

Groups and Group Behaviour

In this recording we summarise the content of chapter 8 Groups and Group Behaviour. Studying this chapter should help you identify Tuckman's five stages of group development; identify categories of group behaviour; list characteristics of effective teamwork; discuss Belbin's eight team roles; .

Introducing the chapter, the authors start with 1. The study of groups in work situations has been an important activity of behavioural scientists ever since the pioneering work of the Hawthorne Researchers almost a century ago. The outcome of numerous studies into different aspects of the behaviour of groups is a considerable store of useful and practicable knowledge about the working of groups. Typical areas of research have included the study of group effectiveness, inter-group competition, group formation methods and group cohesiveness and dynamics. The most important factors in the behaviour of groups are as indicated in Figure 8.1.

[Insert Figure 8.1 here]Figure 8.1 Key factors in group behaviour

Previous chapters have dealt with various aspects of leadership, tasks and environment, motivation, and whilst these factors cannot be ignored, this chapter focuses attention on the other factors, such as group norms, group cohesiveness and roles within groups. It concludes with a summary of recent research into teams and team building.

2. Groups at work are formed as a direct consequence of an organisation's need to differentiate itself. Differentiation, or specialisation, involves not only the breaking down of the organisation into functions, but also the formation of groups to support the tasks assigned to those functions. It is important to recognise that group tasks vary. For example an additive task is a type of task whose accomplishment depends upon the sum of all group members' efforts (e.g. tug-of-war). A conjunctive task is a task whose accomplishment depends upon the performance of the group's least talented member (e.g. running a relay race). Finally, a disjunctive task accomplishment depends upon the performance of the group's most talented member (e.g. A quiz). A group is basically a collection of individuals, sharing a common aim and identity. Thus, a group is more than an aimless crowd of people waiting in an airport lounge or at a bus stop. A group has some central purpose, temporary or permanent, and a degree of self-awareness as a group. In the work situation, most tasks are in fact undertaken by groups and teams, rather than by individuals. Groups are also widely used for solving problems, creating new ideas, making decisions and coordinating tasks. These group functions are what the organisation itself needs to fulfil its purpose. However, individuals themselves need groups. Groups provide identity, stimulus, protection, assistance and other social and psychological requirements. Groups, therefore, can work in the interests of organisations as a whole as well as in the interests of individual members.

3. One of the earliest distinctions to be made between groups (arising from the Hawthorne investigations) was between formal and informal groups. Formal groups were those set up by the management of an organisation to undertake duties in the pursuit of organisation goals. Some writers have described formal groups as official groups, to avoid the confusion that can arise when describing groups operating in an informally structured organisation (e.g. An organic type of organisation). Such groups may be informal in the sense that they have few rules, enjoy participative leadership and have flexible roles. Nevertheless they are completely official. What is meant by informal organisations are those groupings which the employees themselves have developed in accordance with their own needs. These, of course, are unofficial. Every organisation has these unofficial groups, and research has shown how important they are for organisational effectiveness. A second distinction made by some scholars is between groups and teams – we will revisit this issue later in the chapter. First we consider how groups are formed and develop..

The key concepts discussed within this chapter are:

group - An association of two or more individuals who have a shared sense of identity and who interact with each other in structured ways on the basis of a common set of expectations about each other's behavior; Team - Implies a small, cohesive group that works effectively as a single unit

through being focused on a common task.; .

Other terms discussed include:

Adjourning; Forming; Group cohesiveness; Group dynamics; Norming; Performing; social identity; Storming; Team-role; .

Summarising and concluding, the author(s) make the following comments - In this chapter we recognised the important role of groups in helping organizations attain their goals but argued that not all groups are effective; they need to work at developing cooperative structures. Stages of development, group structures and dynamics were considered alongside tools to classify certain types of group behaviour and the roles group members may adopt. Aside from considering within group issues we also considered the challenges associated with inter-group working. We closed with a discussion about teams, recognising there to be many types of team. More recently, as a result of social and technological forces, organizations have given increased attention and made greater use of virtual and multicultural teams..

We have now reached the end of the chapter 'Groups and Group Behaviour'.

There are a number of references for this chapter where further reading opportunities are identified for you.

Additionally, there are questions or activities to help develop and test your understanding of this chapter