Small Group Communication

What is a small group?
- Consists of 3-15 people who share a common goal or purpose and who influence one another
- Must have at least 3 people to be a group, no more than 15 (ideal groups are 5-7)
- In order to be a group we must be united by a common goal—we aren’t a group if we do not have a goal and a plan to accomplish the goal
- We must realize we are members of a group and feel as if we belong to that group
- Group members are also interdependent—what one says or does affects the entire group

Types of Groups and Teams
- Primary group—fulfills the basic human needs of associating with others (Family Unit)
- Study group—meets to learn new ideas
- Therapy group—provides treatment for the personal issues group members have
- Problem-solving group—exists to resolve an issue or work out a problem
- Focus group—people asked to discuss a particular topic or issue and provide feedback
- Social group—exists just for the joy and satisfaction of group members

Why do we join groups?
- To satisfy important social needs—the need to belong or to receive attention
- To solve problems that might overpower an individual
- Group membership can be a source of information and knowledge that one alone may not have
- Can help meet the need for security (safety in numbers)
- Can booster self-concept and social identity
Group members have different roles

- Task roles—these are roles that help the group to achieve its’ specific goals (information seeker/giver, initiator, note taker, elaborator)
- Social roles—these roles affect the climate and group dynamic (harmonizer, gatekeeper, encourager)
- Individual roles—these roles focus attention on individuals, rather than the group, these are not healthy roles (whiner, dominator, blocker)

Power in Groups

- Power refers to our ability to influence another person’s behavior. There are five different types:
  - Legitimate power: power because of your position or role
  - Referent power: power because people like you
  - Expert power: power because you have specific knowledge
  - Reward power: power by granting others rewards
  - Coercive power: power by inflicting punishment

Cohesiveness

- Group cohesiveness refers to the degree of attraction or loyalty group members feel toward the group.
- The more cohesive the group—
  - The more the goals of the group are important
  - The more group members listen to one another
  - The more productive members will be

Cohesive groups...Teams

- Talk about the group in terms of “we” rather than “I”
- Establish and maintain group traditions
- Set clear short and long term goals
- Encourage all group members
- Celebrate when the group accomplishes a goal
- Stress teamwork and collaboration rather than individual efforts
Problem Solving

★ One of the biggest challenges for most small groups is problem solving
★ Why do you think this might be difficult?
★ Five problem solving steps have been presented for reflective thinking in groups.
★ These should be utilized as you complete your group projects

Step One

★ Identify and define the problem
  – Why are we here?
  – What are we doing?
  • Ask questions during this phase in order to identify and properly define the problem that has brought us together. Make sure every member knows the assignment and the plan to proceed.

Step Two

★ Analyze the problem
  – Don’t jump to solutions before analyzing the problem
  – Ask questions/have discussions
  – Set criteria for an effective solution
    • Is it feasible, affordable, desirable, etc.

Step Three

★ Generate creative solutions
  – Brainstorm either individually or as a group
  – Remember, no idea is a bad idea during a brainstorming process
  – Narrow ideas down to only the workable solutions after the brainstorming process
Step Four

★ Select the best solution
  – Rank or rate solutions
  – Decision by expert
  – Vote—majority wins
  – Consensus (all must agree)—this is the most difficult

Step Five

★ Take action
  – Ask the question—will this work?
  – Practice the solution on a small level before “going public”
    • Success—adoption
    • Failure—back to drawing board
  – Assign tasks to group members—who will do what?
  – Celebrate your success!

Group Norms...rules

★ How will we handle the problems that can arise in a group?
  Social Loafing
  Group Think
  Aggressive with bad ideas
  Attendance
  Slow with agreement
  Group hate Phenomenon

Questions and Comments

How will technology work with groups in your business?
  Teleconferencing
  Videoconferencing
  Interactive Computer Conferencing

Are you ready to go to work in groups to deliver your final performance?