

Learning Groups

Building

Maintaining

Leading

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Group Checklist

1. ____ What is the charge of our group?
2. ____ What formal roles will be needed for us to execute our charge? What responsibilities do we expect from these individuals?
3. ____ What informal roles do we bring to this group? How will we deal with troublesome members?
4. ____ How will we manage our meetings and work times? What type of working culture do we want to develop? What ground rules are needed to help us achieve and sustain this culture? What are the documents that will help us work to meet our charge?
5. ____ What is the process we will follow to meet our charge? How will we make decisions as we follow the process?
6. ____ What are the group expectations of our leader?

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The charge/assignment of our group is:

Roles

Formal Roles designate those roles for which individuals are appointed, elected, volunteer, assigned, etc. They are publicly recognized roles that bring with them task expectations. Examples and accompanying expectations of common formal roles are:

Leader/Chair. Typical responsibilities: Conduct meetings, Coordinate logistics (assign tasks, arrange for equipment, etc.), Serve as liaison of group and instructor, Plan agendas, Keep discussions on track, Require decisions to be based on facts, Be supportive of the group, Continuously evaluate group process and effectiveness.

Recorder. Typical responsibilities: Maintain minutes of each meeting, Distribute minutes (hard copy or electronic) and agendas to members, Serve as contact person when members will be absent, Assemble reports, proposals, other products, Handle correspondence and maintain records as needed.

Time Keeper. Typical responsibilities: Assist group to keep on track according to agenda goals, Work with leader to plan agendas, weighting items according to importance and time.

Members. Typical responsibilities: Attend meetings, Be prepared to discuss agenda items, Complete assigned and voluntary assignments, Adhere to group ground rules, Participate in discussions, consider new ideas, Maintain own beliefs, but be prepared to collaborate with others.

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List the formal roles needed to help your team meet its charge. Write a brief description of the responsibilities that will be expected of individuals assuming these roles.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Informal Roles designate members' behaviors and are likely to emerge from members' interactions and as a result of members' personalities. Mudrack & Farrell (1995) identified three types of informal roles:

1. Task Roles move the group toward its goals. Examples of task roles are:

- Information seekers require clarification and evidence
- Opinion seekers request viewpoints from others
- Energizers encourage the group to action
- Elaborators expand on suggestions of others

1. Transactional Roles focus on the social dimension of the group. Examples of maintenance roles are:

- Encouragers praise and agree with others
- Followers serve as the audience for group/team discussion
- Expeditors encourage others to participate
- Harmonizers work to reconcile disagreements

2. Disruptive Roles serve individual goals and hinder group/team progress. Examples of disruptive roles are:

- Blockers disagree with and oppose group direction
- Dominators assert their superiority and try to manipulate
- Help seekers play on sympathy of others by voicing insecurity, confusion and placing blame
- Recognition seekers disrupt to call attention to themselves

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What types of statements did you hear yourself saying as you worked on the puzzle? Do these statements indicate you assumed task roles or transactional roles?

Group Start-Up Tasks

1. Compile contact information for each member.
2. Discuss desired work culture.
3. Agree on need and process for maintaining & accessing documents.
4. Generate ground rules to attain desired culture. Examples:
 - a. attendance expectations
 - b. promptness
 - c. participation
 - d. responsibilities
 - e. communication courtesies
 - f. deadlines
 - g. breaks during meetings
 - h. rotation of formal roles
 - i. preparation/maintenance of agendas, minutes, other documents
 - j. decision-making process

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Describe the ideal culture that your group or team would aspire to. List ground rules that you feel would be needed to maintain this culture.

1. Quality of ideal culture:

Ground rule:

2. Quality of ideal culture:

Ground rule:

3. Quality of ideal culture:

Ground rule:

4. Quality of ideal culture:

Ground rule:

Reflective Thinking Sequence

1. What is the problem, charge, opportunity?
 - Why are we here?
 - What are we supposed to accomplish?
 - Do we have a common view of our charge?

2. Define current group knowledge about the problem/charge/opportunity.
 - What do we know? What do we agree on?
 - What do we need to know? What do we need to decide?

3. Identify criteria/criterion for solution.
 - What are “given” requirements?
 - What are “nice to have”?

4. Generate possible solutions.

5. Match solutions to criteria/criterion.
 - Identify specific requirements met.
 - Identify “nice to have”.
 - Prioritize/match against the criteria/criterion.

6. Select the solution that best meets criteria/criterion.

7. Develop implementation plan.
 - How do we implement the solution?
 - Who assumes which active roles in implementation?

8. Develop assessment procedure.
 - When will reviews occur?
 - Who is responsible for reviews?
 - What is review process?

Based on Dewey, J. (1910). How We Think. Boston: D. C. Heath.

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Create a working plan for your class assignment using Dewey's Reflective Thinking Sequence:

1. Identify the problem, charge, opportunity:

2. What do you currently know? What do you need to know?

3. What is the criteria/criterion for the product?

4. Brainstorm possible ideas for your work:

5. Match the ideas to the criteria/criterion.

6. Which idea best meets the criteria/criterion?

6. What is your plan for developing the idea that results in the product?

Leadership

“The wicked leader is he who the people despise.

The good leader is he who the people revere.

The great leader is he who the people say:

‘We did it ourselves.’”

---Lao Tsu, Eastern Philosophy of Leadership

Responsibilities of Leaders

Linking and Buffering

Work between team and external constituents: consult, represent, gain feedback, moderate;

Creates alliances to retrieve necessary resources: financial, time, materials, information, etc. to meet charge.

Motivating and Coaching

Envisioning: help articulate goals;

Developing others’ leadership skills: identify members’ strengths and convert to areas where they can take responsibilities; encourage their leadership; appreciate successes;

Setting standards: Set standards for team outputs and team ethics;

Guiding ongoing assessment: Develop methods and criteria for assessing process and products;

Coaching: Encourage members to assume responsibility for themselves; help members organize and present products.

Managing and Moving

Planning: Arrange meeting times, locations, arrangements; Secure information and resources; Plan agendas – may be in collaboration with others; Maintain communication in timely manner; Arrange and confirm guests and resource persons for meetings.

Process : Avoid political issues that compromise team process; Show personal commitment to team goal; Don’t overload the team with peripheral priorities; Be impartial to all members; Be capable of holding members accountable for team standards; Be open to members’ ideas and creative efforts.

Discussion: Facilitate: Require critical thinking and data driven decisions; Define roles: Encourage participation; give everyone a chance to speak; Shape discussion: Synthesize concepts; remind members of previously introduced ideas; suggest connections; encourage creative interpretations; Control discussion inhibitors: Keep discussion on track; avoid obsession with criticism.

From Lumsden, G. & Lumsden, D. (2004). Communicating in Groups and Teams: Sharing Leadership (4th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.