

GROUP

INTRODUCTION

When we study management, we carry out planning for the organization. One of the most important elements of planning is to set objectives depending upon the resources available. The organizational objectives are later categorized into departmental objectives and group objectives. What we have done in the process is division of work. To accomplish the organizational objective, each group has to accomplish its group objective so that a “whole” can be achieved by coordinating various activities of groups. It is therefore division of work and coordination that provides synergy to the organization.

Understanding Group

A work group is collection of two or more individuals, working for a common goal and are interdependent. They interact significantly to achieve a group objective. For a manager it is difficult to manage group because of varied nature, personality traits, attitude of individuals and personal interest in the group job the group members display. It is therefore important for managers to understand group member behaviour and deal effectively with the group because of the synergy they provide. Manager should be able to achieve not only group objective but should be able to fulfill individual objectives within the overall organizational frame work. Group members should be able to achieve greater (volume and quality) than the sum total of individual contribution. This is achieved by joint idea generation, finding out various courses open, and selecting and implementing the best course of action. Because of the joint efforts of the group, it is possible to use skill, knowledge and experience of group members to achieve quality decisions and achieve group goals. Fred Luthans states that if a group exists in an organization, its members :-

- Are motivated to join
- perceive a group as unified unit of interacting people
- contribute to various amounts to the group processes
- reach agreement and disagreements through various forms of interaction.

Why do People Join Groups?

1 Security: By joining a group, individuals can reduce the insecurity of standing alone. People feel stronger, have fewer self-doubts, and are more resistant to threats when they are part of a group.

2 Status: Inclusion in a group that is viewed as important by others provides recognition and status for its members.

3 Self-Esteem: Groups can provide people with feelings of self-worth. That is, in addition to conveying status to those outside the group, membership can also give increased feelings of worth to the group members themselves.

4 Affiliation: Groups can fulfill social needs. People enjoy the regular interaction that comes with group membership. For many people, these on-the-job interactions are their primary source for fulfilling their needs for affiliation.

5 Power: What cannot be achieved individually often becomes possible through group action. There is power in numbers.

6 Goal Achievement: There are times when it takes more than one person to accomplish a particular task – there is a need to pool talents, knowledge, or power in order to get a job completed. In such instances, management will rely on the use of a formal group.

Types of Groups

1. Formal Group

Formal group is designated work group defined by the organizational structure. It is collection of employees who work together to contribute towards achievement of organizational objective. For example aircrew. Formal groups are formed based on the work and human resources required by skill, knowledge and experience to achieve organizational task. In a manufacturing unit, the organizational task is sub divided into groups and teams. Each group is composed of various members based on the human resource requirement. The members of the group report to a designated leader. They interact with each other on official level.

Types of formal groups

a) Command Group

A command group is formal group which are determined by the organizational chart depicting the approved formal connections between individuals in an organization. It is composed of the subordinates who report directly to a given manager or supervisor. Examples of command group are school principal and teachers, production manager and supervisors, etc

b) Task Group

Task groups consist of people who work together to achieve a common task. Members are brought together to accomplish a narrow range of goals within a specified time period. Task groups are also commonly referred to as task forces. The organization appoints members and assigns the goals and tasks to be accomplished. Examples of assigned tasks are the development of a new product, the improvement of a production process, or the proposal of a motivational contest. Other common task groups are ad hoc committees, project groups, and standing committees. Ad hoc committees are temporary groups created to resolve a specific complaint or develop a process. Project groups are similar to ad hoc committees and normally disband after the group completes the assigned task. Standing committees are more permanent than ad hoc committees and project groups. They maintain longer life spans by rotating members into the group.

2. Informal Groups

Informal groups are groups that are not formally organized in the work system to get the job done but develop on their own randomly at workplaces because of common interest and mutual liking of the group members. For example members of production department, body manufacturing department, HR department members and few individual from finance dept may form a friendship group. This development takes place because of the interaction they have with each other during the official work. Members from within one group or members from different departments or even an organization can form an informal group.

The features of such groups are as under:

- (a) Informal groups are formed by various members themselves, it has no official sanctity.
- (b) These groups are formed based on commonality of culture, religious function, liking for each other and common interests.

- (c) Their contribution for success of formal group is immense if properly handled by official authority.
- (d) These groups evolve their own structure, elect their own leaders and have followers. They work based on group norms, social norms and code of conduct.
- (e) They represent the human side of an organization.
- (f) The group exist without any rigid rules. Their common interest is bond for existence.

Types of informal groups:

a) Friendship Groups : Friendship groups are associations of people who like each other and who like to be together. Such groups are formed because members have one or more common characteristics, such as age or ethnic heritage, political beliefs, religious values and other bonds of attraction.

b) Interest Groups : Interest groups are composed of individuals who may not be members of the same organization (command or task groups), but they are united by their interest in a common issue. Example of interest groups may include a group of University Professors. They organize a seminar on Law and Order Problems of their city.

c) Reference Group : A reference group is a special type of informal group that people use to evaluate themselves. A reference group may not be an actual one that meets together, it can be an imaginary group. The reference group for a new university Lecturer, for example, may be other scholars in the same discipline at other universities.

Distinction Between Formal and Informal Groups

1. Origin : A formal group is deliberately structured and planned to serve organizational interest. The manager decides about the activities of each individual and his interaction with others. They come together because of the interdependence of their operations or their mutual dependence on their common boss. An informal group, on the other hand, emerges voluntarily and spontaneously. In fact, the formal organization itself contains the seeds for the emergence of informal groups. It allocates people in different departments, work-locations and time-schedules and while performing their tasks, the members develop their activities, interactions and sentiments towards each other which are not cared for by the formal organization.

2. Purpose of the Group Formation : The main purpose of formal groups is to serve the organization as means to formal ends, while the informal groups provide social satisfaction and stability to work groups.

3. Authority : The authority to a formal group is given by the institution according to the position on the organization chart. It is given to the position and not to the man concerned. Whosoever be in that position, will enjoy the authority. Authority in such groups is acquired through delegation from the above to the downward. Contrarily, the authority in an informal group is earned or given permissively by the members of the group. It is given to a person considering his age, seniority, competence, etc. and not to the position and so it flows horizontally or at times, even upward.

4. Communication: All messages-upward or downward-pass through the chain of command strictly as given on the organization chart. In an informal group, all messages are passed through informal channel because there is no such chain of command. People remain in mutual contact with each other, they learn about every person of group what is going on in the organization.

5. Control on Behaviour: Behaviour of the people of the formal group is regulated by the rules and regulations framed with an intention to attain rotationally and efficiency. Violation of any rule attracts penalty and punishment. In an informal group, on the other hand, behaviour of the members is controlled through norms, values and beliefs of the group. The members of the informal group may compel any member of the group to disassociate himself from the group, if he is continuously violating the norms of the group after giving him proper warning.

6. Size : Formal groups are quite large because personal relations have no concern there, while the informal groups tend to remain smaller so as to keep it within limits of personal relations.

7. Nature of Group: Formal groups are stable in character and continues for a longer period. Informal groups are quite unstable because they are subject to sentiments and feelings of the group members. A particular informal group ceases to exist as soon as its purpose is solved.

8. Sanctions to Members : Members are suitably rewarded or punished for their work done in a formal group according to the formal rules and regulations of the group. Rewards or punishments may be financial or non-financial. But in an informal group, the efforts of the person are recognized mainly through non-financial rewards or punishments generally in terms of feelings, status and prestige.

9. Abolition of the Group : As formal groups are subject to management control, they can be abolished at the discretion of the proper authority while a particular informal group cannot be destroyed because any attempt to destroy it may lead to formation of several other groups because there is no management control over it. Management cannot destroy it because it has not formed that.

10. Number of Groups : The whole organization (formal group) is divided into several units and sub-units working for the common cause but a large number of informal groups are found in an institution and some ever outside the institution. An individual may be the member of a number of informal groups for different purposes. So there is overlapping membership and multiple groups.

Stages of Group Formation

1) Forming: When a group is initially formed, its members cannot accomplish much until they agree on what their purpose is, how they will work together and so on. Answering such questions brings group members face to face with the first obstacle to maturity: uncertainty, anxiety, and disagreement over power and authority. In this stage, the focus is on the interpersonal relations among the members. Members assess one another with regard to trustworthiness, emotional comfort, and evaluative acceptance. Thus, the forming stage is characterized by a great deal of uncertainty about the group's purpose, structure and leadership. Members are testing the waters to determine that type of behaviour is acceptable. This stage is complete when members have begun to think of themselves as part of a group.

(2) Storming: The storming stage is one of inter-group conflict. Members accept the existence of the group, but resist the constraints the group imposes on individuality. Further, there is conflict over who will control the group. After a group leader has emerged, the remaining group members must sort out where they fit in the group. Even if all the group members must sort out where they fit in the group. Even if all the group members accept the leader, the group enters a phase of conflict and challenge. One or more followers may test the leader. The group may split into factions supporting and opposing the leader. If the group gets stuck in this phase of development, group members may engage in battles over turf and expend their energies on a variety of political tactics. When this stage is complete, a relatively clear hierarchy of leadership exists within the group.

(3) Norming: In this stage, close relationships develop and the group demonstrates cohesiveness. Entering and conducting the cohesion phase requires intervention by a group member who is emotionally unaffected by power and authority issues. Typically, such a person encourages group members to confront these issues openly. If the group engages in this process, the cohesion phase usually passes quickly. Group members recognize where they fit in and the group agree on how it will operate. A new leader may emerge, or the existing leader may become more aware of how much others in the group contribute. The norming stage is complete when the group structure solidifies and the group has assimilated a common set of expectations of what defines correct member behaviour.

(4) Performing: The fourth stage is performing. The structure at this point is fully functional and accepted. Group energy has moved from getting to know and understand each other to performing the task at hand. Members' attention is directed to self-motivation and the motivation of other group members for task accomplishment. Some members focus on the task function of initiating activity and ensure that the work of the group really gets moving. Other members contribute to motivation and commitment within the group through maintenance functions such as supporting, encouraging and recognizing the contributions of members or through establishing the standards that the group may use in evaluating its performance.

(5) Adjourning: For permanent work groups, performing is the last stage in their development. However for temporary groups, there is an adjourning stage. In this stage, the group prepares for its disbandment. High task performance is no longer the group's top priority. Instead, attention is directed toward wrapping up activities.

Advantages of Group Decision Making

Groups, generally, are considered to be more effective as compared to single individuals. Some of the advantages inherent in group decision making are :

1. Greater Knowledge Base : Groups tend to have a greater knowledge base, since these involve more than one person and two heads are always considered better than one. All the members of the group have their own specialties and they contribute lots of information and knowledge to the knowledge base of the group. Thus, the decisions where knowledge is of paramount importance, can be effectively taken only at group levels.

2. Greater Number of Alternatives : More the amount of knowledge and information, greater will be the number of alternative available for the solution of a problem. Greater number of alternatives offer more perspective on a problem as compared to the narrow vision of a single perspective.

3. Effective Implementation of Decisions : The implementation of decisions will be more effective as the people who are going to implement the decisions are the people who also participated in decision making. People are more committed to the implementation of the decisions which they themselves have participated in decision making. In such a case, acceptance of the decisions will also be more, which is a very important consideration because a decision which has more acceptance will be more effective.

4. Elimination of Personal Biases : As a number of people are involved in the decision making, the biases they have introduced due to individual decision making are eliminated. The decisions become more reliable and dependable as compared to individual decisions.

5. Larger number of members provide more perspectives of the problem. As such, the narrow vision of a single perspective is avoided in making decisions.

Disadvantages of Group Decision Making

Group decision-making suffers from the following disadvantages also :

1. Time consuming:- Group decision-making is a time consuming process.

2. Dominated by a few: Quite often, discussions in a group are dominated by a few members. Although a group discussion means a collective discussion, some people usually manage to take a position of informal leadership owing to their personality or style of participation. This leadership can also be because of the position held within the organisation or simply because of self-confidence generated by previous experiences. Sometimes only a few individuals dominate and the others fade away in a group, thereby defeating the very purpose of group discussion.

3. Compromise decision: The need to arrive at a group decision sometimes results in a compromise. The solution offered is not essentially the best. It is, instead, a compromise acceptable as a mid-point to all concerned. There are different demands and social pressures, and members may agree to a proposal without really evaluating it. Such support may not be wholehearted.

4. Potential for Group Polarization and Social loafing

Another disadvantage when relying on group decision making is group polarization. This can happen when the group will converge to a more extreme solution for a particular problem. Thus, it can result to a risky shift when majority of the group decide an extreme decision. This is because they will feel lesser responsibility or accountability for their actions compared to only one person making the decision

Another negative effect is social loafing, which is the tendency for people to exert less effort to achieve a goal when they are in a group. This goes against the adage that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It is often found that certain members of the group would sit back and watch while other members did the majority of the work. This is seen as one of the main reasons groups are sometimes less productive than the combined performance of their members working as individuals, but should be distinguished from the accidental coordination problems that groups sometimes experience.

Techniques of Group Decisions Making

1. Brainstorming : Brainstorming technique was originally adopted by Alex Osborn in 1938 in an American company for encouraging creative thinking in groups of six to eight people. According to Osborn, brainstorming means using the brain to storm the problem. In brainstorming, the participants should be connected with the problem directly or closely. It is based on the following four basic guidelines :

- (a) Generate as many ideas as possible.
- (b) Be creative, freewheeling and imaginative.
- (c) Generate ideas, extend, or combine earlier ideas.
- (d) Withhold criticism of others' ideas.

There are two principles that explain brainstorming. One is deferred judgment, by which all ideas are encouraged without criticism and evaluation. The second principle is that quantity breeds quality. As more ideas come forth, it facilitates to develop the higher-quality ones. The success of brainstorming depends on each member's capacity and willingness to listen to others' thoughts, to use these thoughts as a stimulus to spark new ideas of their own and then feel free to

express them. Brainstorming sessions last from ten minutes to one hour and do not require much preparation.

Although brainstorming technique is found useful for all types of decisions, it is particularly useful for simple and well-defined problems. It stimulates members to generate new ideas for solving a particular problem.

2. Nominal Group Technique (NGT) : The two disadvantages of group decision making are: (i) it is time-consuming and (ii) the decisions are influenced by the dominant members. The nominal group technique (NGT) minimizes these problems. In the NGT, a nominal group exists in name only. The members have minimal interaction prior to making a decision.

The objective of nominal group technique is to resolve the opinion conflicts among the group members by enabling each individual to pen down his/her thoughts about the problem and later discuss it with the entire group to reach the consensus solution. Generally, the nominal group training is comprised of the following steps:

1. First of all, the facilitator welcomes all the participants and then briefs about the problem requiring decision.
2. The participants are given time to pen down their ideas that come to their minds in reference to the problem being discussed. During this period, each member writes his/her ideas silently without discussing anything with each other.
3. Once all the members have written, their ideas are required to share them in front of all the group members. At this stage, the facilitator chalks down the ideas of each group member on the flip chart, thereby giving all the members equal opportunity to share what they feel.
4. Once the key points are written on the chart, the members are asked to discuss the points which they feel requires an explanation. Each member explains his/her mind to the other members and in the meanwhile, the facilitator tries to maintain the discussion as neutral as possible, thereby avoiding the criticism and judgement.
5. Once all points are explained, the members are asked to give vote or rank various ideas by prioritizing these in relation to the basic problem, for which the meeting is held.

If the group does not reach a consensus decision, then again the ranks are assigned to the recorded ideas and this process continues till the final decision is arrived.

One of the main advantages of nominal group technique is that it gives all the group members an equal opportunity to speak out their minds. Also, some group members are quite and shy, this method helps them to write down their ideas and discuss with the group members. The major disadvantage is that this technique consumes a lot of time to arrive to a final conclusion and also only one problem can be addressed at a time

3. Delphi Technique : In Delphi technique of decision-making, members are scattered over large distances and do not have face-to-face interaction for decision-making. Members are selected because they are experts or have relevant information to share.

It involves obtaining the opinion of experts physically separated and unknown to each other. All these opinions are handled by a central coordinator, who consolidates the opinions and this information is sent back to the experts for further analysis and opinion refinement. The Delphi technique is characterized by the following sequential- steps:

1. The problem is identified and a set of questions are built relating to the problem so that the answers to these questions would generate solutions to the problem. These questions are consolidated in the form of a questionnaire.
 2. Experts in the problem area are identified and contacted. The questionnaire is sent to each member who anonymously and independently answers the questions and sends it back to the central coordinator.
 3. The results of this questionnaire are compiled and analyzed and on the basis of the responses received, a second questionnaire is developed, which is mailed back to participating members.
 4. The members are asked again to comment, suggest and answer the questions, possibly generating new ideas and solutions.
 5. The responses to this second questionnaire are complied and analyzed and if a consensus has not been reached, then a third questionnaire is developed, pinpointing the issue and unresolved areas of concern.
- (vi) The above process is repeated until a consensus is obtained. Then the final report is prepared.

One of the advantages of the Delphi technique is that the group members are totally independent and are not influenced by the opinion of other members. Also the members do not have to be present at one location, so that an expert who is geographically separated can also be asked for his opinion, so that the cost of bringing these experts together is avoided.

4. Quality Circles

A quality circle is a participatory management technique that enlists the help of employees in solving problems related to their own jobs. Joel E. Ross and William C. Ross define a quality circle as "a small group of employees doing similar or related work who meet regularly to identify, analyze, and solve product-quality and production problems and to improve general operations. The circle is a relatively autonomous unit (ideally about ten workers), usually led by a supervisor or a senior worker and organized as a work unit." Employees who participate in quality circles usually receive training in formal problem-solving methods—such as brainstorming, cause-and-effect diagrams—and then are encouraged to apply these methods to either specific or general company problems. After completing an analysis, they often present their findings to management and then handle implementation of approved solutions.

Although most commonly found in manufacturing environments, quality circles are applicable to a wide variety of business situations and problems.

They are based on two ideas:

a) that employees can often make better suggestions for improving work processes than management;

b) that employees are motivated by their participation in making such improvements.

Thus, implemented correctly, quality circles can help a small business reduce costs, increase productivity, and improve employee morale. Other potential benefits that may be realized by a small business include greater operational efficiency, reduced absenteeism, improved employee health and safety, and an overall better working climate.

Group members creativity is tapped to solve their day-to-day work related problems. It is through this process they get become cohesive team and their organizational ownership get developed. Hence it is necessary that the group member should understand this process very clearly.

- 1) Identification of work related problem
- 2) Selection of problem
- 3) Defining the Problem
- 4) Analyse the problem
- 5) Identification of causes
- 6) Finding the root causes
- 7) Data Analysis
- 8) Developing solution
- 9) Foreseeing the probable resistance (the probable constraints and finding ways to overcome them)
- 10) Trial implementation and checking performance.
- 11) Regular implementation
- 12) Follow-up and review

GROUP COHESIVENESS:

Following factors contribute to group Cohesiveness.

Similarity in Attitude and Value

Group members having identically attitude and high level of value system will behave themselves identically and promote group norms and achieve Cohesiveness. In such situation decision making and implementation of group task is comparatively easy . Conflict situations are avoided and a smooth sailing is achieved. Interest of the group is well protected due to cohesiveness of the group.

Togetherness

It is a natural tendency that people want to remain together When they interact they know each other better and are attracted by their nature and behaviour pattern. People share their happiness and hardships and a bond of togetherness is formed. In organizational setting, people on the same floor, department, residing in the same colony, bus stop friendship are attracted to each-other because of their close proximity. It will invariably be found that the people who are closely associated ,by virtue of even seating arrangement in the work-place, share their views and display more cohesiveness than those who are located away.

Group Size

Cohesiveness of a group depends upon the close interaction of the group members with each other. In a large group it not possible for the individual to communicate with each other hence there is likelihood of large group being less cohesive than the small group. In work environment small group is more effective. If a group is large, there is also a possibility of formation of small sub groups within a large group. This will lead to delusions of group norms and power politics within the sub group, which is not desirable.

Threat and Challenges

Every group has its objectives. It has been experimented that whenever there is a threat to disturb the group norm or group objective, group members get more united to protect the group objective from the party threatening the same. It will be noticed that external threat brings higher degree of cohesion to the group. In the fast moving world today, the importance of group has increased many fold. Employees have sacrificed their perks and privileges to ensure higher productivity by adhering to group norms. For example employees in a well organized industry work beyond specified time to achieve group goals. Meeting higher challenges brings personal satisfaction to group members and higher level cohesiveness to the group they are part of.

Status of the group and entry norms

There are organizations whose membership is difficult to obtain. There are also clubs which are reserved for exclusive members of a particular background like Defence Services Officers club. Joining of such group elevates the status, position and members feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. Because the membership of such clubs is exclusive,at times, there is also a long waiting list to join such groups. More exclusive the group more cohesive it will be. More difficult to get entry, more cohesive the group would be.

Degree of participation in group Activities

Participation in group activities is important as it leads to more frequent interaction between group members. Success in group activities also bring cohesiveness as each of the participants feels that he has been the contributor for achievement of group goals. For example ,participation in sports team and achieving the victory.

Advantages of Group Cohesiveness

Participation Once a high level of cohesiveness is achieved each member develops a sense of belonging to the group. He craves to be intensely involved in group activities. He also develops close relationship with each member and consider the group as a family. The members participation gives an opportunity to fulfill social needs.

Increased Productivity Group efforts are expected to bring better results than the sum total of individual efforts. Studies show that outcome is not only related to group cohesiveness but also to group compliance with organizational goals.

Satisfaction. In a group environment satisfaction is guided by cumulative effect of external factors like respect for each other, support from group members, expert guidance, achievement and sense of safety in group environment. These factors bind members to each other and achieve cohesiveness. If members are not satisfied they would seize to be part of the group.

Better Communication. Members form a group , remain member of the group because of the value system they share with each other. By virtue of this an effective communication is evolved that reduces conflict to a large extent. Members of the group enjoy the freedom of action by virtue of respect for each other and the social relationship.

Time saving

A work or a task allotted to a group of persons instead of work allotted to an individual, can definitely approach a positive side of the work. For instance, when it comes to an individual person, then the person might take a little longer time to solve the issues, but when it comes to group of people, then the solution can be better and quicker as compared to the individual doing the work.

Success

Group is formed to achieve a particular group objective. When achieving group objective, the personal objective takes a back seat. Group Cohesiveness and success are interdependent. When group is highly cohesive the success is almost assured. On the contrary if the group is not cohesive the members will display separate interests and fulfillment of group objective will merely remain as an objective and its accomplishment will be difficult.

Disadvantages of Group Cohesiveness:

Low level of productivity: Most of the time, working in a group cannot favor a company or an organization with the help of their own group, and that is because all the teams own their own thinking. Members of cohesive groups tend to follow group norms. Group norms are the explicit and implicit rules that govern the values, actions and behavior of group members. Some norms enable the group to function more effectively, such as encouraging everyone to participate in decision-making. However, low performance norms can be detrimental to group productivity. For example, in a cohesive group members will be reluctant to put in extra effort to meet a deadline if the norm is to work at a steady pace.

Lack of creativity: As most of the members of the team share a single and simple interest and eventually this type of similar interest can deliver same sort of results each and every time. Therefore, because of group cohesive behavior the company can lack behind with their creative elements. Moreover, all the elements in the group cohesiveness provide a lower level of creativity among their group or a team.

Lack of innovation: It is quite similar to the topic that one can understand better. At most of the time people involved in a group can come up with a low level of innovation and that eventually lacks creativity in their field of work. Therefore, it is necessary to understand all the things within this group cohesiveness. Moreover, this creates a lack of innovation among their members.

Groupthink

When highly-cohesive groups make decisions they run the risk of groupthink. Groupthink occurs when group members are reluctant to express dissenting opinions to avoid causing disharmony within a cohesive group. Opinions held by the majority or by key group members are regarded as unanimous and alternative views are discouraged. Cohesive groups are suspicious of contradictory opinions expressed by outsiders. Information from outsiders that contradicts the group's opinion may even be hidden by group members. Groupthink can lead to poor or irrational decisions.

Resistance to Change

Members of cohesive groups rely heavily on each other and resist external ideas and input. This can lead to isolation and a feeling of superiority over others in the organizations. As a result, cohesive groups find it difficult to change their values, actions or behaviors, particularly when the change is driven by external forces. Even if an individual member of the group becomes convinced of the need for change, he may find it difficult to put into practice due to the strength of the group dynamic.