

Working in Groups

A set of resources

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What you will learn from this session

You will learn how:

- Groups function
- To assess yourself and other group members
- To assess various questionnaires
- To use web links to gain further knowledge concerning groupworking

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Introduction

Those in them often regard working in groups in an educational setting as a cop-out for teachers – I do not believe this. Planning, directing and evaluating this activity correctly takes a lot of time. I also believe that the experience gained by those in them is beneficial.

Characteristics

Workgroup can be set up for any number of purposes and can possess anything from two (is this really a group?) to several dozen members.

Different writers have presented views as to the structure of workgroups and also their natural history. One way that you can get a feel for much of this is by looking at the various assessment tools that are available for group work. This document presents several.

Assessment by nomination

A novel method of group assessment is to get each member to state who they feel is the person in the group who exhibits a particular characteristic to the highest degree. The questionnaire below gives an example. Using such a questionnaire has many implications, one of the most important being what should be done with the data collected.

Instructions: Answer all questions with the names of two group members. Base your nominations on interactions in the group. Be sure to choose two people for each question. Do not include yourself.

1. Which members can most easily influence others to change their minds? Name one Name two
2. Which are least able to influence others to change their minds? Name one Name two
3. Which have clashed most sharply with others in the course of the meetings? Name one Name two
4. Which are most highly accepted by the group? Name one Name two
5. Which are most ready to support members? Name one Name two
6. Which try to put themselves in the limelight? Name one Name two
7. Which are most likely to put personal goals before group goals? Name one Name two
8. Which have most often introduced topics not directly related to the group task? Name one Name two
9. Which have shown the greatest desire to accomplish something? Name one Name two
10. Which have wanted to avoid conflict in group discussions? Name one Name two
11. Which tend to withdraw from active discussions when strong differences begin to appear? Name one Name two
12. Which have sought to help in the resolution of differences between others? Name one Name two
13. Which have wanted the group to be warm, friendly and comfortable? Name one Name two
14. Which have completed most with others? Name one Name two
15. Which have done most to keep the group lively? Name one Name two
16. Which would you choose to work with? Name one Name two
17. With which have you talked least? Name one Name two

Taken from J William Pfeiffer, John E Jones (eds.) A handbook of structured experiences for human relations training, Vol III, San Diego, Ca. University Associates Inc.

A possibly more kind approach, to the group members, is to have each member assess all other members as in the questionnaire on the next page.

Created by Dr. Barbara Frandsen see: <http://www.stedwards.edu/cte/resources/grub.htm>

Directions: Develop one score for each group member

		Excellent=5	Good=4	Average=3	Poor=2	
Name	Score	Did a full share of the work--or more	Did an equal share of the work	Did almost as much work as others	Did less work than others	EQUAL WORK
Name	Score	Took the initiative in helping the group get organized	Worked agreeably with partner(s) concerning times and places to meet	Could be coaxed into meeting with other partner(s)	Did not meet partner(s) at agreed times and places	EQUAL WORK
Name	Score	Provided many ideas for the unit development	Participated in discussions about unit	Listened to others; on some occasions, made suggestions	Seemed bored with conversations about the unit	EQUAL WORK
Name	Score	Assisted other partner(s)	Offered encouragement to other partner(s)	Seemed preoccupied with own lessons	Took little pride in own lesson	EQUAL WORK
Name	Score	Work was ready on time or sometimes ahead of time	Work was ready very close to the agreed time	Work was usually late but was completed in time to be graded	Some work never got completed and other partner(s) completed the assignment	TIME
Name	Score	Clearly communicated desires, ideas, personal needs and feelings	Usually shared feelings and thoughts with other partner(s)	Rarely expressed feelings, preferences.	Never spoke up to express excitement and/or frustration.	COMMUNICATION
Name	Score	Expressed frequent appreciation for other group members	Often encouraged and appreciated other partner(s)	Often encouraged and appreciated other partner(s) Seemed to take the work of others for granted	Group members often wondered, "What is going on here?"	COMMUNICATION
Name	Score	Gave feedback to others that dignified	Gave feedback in ways that did not offend	Sometimes hurt feelings of others with feedback	Was openly rude when giving feedback	COMMUNICATION
Name	Score	Accepted feedback from others willingly	Reluctantly accepted feedback	Argued own point of view over feedback	Refused to listen to feedback	COMMUNICATION

Group functioning

Certain writers suggest that clearly definable roles and functions develop in all groups. One such categorization is into Driver, Persuader, Analyzer, Organizer (see: <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadtem2.html>). Those who believe this tend to create questionnaires that focus on these issues. The questionnaire below is an example. Do you think it is suitable for all types of groups?

Score each of the questions below from not at all, minimal, adequate, good to excellent.

1. Members of the group have agreed upon and understand the specific goals for the group
2. Members of the group have agreed upon and understand the ground rules for the group activity
3. The group has responded to the feelings or moods expressed by its members
4. The group has listened to and responded to members' ideas and comments and expressed recognition of contributions
5. All members of the group are involved and have participated in the discussion
6. The atmosphere of the group has been friendly and open, encouraging members to express criticisms or ask questions which expose themselves
7. The group leader encouraged discussions by group members before presenting his own ideas to the group
8. The group leader has synthesised related ideas and summarised concepts that the group have been discussing
9. The group leader has determined if all group members have reached agreement about a particular point or are ready to move to something else
10. The group has confronted a member who was hindering the group in achieving its task such as undue arguing, going off topics etc.
11. The group has been able to discuss areas of differences between members such that it does not avoid conflict nor does it allow the discussion to become destructive
12. The group leader did not dominate nor did the group defer unduly to the leader's recognition of contributions
13. The group has evaluated its progress toward its goals during and at the close of the session
14. At the end of the session the group has decided on its specific task and work required to be done for the next session.

From The small group tutorial, McMaster University Educational Monograph 3 1972

Taking this idea that groups have a natural form the questionnaire below assesses the group from the usefulness as an educational experience. Some of the questions below are reversed; think about how you might score the results?

Assessment of Educational Usefulness of a Workgroup

	Score	
Degree of mutual trust:		
High suspicion	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	High trust
Degree of mutual support:		
Genuine support for each other	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Everyone for themselves
Communications:		
Guarded, cautious	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Open, authentic
Group Objectives:		
Not understood by group	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Clearly understood by group
Group is not committed to objectives	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Group is negative towards objectives
Low attainment of objectives	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	High attainment of objectives
Handling conflicts within group:		
We deny, avoid or suppress conflicts	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	We bring out conflicts and work through them
Utilisation of member resources:		
My ideas, abilities, knowledge and experience were properly drawn out and properly used	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	My ideas, abilities, knowledge and experience were NOT drawn out and NOT properly used
Suitability of group method		
Group method suitable for the objectives	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Group method unsuitable for the objectives
General comment		
Adapted from David Jaques Learning in groups. Croom Helm (year?)		

Independent group assessment

While getting the group to assess one-another, or the group as a whole, seems sensible it could be argued that the best way to assess a group is to use an independent observer. The questionnaire below uses this strategy. Please note that it was designed for the purpose of using a group to teacher each other a specific topic which would explain several very specific questions.

Evaluator:			
Person being evaluated:			
Course:			
Date:			
Score:			
Knowledge of topic area:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Understanding of topic area at applied level of thought (gives examples of personal experiences, related background knowledge, and/or future uses of the information in applying the information to real-life situations):			
Inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Ability to articulate personal opinions and points of view clearly and accurately:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Ability to defend his/her point of view:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Empathic listening (seeks to understand opposing perspectives before defending his/her own position):			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Amount of praise and encouragement given to team members:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Contributions to the group's discussion:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Ability to refrain from dominating the discussion:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Ability to teach content to team members:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Amount of assistance offered to team members:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Facilitation of the group's movement toward consensus:			
inadequate (0)	acceptable (1)	good (2)	excellent (3)
Identify at least one strength of this person as a team member:			
Make at least one suggestion to this person for improving his/her contributions to the group:			
From: http://www.stedwards.edu/cte/resources/gpform.htm (adapted)			
St Edwards university learning resource center (lots of good stuff)			

Assessing meetings

One aspect of groupwork is the meeting and while many of the above questionnaire include several questions about how meetings are conducted. The following questionnaire, the development of which was the persons PHd, is specific to assessing meetings.

Taken from: Davison, Robert .M., "An Instrument for Measuring Meeting Success", *Information and Management*, **32**, #4, pp.163-176.

Instrument: The instrument includes five constructs, measuring: communication in meetings (C), discussion quality in a meeting (D), status effects experienced in meetings (S), team work in a meeting (T) and efficiency of meeting processes (E). For a full explanation of the rationale behind the instrument, its development and subsequent validation and modification, see Davison (1998):

<http://www.is.cityu.edu.hk/People/AcademicStaff/rd/rd-phd.htm> his home page: <http://www.is.cityu.edu.hk/People/AcademicStaff/rd/rd.htm>

Compared to previous meetings of this team, do you feel that:	<i>Improved</i>	Stayed about the same	Deteriorated
<i>Your ability to participate in the meeting (C1)</i>			
<i>Your understanding of the comments from other group members (C2)</i>			
<i>Your ability to express yourself (C3)</i>			
<i>Your willingness to put forward ideas (C4)</i>			
<i>The pressure you experienced, either to conform to a particular viewpoint or not to contradict others (S4)</i>			

Compared to previous meetings of this team, do you feel the discussions improved, stayed the same or deteriorated on the following scales:

	<i>Improved</i>	Stayed about the same	Deteriorated
Meaningful (D1)			
Appropriate (D2)			
Openness (D3)			
Imaginative (D4)			

Compared to previous meetings of this team, do you think that:	<i>Increased</i>	Stayed about the same	Decreased
<i>The willingness of other members to answer questions when asked (T1)</i>			
<i>The extent to which members worked together as a team (T2)</i>			
<i>The extent to which members had sufficient access to the information they needed so as to participate actively in and fully understand the meeting (T3)</i>			

	<i>More efficiently</i>	As efficiently	Less efficiently
<i>The time in the meeting was used (E2)</i>			

	<i>More thoroughly</i>	As thoroughly	Less thoroughly
<i>Ideas were discussed (E3)</i>			

	<i>Increased</i>	Stayed about the same	Decreased
<i>The extent to which some group members tried to intimidate others, e.g. by talking loudly, using aggressive gestures, making threats, etc. (S1)</i>			
<i>The extent to which some group members tried to use their influence, status or power so as to force issues on the other group members (S2)</i>			
<i>The extent to which you felt inhibited from participating in the discussion because of the behaviour of other meeting members (S3)</i>			

To what extent would you say that this meeting was result oriented? (E1)	Strongly Result Oriented (5)	5 < --- > 1	Weakly Result Oriented (1)
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What percentage of this meeting's time do you think was spent on serious discussion? ____% (E4)

A more academic rigorous approach

Much of the work presented in this document has little academic validity, however there is a large amount of research going on in this area and I would urge anyone who is interested in the more academic side of things to start by reading chapters 13 (communication in group decision making) and 12 (communication in relationships) of Theories of Human Communication by Stephan Littlejohn (7th ed. 2002).

Summary

This short handout has provided information about a number of ways of assessing Workgroups. It is possible for individuals within the group to consider many things including assessing other individuals within the group or the group as a whole. It is also possible to have the group assessed by using a non-participant observer. Finally it is possible to consider clearly defined tasks such as meetings.

Exercises

1. Look carefully at the questions in the above questionnaires and see if you can define several headings that the questions for most of them might fall into, such as empathy etc. Create a table similar to the one below to help you.

Aspect	Places were the question occurs	Comment
e.g. empathy	Nomination assessment (q5) Independent group assessment. etc.	Implied used the word 'support'
etc		

2. Go to one or two of the web links given in this handout and describe what Tuchmans model is. Describe each of the stages in no more than 300 words.

3. If you are involved in groupwork choose two of the above questionnaires to discuss consider what you think the advantages and disadvantages are to them.

4. Draw up a list of no more than ten tasks that you think a group should do when it first meets. After this visit several of the web links given in this handout and review your list. If you are already in a group do this individually than share your results with the group. Do you think hindsight may play a major part in what you have come up with?

5. While many of the questionnaires assess the success of the group few directly consider possible contributing factors to success, draw up a list of what you consider to be those possible factors.

6. Next time you go to a meeting take along with you the Meeting Assessment Questionnaire and try to complete it afterwards, if you can try to share your results with other people who have also been at the meeting.

Web links

Links below live at: 9/15/2002 10:42:33 PM

<http://www.sa.ucsb.edu/osl/LeadershipOpportunities/pdf/StagesOfGroupDevelopment.pdf> Lists the usual five stage model (forming, norming, storming, performing, adjourning) developed by Tuckman, B.W. (original article: "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," Psychological Bulletin, vol. 63, 1965, pp. 384-399). along with problems and solution at each stage

<http://www.udel.edu/inst/june99/forminggroups/> Good powerPoint presentation on Groups – strategies to make them work

http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/076742686x/student_view0/chapters_1-3.html A eBook from McGraw-Hill called communicating in groups. By Joann Keyton Very good in places.

<http://www.people.ku.edu/~jkeyton/grptext/> Joann Keytons web site contains links including material on virtual groups etc.

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadtem2.html> Good page describing Tuchmans model and various member types.

<http://english.ttu.edu/carter/5376/Lectures/norming.htm> A page doing the same as this with links to the Tuchman model

<http://web.utk.edu/~sjmcmill/teamweb.htm> Handout for those involved in team work (students) also describes roles in the following categories; Leader, thinker, achiever, carer and doer.

http://ntsrv2000.educ.ualberta.ca/nethowto/examples/n_miller/lpgrpdev.html A detailed lesson plan, lecture notes and activates for a session on group working.

<http://www.personalitypathways.com/MTR/> MTR-i team roles poster Sculptor, Curator, Conductor, Scientist, Coach, Explorer, Crusader, Innovator.

Appendix A Comparison between the MTR-i and Belbin Team roles

The *MTR-i*TM team roles do not correspond with the Belbin[®] team roles - they are a new set of roles, having been produced on a different theoretical basis. A study undertaken by Henley Management College (Higgs, 1996) showed that, although there may be some loose correlations, there is not a clear relationship between Belbin and the MBTI[®] (based on the same underlying theory as the *MTR-i*).

MTR-i team role	Belbin comparison	
	(derived from Henley Report)	(MTR-i author's hypothesis)
Coach	Team Worker	Team Worker
Crusader	No equivalent	No equivalent
Explorer	Resource Investigator	Resource Investigator
Innovator	No equivalent	Plant
Sculptor	No equivalent	Shaper
Curator	Monitor Evaluator Implementor	Monitor Evaluator
Conductor	Co-ordinator Completer Finisher Implementor Shaper	Co-ordinator Completer Finisher Implementor
Scientist	No equivalent	No equivalent

The table shows the implied correlations there might be between the two team role models:
Taken from <http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/belbin.html>

Appendix B Comparison between Myers-Briggs and MTR-i

(Taken from <http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/belbin.html>)

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a model of personality preferences. It identifies characteristics and traits that are associated with the person. The *MTR-i* is a team roles model. It identifies what kind of contribution is being made to the team. Whereas MBTI type is inborn, *MTR-i* team roles change from situation to situation, in accord with the demands of the environment.

The *MTR-i* complements the MBTI by enabling a comparison between preferences and roles being performed. The *MTR-i* does not measure the same things as the MBTI.

MBTI	MTR-i
Reports personality preferences Consistent over time Tries to measure personality type Reports 4 pairs of preferences, resulting in 16 personality types	Reports contribution to the team Changes in different situations Tries to measure use of Jungian function-attitudes Reports 8 distinct team roles

Any personality type can undertake any team role. However, there is a strong link between the two models, based on the theory of Carl Jung. Both models and questionnaires are concerned with the Jungian functions or function-attitudes. The differences are:

- The MBTI indicates which Jungian function-attitudes are preferred. (Everyone uses all the Jungian-functions, no matter what their preferences.)
- The *MTR-i* indicates which Jungian function-attitudes are primarily being used at present. (Irrespective of which function-attitudes are currently being used, one's underlying preference may be different.)

The table below identifies the theoretical correspondence between personality type and team role, and the Jungian function attitudes that provide the link.

MBTI types	Function-attitude preferred / used	MTR-i team role
ESFJ/ENFJ	Fe	Coach
ISFP/INFP	Fi	Crusader
ENTP/ENFP	Ne	Explorer
INTJ/INFJ	Ni	Innovator
ESFP/ESTP	Se	Sculptor
ISTJ/ISFJ	Si	Curator
ESTJ/ENTJ	Te	Conductor
ISTP/INTP	Ti	Scientist

The linkages between the two models are reflected in the colours of the *MTR-i* team wheel:

- Yellow team roles correspond to the Sensing function
- Green team roles correspond to the Intuition function
- Red team roles correspond to the Thinking function
- Blue team roles correspond to the Feeling function
- Team roles on the outside of the wheel correspond to functions oriented towards the outer world of people/things
- Team roles on the inside of the wheel correspond to functions oriented towards the inner world of ideas/information

The *MTR-i* can be purchased by appropriately qualified individuals from various distributors.

References

Higgs, Malcom (1996), *A comparison of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Belbin Team Roles*, Henley Management College