

MODULE 3

INTRODUCTION TO GROUPS

A group is a collection of individuals connected by and within a social relationship. The members of the group interact with one another and also with the group as a whole. There will be a purpose of existence of every group. Group members identify the purpose of the group and bond together. Communication and interaction among group members will be according to formal or informal set of rules and norms. When individuals have common goals, common sentiments and greater interactions, they tend to develop attitudes towards each other and consequently they form different groups.

Characteristics of a Group

- ✓ Frequent interaction which includes interpersonal communication and relationship interaction.
- ✓ Interdependence among the members and mutual influence.
- ✓ Hierarchy, leadership and pattern of rules and norms.
- ✓ Common objectives, common beliefs and common expectations regarding outcomes.
- ✓ Cohesiveness and unity among members.

Importance of Group

Different groups are formed for different purposes. The importance of forming groups is given below.

Importance of Formal Groups

- ✓ To accomplish complex and independent tasks those are beyond the capabilities of individuals.
- ✓ To create new ideas
- ✓ To coordinate interdepartmental efforts
- ✓ To solve complex problems requiring varied information and perceptive.
- ✓ To implement action plans.
- ✓ To socialize and train new comers

Importance of informal Groups

- ✓ To fill in the gaps of manager's abilities
- ✓ To solve work problems
- ✓ To have better coordination
- ✓ To channel communication
- ✓ To have better relations

Stages of Group Formation

There are many stage theories of group development. The most well known theory is that of **Tuckman** and **Jensen**, which propounds five stages of group formation and is based on the development of internal relations of group members. The five stages of group development are **Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning**.

1. Forming

This is the first stage in which entry of the new members and orientations to them happen. The members get to know each other. There will be some confusion among the members about the purpose and objective of the group. Discovering the purpose of the group, what is considered as acceptable, etc. are learned in this stage.

2. Storming

This stage is characterised by the inevitable conflicts arise in the group. Disagreements on roles, goals and procedures often lead to dissatisfaction. The group members identify that the task at hand are more complicated than expected. The groups will be divided into subgroups. The conflicts among the subgroups will be settled towards the end. Unresolved conflicts after this stage leads to dispersing of the group.

3. Norming

The members will reach the expectation level of others and recognize the individual differences. The group begins to organize itself, resolve problems, sharing responsibilities and arriving at consensus. Group members will develop mutual trust and a sense of identity. At the end of this stage, a group

structure and a hierarchy will be emerged. Group will become focused on the mission.

4. Performing

The group becomes fully functional and matured. The focus in this stage will be on solving any issue through collective work and sharing responsibilities. Members of the group are aware of the drawbacks and weaknesses and try to compensate them. The entire team work is used to accomplish the goal. Peak performance usually occurs towards the end of the stage.

5. Adjourning

Once the common objectives are accomplished, the group often adjourns or ends. Some groups may continue inactively, others may have a planned ending while some other groups naturally end.

Group Thinking

Group thinking is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an irrational or dysfunctional decision making. Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus by actively suppressing dissenting viewpoints and by isolating themselves from outside influences, without critical evaluation of alternative viewpoints.

Group thinking requires individuals to avoid raising controversial issues or alternative solutions, and there is loss of individual creativity, uniqueness and independent thinking.

Getting Acquainted

Relationship among group members is the most important factor to determine and create group dynamics. A good initial process of getting familiarized with each other promotes team effectiveness. The new members of the group will meet the existing members and vice versa. The activities that help the members to acquaint with each other can be called **ice breakers**.

Advantages of ice breakers are given below.

- ✓ Members get to know each other better and faster

- ✓ Team spirit is generated
- ✓ Members will learn to listen actively
- ✓ Differences are easily forgotten and a good rapport is created
- ✓ Energy and enthusiasm get increased
- ✓ Promotes synergy

Clarifying Expectations

Expectation is a feeling or belief about how good someone or something would turn out to be. It includes how a person will behave, how things are going to happen, what is going to be the result, etc. It is necessary to avoid expecting high, as over expectation leads to disappointment if things will not happen as per the expectations.

While forming a group, the members should be clarified about the possible outcomes and expectations, to avoid disappointment. Leaders of the group should spend some time for this. The objectives of the group are to be made clear to the new members.

Group Problem Solving

There are different steps involved in group problem solving as given below.

1. Define
2. Analyse
3. Set Criteria for Solution
4. Generate all Possible Solutions
5. Evaluate and Select the Best Solution
6. Implement

1. Define the Problem

There should not be any confusion about the task at hand. The team leader must be able to summarize the problem in a single sentence.

2. Analyse the Problem

While analyzing the problem, the following points can be discussed by the team/group members.

- ✓ Is it true that the problem exists?
- ✓ How serious the problem is?
- ✓ What are the root causes of the problem?

- ✓ Have there been previous attempts to solve the problem?
- ✓ Do we have sufficient data to generate the solution?
- ✓ What is the deadline for the solution?
- ✓ Do we have enough experts among us?

3. Set Criteria for Solution

Some of the criteria can be,

- ✓ The solution should be workable
- ✓ The solution should be economical
- ✓ The solution should address the cause of the problem
- ✓ The solution should not result in side effects

4. Generate all Possible Solutions

This is the brainstorming session where all the members bring their ideas to solve the problem. **It is important that the solutions are not evaluated at this point.** The members can ask questions and clarify the various aspects. The focus here is to generate as many solutions as possible.

5. Evaluate and Select the Best Solution

In this process, each solution is critically evaluated for its merits and completeness. The following questions can be used to find the potential solution.

- ✓ What is the exact nature of each solution?
- ✓ Is it possible to implement this with our current resources and workforce?
- ✓ Is it economical in the long run?
- ✓ Does the solution address the root cause of the problem?
- ✓ How well does it meet our criteria?
- ✓ Will this bring any side effect?
- ✓ Would a combination of result work better?

A consensus has to be reached by the group members at the end of this process.

6. Implement

It includes the following steps.

1. Decide the modus operandi (way of operation)
2. Allot individual tasks to team members, based on their expertise/strength
3. If necessary and possible, assign tasks to people outside the group
4. Decide on how to assess the effectiveness of the solution
5. Decide a timeframe
6. Execute

Achieving Group Consensus

Consensus is a general agreement or a collective opinion. Achieving group consensus helps effective decision making. It helps the team to see the solution to a problem from all the possible angles. The team members discuss the subject until each member agrees to the decision. Everyone will come to the positive side of agreeing even though different opinions will be there. Achieving group consensus is easier with teams of professionals.

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics refers to the complex interplay of various interactive forces between members of a group. It influences the attitude of members of a group, group performance and its long time survival. It can be synonymously called as group processes.

Group Dynamics Techniques

1. **Brainstorming**
2. **Multi voting**

Multi voting is a fast method to select the most relevant and popular ideas from a list with the least difficulty and least chances of conflict. **The steps involved in multi voting are,**

- ✓ Number each idea
- ✓ Combine similar items if the group agrees and renumber them
- ✓ Each member votes multiple times and his ideas will be written on a paper
- ✓ Lists are collected and consolidated
- ✓ Ideas with maximum votes are identified.

3. Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

NGT involves the following steps,

- ✓ Moderator states and clarifies the problem
- ✓ Each member thinks independently about the problem and silently writes his ideas on a paper
- ✓ Moderator asks for ideas and writes those on a board to make them visible to the others in the group.
- ✓ Each recorded idea will be evaluated
- ✓ Each member votes for 5 ideas the he thinks the best
- ✓ The moderator adds scores of the votes.
- ✓ The ideas that are ranked high are chosen.

4. Decision Grid

In this method, options are listed as rows and factors to be considered as columns. Scores are given for each option/ factor and scores are added. We can understand the relative importance of each factor.

If there are numerous factors to be considered, the decision grid will be given on pair wise, i.e. only two alternatives will be given from which a single solution is given as voting.

INTRODUCTION TO TEAMS

A team is a small group of individuals work together to achieve a specific and common goal. Not all small groups operate as teams. Members of a team usually have complementary skills and therefore a high degree of interdependence will be there. If a football team is taken for example, each player of the team will have own role and contribution towards the success of the team and the performance of the team will be better than that of the individuals. Better coordination, harmony and sense of commitment create synergy in teamwork. A team in action has the capacity for self governing and self managing. Teams develop through five stages,

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing
5. Adjourning

Team Composition

Depending on the attributes of the individual team members, teams can be of

1. Homogenous Composition

Homogenous team is a team in which team members share almost the same attributes such as skill, intellect, education, personal, demographic traits, etc.

Characteristics of Homogenous Composition/ Team

- ✓ Better initial rapport
- ✓ Easiness in communication
- ✓ Lesser conflicts
- ✓ Paucity of ideas
- ✓ Liable to get stuck

2. Heterogenous Composition

Heterogenous team is the one in which individual members have different attributes.

The attributes of heterogenous teams are,

1. Knowledge, skill and abilities.
2. Specialization
3. Perception of organizational goals.
4. Demographic traits like age, gender, nationality, etc.
5. Personality traits like extroversion, creativity, friendliness, etc.

Characteristics of Heterogenous Composition/ Team

- ✓ Initial conflicts
- ✓ Difficulty in communicating
- ✓ Different perspectives
- ✓ More creativity
- ✓ Productive in long run

Depending on the roles assigned to the team members, **an ideal team should be composed of the following.**

1. Creator who generates new ideas
2. Promoter who takes the ideas forward
3. Analyst who evaluates various options available

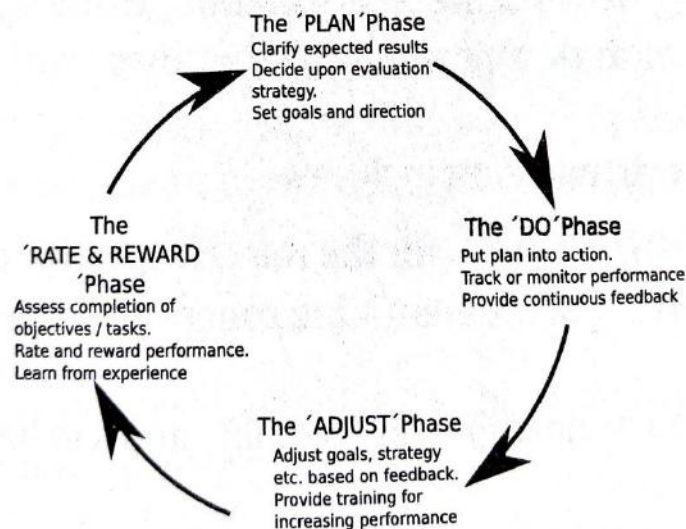
4. Organizer who puts together the structure
5. Producer who follows through the plan.
6. Controller who sets the standards and ensures compliance
7. Upholder who represents and champions the team outside
8. Advisor who constantly seeks more information and gives insights
9. Coordinator who coordinates various activities

Team Performance Management/ Managing Team Performance

Team Performance Management is the process of continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of a team. It also includes varying and adjusting the different factors which influence the performance of a team. **Performance of a team is directly related to the individual performance and the way how the individual performs and contributes in a team.**

There is a difference between conventional team building exercises and TPM. The idea of the former is that the team building activities will somehow enhance the team effectiveness while TPM refers to following an ongoing and well structured process specifically targeted to identify, quantify and modify the factors affecting performance.

The TPM cycle is given below.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEAMS

1. Problem Solving Teams

It is a team which is constituted to focus on a specific issue. Such teams get dispersed once the objective is achieved.

2. Self Managed Teams

It is a team in which the members are empowered to make informed decisions. In addition to the executive power, each team member usually has a unique skill set.

3. Functional Teams

It is a team in which the members are brought together by similar function. Members in this group will have more or less the same skill set and these skills are combined to achieve more efficiency.

4. Cross Functional Teams

In this, members with different functional expertise are brought together to form a team. For example, if the objective is to launch a new product, members from finance, technical, marketing, etc are brought together to form a cross functional team. Better interdepartmental coordination and creative solutions will be the result.

5. Virtual Teams

In a virtual team, members are distributed across several geographic locations. The communication among the team members will be digital rather than face to face.

GROUPS VERSUS TEAMS

	GROUP	TEAM
1	Individual contributions	Synergic contribution
2	Random skills	Complementary skills
3	Works towards common goal	Total commitment to common goals
4	Little sense of ownership among members because they are not much involved in planning the goals	Great sense of ownership because the members have helped in establishing the common goals

5	Little scope for creativity	Opportunity for creativity
6	Individual responsibility	Collective responsibility
7	Diverse culture	Shared culture
8	Shared interest	Mutually agreed interest
9	Conflicts are common	Lesser chance for conflicts
10	Accountable to group leader	Mutual accountability
11	More focus on individual rewards	More focus on shared rewards
12	Less interdependence	High interdependence
13	Leader controls the group	Leader acts as facilitator
14	Lesser coordination, lesser task orientation and lesser collaboration	Greater coordination, task orientation and better collaboration
15	Lesser familiarity among members	Greater familiarity among members
16	Limited awareness about the skills and tasks of other members	Greater awareness about the roles, weaknesses and strengths of other members
17	Cautious approach and limited trust	Candid approach and higher level of trust
18	Lesser chances of appreciating others' efforts	Greater appreciation from team members
19	More concerned with challenges faced by the individual	More concerned with challenges faced by the team
20	Roles and tasks are often fixed	Roles and tasks are rotated as and when required
21	Members think that they are brought together for administrative convenience	Members are aware that individual goals are best achieved through mutual support and working towards team goals

TEAM DYNAMICS

Team dynamics are the unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of behaviour and performance of a team. Team dynamics are created by the nature of the work of the team, the personalities within the team and their working relationships with other people and the environment in which the team works.

Team dynamics can be good when they improve overall team performance and get the best out of individual team members. They can also be bad when they cause unproductive conflict, demotivation and prevent the team from achieving its goals.

DECISION MAKING IN TEAMS & GROUPS

Following are the common methods for a team to arrive at a decision or select a solution from various alternatives possible.

1. **Group consensus** : Members coming to a general agreement
2. **Majority vote** : Opinion of the majority of members is accepted.
3. **Expert Decision** : An expert or expert committee takes the decision for all.
4. **Decision by Authority** : The leader takes the best solution.

BUILDING AND MANAGING SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL TEAMS

A virtual team is constituted by people working together remotely by connected together by digital channels of communication. E mails, phones, teleconferencing, software, etc are used as tools for the same.

Advantages of virtual teams are,

1. Getting the best person for the role, irrespective of where they stay.
2. People working in different time zones can ensure 24x7 support.
3. Team members have greater flexibility and can have better work life balance.
4. Women have more opportunities as they can work from home.

Factors in Building and Managing Successful Virtual Teams Include

1. New Perspectives in Human Resource Management

Virtual employees feel less towards the organisation than the in house employees do. So the management should be careful to foster communication among the team members. Also the team members should be asked to express opinions and update them with all the recent and relevant information.

2. A Strong Support Mechanism

Most of the virtual team members work alone and it is a disadvantage when requires help from colleagues. To tackle this, a reliable support network should be effectively maintained. They should be given with communication media also.

3. Better Information Management Systems

Details of work assignments, scheduling and sequencing of tasks within a project, workload tracking, etc have greater significance in virtual context.

Management should make sure that the information flow up and down the organisation including the virtual teams also.

4. Coaching, Learning and Development

Initial coaching and training of virtual team members should be done properly at the beginning itself. Remote training programmes can be organized once the members start working as virtual team members. Online seminars, virtual classes, group discussions, etc can be arranged on regular basis.

5. Effective Leadership

The leadership must be able to handle the complexities of managing a virtual team of talents tasks, etc.

6. Access to Electronic and Collaborative Technologies

As the virtual team members won't get chance to meet with each other, share the documents and think together, keeping in touch with the updated online tools is mandatory. Some of the online applications are Squiggle (video), Dropbox (file sharing), Google docs (document management), Skitch (screen shot sharing), Trello (project and task management), etc.

7. Changing the Organisational Culture

Remote employees, virtual and cross functional teams, work from home, etc are becoming popular. This tends to influence the organizational mindset. Managers should be able to accept the changes in the organizational culture in this regard.

MANAGING TEAM PERFORMANCE

It can be used to help and fine tune that are already performing well. It is based on a new model of teamwork and an instrument which can measure team performance. Understanding and subsequently discussing a team's performance is important in managing team performance. To work effectively, teams must regularly and objectively review their "teamwork". In addition to concentrating on their short term outputs, team members must examine work processes to ensure that the team is working creatively, that the team is effectively promoting itself to others, and so on.

Successfully managing team performance starts by identifying where the team is performing well and where it needs further development. The Team Performance Profile Questionnaire and associated analysis gives team members an objective assessment of how the team is doing. It provides opportunities to compare the various viewpoints of team members and outsiders and relate them to the team vision and purpose. The diagnosis of the problems is essential. Once we know what is wrong, it is usually easy to fix it.

While measuring the team performance, the following have to be looked.

- ✓ Individual performance
- ✓ Individual's contribution to the team performance
- ✓ Performance of the entire team

MANAGING CONFLICT IN TEAMS

Conflicts in teams aren't always disadvantageous. **Conflicts can benefit teams as follows.**

- ✓ Conflicts encourage the expression of new ideas which can lead to new and better ways of doing business.
- ✓ Conflicts can also expose weaknesses in operational procedures and policies.
- ✓ Conflicts highlight challenges that have the potential to turn into chronic problems if ignored.

Conflict becomes negative when,

- ✓ Disagreements are ignored and/or allowed to develop into hostilities.
- ✓ Communication becomes unprofessional.

Managing conflict effectively can be a delicate task, but there are a number of **techniques and policies** that can be implemented to help you keep things under control as given below.

1. **Train the staff to resolve conflicts in a professional manner without the intervention of management.**

Ensure that each team member knows the protocol for resolving differences with each other in particular situations. **The first step in resolving most conflicts is an informal,**

one-to-one meeting between the parties involved. Discuss the problem from both points of view, suggest solutions and agree on a course of action. If no resolution is made, record the substance of the discussion and make the manager aware of the problem.

2. Intervene and act as an objective third party in the dispute.

Bring the two parties together and mediate a discussion. Ask each team member to **explain his/her challenge and the reasons why a resolution was not reached** during the earlier meeting between the two parties. If the situation warrants, **suggest alternative solutions that might be agreeable to both parties and the team as a whole.** If one side is in the wrong according to company rules and procedures, make that judgement and enforce it, but be sure to explain your decision in an objective and constructive manner so that future challenges of a similar nature do not arise. If a resolution cannot be determined at this stage of the conflict, refer it to the team for open discussion.

3. Call a team meeting and explain the problem from the point of view of an objective third-party.

Allow each of the two team members engaged in the conflict to add to your description of the situation. Ask each member of the team to contribute their thoughts on the situation with a brief and objective statement, with team goals and company policies and procedures as their primary frame of reference. Come to a group decision and be sure that each team member understands how and why the team has come to this decision. Record all developments during the meeting and file it for future reference. Doing so can help resolve future disputes and documents employees who frequently find themselves in situations of conflict.

WORKING TOGETHER IN TEAMS

Teamwork is the concept of people working together as a team for a specific purpose under the same value. Greater interpersonal skills are necessary to be in a team. **Team work aims at sharing responsibilities, open communications, improving the working environment, relieving stress, reducing errors, etc.**

When working together in team, it promotes effectiveness and enthusiasm of a professional. It aims at reducing the risks and promotes synergy.

TEAM CULTURE

Team culture is the set of underlying rules and beliefs, usually unrecognized, that determine how everyone in your practice interacts with each other and with the clients. New team members gradually absorb the culture of a team, without being taught, usually without even noticing.

Maintaining team culture is important for team formation, operation and continuance. **Tuckman and Jensen found a hierarchy of drivers for team performance; they are,**

- ✓ effective communications
- ✓ Trust, respect, and credibility
- ✓ Overall team performance
- ✓ Interesting and stimulating work.

Westby and Ford proposed four functions of team culture; they are,

- ✓ Sharing patterns of interpretation and perception
- ✓ Sharing patterns of feelings and values
- ✓ Defining who is a member
- ✓ Prescribing behaviour.

Teams create their own language, jargon, and stories which are used to describe and demonstrate the values, beliefs, and perspective of the team.

Team culture may be identified through the dimensions of a team goal, leadership and followership, commitment, motivation, trust, and power.

TEAM POWER

Team power is a measurement of the collective strength of a team. Team power can be best used to solve any complicated problem and it helps improving the synergy of the members of the team.

TEAM LEADER DEVELOPMENT

Leader development is defined as the “expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes”. These roles and processes are ones that aid in setting direction, creating alignment and maintaining commitment in groups of people sharing common work. Most organizational leadership research and educational programs have focused on developing individual-based knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with formal leadership roles.

There are **three types of intrapersonal competencies related to leader development**; they are,

1. **Self Awareness** (emotional awareness, confidence, and accurate self image)
2. **Self Regulation** (self control, trustworthiness, adaptability and personal responsibility)
3. **Self Motivation** (commitment, initiative, and optimism)

Leadership can be developed by the following methods,

1. Formal Training

Organizations often offer formal training programs to their leaders. Traditional styles provide leaders with required knowledge and skills in a particular area by utilizing coursework, practice, with rehearsals, and feedback. This traditional lecture based classroom training is useful, however, the limitations include the leader’s ability to transfer the information from a training environment to a work setting.

2. Developmental Job Assignments

Formal training organizations should assign leaders to be with developmental jobs that target the newly acquired skills. **A job that is developmental is one in which leaders learn, undergo personal change, and gain leadership skills resulting from the roles, responsibilities and tasks involved in that job.** Developmental job assignments are one of the most effective forms of leader development.

3. Three Hundred and Sixty Degree (360°) Feedback

It is a necessary component of leader development which allows leaders to **maximize learning opportunities from their current assignment. It systematically provides the leader with perceptions of his or her performance from a full circle of viewpoints including subordinates, peers, superiors and the leader’s own self.**