“The Forgotten Group Member” Case Study

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**Part I: Group Development**

*Forming Stage:*  Members are interested to get to know each other, learn and discover each other's behavior and determine the real task of the team and what they can contribute to the team.

*Storming Stage:*  In this state members tend to be emotional and there might be tension between team members. Coalitions and cliques are formed as members compete to achieve status quo and impose preferences on one another. Moreover, members learn how to deal with each other and in defining group tasks.

*Norming Stage:* Members become unified, begin to integrate and maintain positive balance. The turmoil of the storming stage gives way to a precarious balancing of forces.

*Performing Stage:* Members of the team have become fully integrated and function with maturity. The structure is stable, and members are motivated by team goals and are generally satisfied.

*Adjourning Stage:* The members must be able to convene quickly, do their jobs on a tight schedule, and then adjourn.

Based on the statements in the case, the team is currently in the midst of the storming stage where members appear to be highly emotional and there seems to be lots of tension. Moreover, the fact that some of the team members conduct unannounced meeting proves that cliques are starting to form. By knowing the various stages of group development, Christine could have easily identified the current stage of the group, which would have allowed her to address the issues accordingly by increasing the communication and supervision amongst the team members. Groups in the storming stage require additional coaching, training, supervision and communication.

**Part II. Problem Identification**

Most of the problems being caused within the group are primarily because of Christine's lack of leadership and focus. By failing at going through the forming stage, Christine did not have a chance to allow the members to get to know each other accordingly and also prevented her to get a good feel of her team. Thus, as a leader she was not able to set a clear and challenging direction for her team. Among other things, a good team leader must be able to keep goals and expectations clear, communicate high standards, create a sense of urgency and ensure the members have the right skills and help members spend time together. Also, because of her selfish needs, such as getting good grades in her other classes, Christine was not able to invest enough time with her team to assure tasks and milestones were being met.

A secondary issue with this team would be that Mike is a classic case of a social loafer. He does not contribute much to the group and has excuses of not attending team meetings such as the times being too early for him to come or that he has relationship problems. Christine is also a factor in Mike being a social loafer. She facilitates his behavior by allowing him to give her incomplete work and not attending meetings. She is indirectly facilitating Mike's behavior.

Most if not all of the issues encountered within the group could have been prevented if Christine had increased team cohesiveness. She should of determined what motivated each member of the team. Cohesiveness tends to be high when teams are more homogenous in make-up and members respect one another's competencies, agree on common goals and work together rather alone on team tasks. Christine also failed at distributing the leadership where members all share responsibilities for meeting group tasks and maintenance needs.

**Part III: Retrospective Evaluation**

Several steps could have been taken to avoid and/or resolve the challenges that Christine was faced with as it relates to her group. During the course of the project, there was never any form of team building. Since this team was not a very formal one, Christine could have taken the continuous improvement approach where her or the group members themselves would take responsibilities for regularly engaging in team building process. This would lead to team members continuously monitoring group development and making daily changes to ensure team effectiveness. If meeting at 8:30 in the morning did not work, then maybe the team could have met at lunchtime or in the afternoon.

Moreover if Christine did not feel like she could handle the team or commit as much as she would like, she could have distributed the leadership among team members. Each team member could have discussed what he or she feel like they are good at and would work on the specific part of the project. This would allow them to not only complete the task timely and correctly but it would also provide them with the emotional satisfaction that they made full contribution to the team. If Mike was the creative one, then he could of worked on the creative aspect of the project and since Steve was the business minded one, he could have been the one that would manage deadlines and milestones for everyone.

**Part IV: Reflection**

Christine was not an effect group leader primarily because she did not focus much on the group and what was in the best interest of it. She was terrible at delegating work by not ensuring that members have the right skills. She did not give any positive feedback to her team members and never created a sense of urgency. She did not utilized her team members efficiently based on their strengths and weaknesses and she was not a good motivator and mentor. These are all characteristics that a good leader should have.