or other nonchalant behavior.

Dominator

The dominator is someone who tries to control the group/team and dominate the group's discussion and decision-making processes. This individual is often highly manipulative and will attempt to coerce those in subordinate status positions to her or his stance within the group. Often these people will see their own position within the group or team as more superior than other group members and will make this very clear while asserting that her or his ideas are more superior because of her or his elevated position within an organization's hierarchy.

Help-Seeker

The help-seeker tries to get the group to be sympathetic by stressing that he or she is insecure or confused. The goal of the help-seeker is to downplay her or his own ability to contribute to the group by making other group/team members care for her or him.

Special Interest Pleader

The special interest pleader is someone who always has a secondary agenda within a group. According to Benne and Sheats, a special interest pleader pleads on behalf of a specific group (e.g., small businesses, labor, gender, race, etc...), but is "usually cloaking [her or] his own prejudices or biases in the stereotype which best fits [her or] his individual need".(2007). Functional roles of group members. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications, 8*, 30–35. (Reprinted from 1948 *Journal of Social Issues, 4*(2), 41–49), pg. 32. By allegedly "speaking on behalf" of a special interest group, the special interest pleader serves to distract the group/team from its basic decision making processes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The first form of group roles proposed by Benne and Sheats are tasks roles or roes that individual group or team members embody that help a group accomplish its basic task(s). Benne and Sheats identified twelve different task roles: initiator-contributor, information seeker, opinion seeker, information giver, opinion giver, elaborator, coordinator, orienter, evaluator-critic, energizer, procedural technician, and recorder.
- The second form of group roles proposed by Benne and Sheats are group building and maintenance roles. Group building roles are roles that help build a group-centered identity for the members; whereas, maintenance roles are roles that help keep that group-centered identity over the lifecycle of the group or team. Benne and Sheats identified seven different group building/maintenance roles: encourager, harmonizer, compromiser, gate-keeper, standard setter, group-observer and commentator, and follower.
- The second form of group roles proposed by Benne and Sheats are self-centered roles, or roles that individual group members embody that focus on the individual desires of group members and not necessarily on what is best for the group or its decisions. Benne and Sheats identified eight different self-interest roles: aggressor, blocker, recognition-seeker, self-confessor, playboy/playgirl, dominator, help-seeker, and special interest pleader.

EXERCISES

1. Think about a group you are in, what roles are present?
2. Looking at different group roles, what do you think are the best and worst? Why?
3. Create a list of at least two groups belong to? What group roles are present? Are they effective?

9.5 Chapter Exercises

Real World Case Study

The following case is based on a consulting experience of one of our colleagues. Names and institutions have been altered for this case.

Morgan, an organizational consultant, was approached to serve as an executive coach for a work team in a new organization called Sankaya. Sankaya is a retail organization geared towards fashion merchandising and retailing. This work team was trying to figure out ways to generate sales, maximize profits, and minimize resources. Sankaya encouraged the work team to think outside the box and figure out innovative ways to increase sales. The work team was skeptical about Morgan's involvement. They did not feel they needed an "outsider" to coach them on their task. It became quite apparent in the first meeting that group members were not cohesive. Certain ideas were given more credit and time than others. Also, some group members were even implying to do unethical means to increase sales, such as not pay their workers for constructing their garments and even giving themselves raises for working on the team.

1. Can these employees be coached?
2. If you were Morgan, how would you handle this situation?
3. How can you change this group's communication behaviors?
4. How would you handle the unethical ideas, especially if you do not have the power to stop or prevent them from happening?

Real World Case Study #2

After 40 years in the same building, Corporate Communications built a new building to attract more customers. The new building has more space and better lighting. However, in the old building everyone knew each other because the space was so small. All the employees were able to interact with each other because there was only one entrance and one exit into the building. Moreover, many of the employees were collaborating and interacting with other employees because they were not separated by their job. In other words, technicians would work right alongside people in human resources and advertising. In the new building, each employee was place in a distinct location so that all the human resources employees could be found in the same office. This new building has cause more tension and stress among the employees who may sense a feeling of professional jealousy and competition. Many employees are unhappy.

1. If you were hired as a consultant, what would you do?
2. What recommendations would you provide?
3. How can you change this organization's communication behaviors?
4. What hindrances and limitations could you foresee in implementing your ideas?

End-of-Chapter Assessment Head

1. Jonas was assigned to a group. He is still learning his group member's names and interest. According to the team development model, which stage is Jonas in?

   a. forming
   b. norming
   c. storming
   d. transforming
   e. performing

2. Tessa has been working in a group for about two month. Her group members are still not sure about their ultimate goal. According to the Team Performance Model, which stage is her group in?

   a. trust building
   b. commitment
   c. goal clarification
   d. implementation
   e. renewal

3. Tessa has been working on a project team. They want her team to complete an advertising campaign by tomorrow. Based on what you know about project teams, which element can Tessa not spend much time on with her other group members?

   a. trust building
   b. commitment
   c. goal clarification
   d. implementation
   e. building stronger relationships

4. Zavin is the only person in his organization in charge of the sales and marketing of the organization. What would his title most likely be?

   a. Chief Executive Officer
   b. Chief Operations Officer
   c. Chief Technology Officer
   d. Chief Financial Officer
   e. all of these

5. Brenna's group members just found a new problem with a product that has already been sold in stores. Everyone in her group believes that they should just ignore the problem. No one questions the decision to ignore the problem. What downside of teams is most likely occurring in this situation?

a. group think
b. risky shift phenomenon
c. executive decision making
d. apathetic conflict
e. social loafing

Answer Key

1. A
2. C
3. E
4. B
5. A