Managing Conflict, cont.

2020-03-24

Course(s) Used:

- Team and Small Group Communication

  Goals and Objectives:

- Students can identify the indicators of groupthink.
- Students are aware of strategies to avoid groupthink in their groups.

  Rationale:

  Groupthink and excessive conflict avoidance are unfortunately common. Students need to be able to identify and respond to groupthink in order to help their groups be successful.

Materials Needed

Materials:

- None

  Technology:

- Classroom computer and projector

Outline of the Lesson

1. Review of previous session's content
2. **Groupthink** is one way that conflict is managed ineffectively[1,2]
3. Features that make groupthink more likely:

   A. Apathetic group (class projects, OMG)
   B. Members don't believe they can be successful
   C. One or more qualified and capable group members
   D. A very persuasive group member
   E. A norm of censoring negative opinions

4. Identifying groupthink

   A. Critical thinking not encouraged or rewarded
   B. Members think their group can do no wrong
   C. Members too concerned with justifying/rationalizing their actions
   D. Members pressure those that don't support decisions

[1] Janis, I. L. (1972). *Victims of groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes*. Houghton Mifflin.

[2] Janis, I. L. (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes*. Houghton Mifflin.

    E. Members believe there is consensus

    F. Members reinforce the leader's beliefs

5. Avoiding/Reducing groupthink

    A. Encourage critical thinking

        1. Explicitly ask for disagreement

    B. Pay attention to status

    C. Invite an outside observer

        1. They should not be critiquing your ideas

        2. Have them focus on process and relationships

    D. Assign responsibility for criticism

        1. Assigning this responsibility makes criticism less personal ("It's my job")

    E. Subdivide the group

        1. Limited time in larger groups for people to share

        2. There is a reason committees are so common–they work!

    F. Integrate technology

        1. Can allow asynchronous work

        2. Can allow anonymity

        3. Brainstorming/Feedback/Voting

6. Lesson closing

Variations and Accommodations

Follow guidance from local accommodation authorities.