

# **OBH 312 : MANAGING INTERNATIONAL AND GROUP PROCESS**

## **Lesson No. 1**

### **GROUP AS A MEDIUM OF LEARNING ; DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE**

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#### **1.0 Objective**

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define a group
- Understand the reasons and stages of group formation
- Identify the factors that enhance group performance and increase group cohesiveness.

- Get the picture of how a group acts as a medium of learning.

## **1.1 Introduction**

Ever since man has started living on earth, he has been a social animal. The groups have existed in some form or another since the time immemorial. The early instances of history show that man had made huge structures like the pyramids, crossed mountains, traveled across seas, fought wars, wrote several texts and invented the gadgets have made the modern life very easy. This could not have been possible without working in groups.

With the societal and technological developments, the interactions between the individuals have increased. In the present day economy of globalized world, the whole world is being knit into a global village. So, human beings have to learn, not only their individual skills, but also the skill of working as a group.

In the present times, knowledge and learning are two key elements of success. However, if these are confined to a few individuals, then the entire group is unlikely to gain the competitive edge. The groups have to master the art of learning as a group, which can guarantee them the success. This lesson gives an overview of the concept of group, their types and how people interact in groups and the influence of group on organizational performance.

## **1.2 Definition of Group**

Definitions of group are as abundant as the research on groups. Groups can be defined in terms of perceptions, motivation,

organization, interdependencies, and interactions. A simple and comprehensive definition has been offered by Marvin Shaw:

*A group is two or more persons who interact with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person.*

The concept of interaction is essential to this definition. Two people who are physically near each other are not a group unless they interact and have some influence on each other. For example, people sitting in a bus do not constitute a group. However, if the bus gets punctured at an unknown place and the passengers pool their resources to tide through the crisis, they constitute a group. Coworkers may work side by side on related tasks, but if they do not interact they are not a group. In a University, Physics Department may be situated with Management Department. However, for academic purpose, these cannot form a group. Management may group with Commerce or Economics Departments. The presence of others may influence the performance of a group: An audience may stimulate the performance of actors, or an evaluator may inhibit the employee's behavior. However, neither the audience nor the supervisor can be considered part of the group unless interaction occurs.

It may be noted that in the above definition there is no mention of a group goal or the motivations of group members. This omission implies that members of a group may identify little or not at all with the group's goal. Consider the example of a boy, who has won Ranji trophy and he joins a cricket club. He would be more interested in his joining India's team to play international tournament and less bothered about club team performance. In

fact, the entire team of the club may be composed of individuals whose motives are personal and who give no thought to the group purpose. Since, the team members will interact with and influence one another, they can be considered a group. It is noteworthy that the quality of the interactions and the group's performance may be affected by the members' lack of interest in the group goal. But a goal does exist even if it is secondary to certain group members.

This definition of group also suggests a limit on group size. A collection of people so large that its members cannot interact with and influence one another does not meet this definition. And in reality, the dynamics of large assemblies of people usually differ significantly from those of small groups. For example, assembly of people at airport or railway station is not a group. In organizational settings, such groups are irrelevant and in this lesson, the discussion is confined to small groups, whose members interact and influence each other.

### **1.3 Importance of Groups**

We cannot study behavior in organizations without attempting to understand the behavior of people in group settings. Groups are everywhere in our society. Most people belong to several groups— a family, bowling team, church group, fraternity or sorority, work group at the office. Some groups are formally established in a work or social organization; others are more loosely knit associations of people.

In order to understand the behavior of people in organizations, we must understand the forces that affect individuals as well as the ways individuals affect the organization. The behavior of individuals both affects and is affected by the group. From a

managerial perspective, the work group is the primary means by which managers coordinate individuals' behavior to achieve organizational goals. Managers direct the activities of individuals, but they also direct and coordinate interactions within groups. For example, the manager's efforts to boost sales-persons' performance has been shown to have both individual and group effects.

Therefore, the manager must pay attention to both the individual and the group in trying to increase employee performance. Because the behavior of individuals is key to the group's success or failure, the manager must be aware of individual needs and interpersonal dynamics to manage groups effectively and efficiently.

#### **1.4 Types of Groups**

There is a wide difference in the nature and functions of groups that exist in the society as well as in the organizations. Broadly, groups may be categorized according to their degrees of formalization (formal or informal) and permanence (relatively permanent or relatively temporary). Table 1.1 shows how various types of groups can be classified according to these broad categories.

##### **1.4.1 Formal Groups**

Formal groups are established by the organization to do its work and usually are included in the organization chart. Formal groups include the command (or functional) group, which is relatively permanent and characterized by functional reporting relationships, and the task group, which is created to perform a specific task and is relatively temporary. In business organizations, most employees work in command groups, typically

specified on an official organization chart. For example, in a company, a manager X might be working as Regional Manager in the Marketing Department. He might be reporting to the Zonal

**Table 1.1**  
**Classification of groups**

<b>Classification Scheme for Types of Groups</b>	<b>Relatively Permanent</b>	<b>Relatively Temporary</b>
<b>Formal</b>	Command Groups Quality Department Marketing Department Accounting Department	Task Groups Market Research team Training groups Committees Teams
<b>Informal</b>	Friendship Groups Friends who do many activities together (attend the theater, play games, travel)	Interest Groups

Manager and might be in charge of Area Managers and Sales Representatives. His entire team would be known as a formal permanent group because it would have a unique place in the organizational structure of the company. The authority, responsibility and the communication channels of the group will be well defined. If the Managing Director of the company plans to launch a new product and deposes X and his team to study the market potential of that product, then this group would cease as soon as the task is accomplished. In the organization, the Departments are “formal permanent” groups, while the committees or task forces constituted for specific purpose will be the “formal temporary “ groups

#### **1.4.2 Informal Groups**

The formal groups are established by an organization and informal groups are formed by their members. They consist of the friendship group, which is relatively permanent, and the interest group, which may be shorter lived. Friendship groups arise from friendly relationships among members and the enjoyment they get from being together. Interest groups are organized around a common activity or interest, although friendships may develop among members. Continuing with the earlier example, Mr. X and the Personal Manager Mr. Y might be good friends because they come from the same state and speak the same language. They meet every Sunday and celebrate all festivals together. In such a case, their group would be an “informal permanent “ group. If, Mr. X and his rival Regional Manager Mr. Y have a common grudge against their Marketing Manager, they might lobby against him and report negatively to the M.D. In this case, two rivals have joined for the issue and as soon as it is resolved, they will pursue their self interests. Such a group is known as “informal temporary” group. It is a short-lined group and ceases to exist when the informal interest is lost.

Although the distinction between friendship and interest groups can be hazy, the relative permanence of the association usually helps mark the difference. For example, the common interests and activities of a well-established friendship group may change over time, but the group stays together. Friendship and companionship are strong and durable ties. An interest group, though, may break up if its members interests change.

#### **1.5 Reasons for Group Formation**

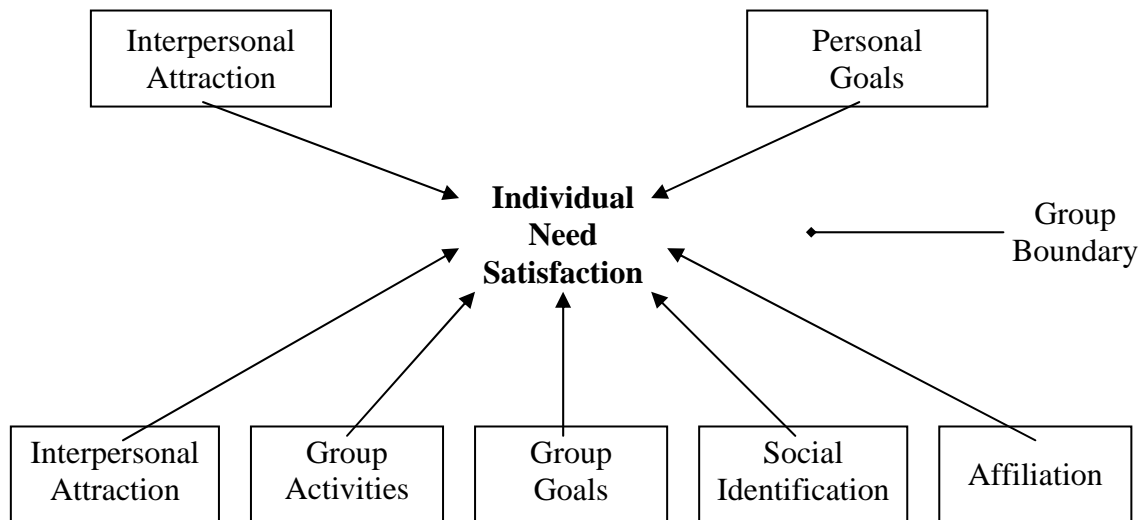
The formal groups are formed because the managers expect that organizational goals can be better achieved if people work

together in work groups, On the other hand, individuals may form an informal group or join an existing one for many reasons. One of the most important purposes is affiliation with a group to satisfy a need, The reasons for group formations can be classified into two categories :-

1.5.1 Internal reasons

1.5.2 External reasons

These reasons can be represented in the form of Figure 1.1 and are discussed in the following discussion.



**Figure 1.1**  
**Sources of Need Satisfaction from Group Membership**

### 1.5.1 Internal Sources of Need Satisfaction

Internal sources of individual need satisfaction fall into five social categories:

- (i) Interpersonal attraction
- (ii) The group's activities
- (iii) The group's goals
- (iv) Social identification
- (v) Social affiliation



### **(i) Interpersonal Attraction.**

Interpersonal attraction probably is the most obvious reason for group formation. People join or form a group because they are attracted to other people in the group. Several factors may influence interpersonal attraction, including location, physical attraction, perceived ability, and similarities in attitudes, beliefs, sex, race, and personality. A very common factor in interpersonal attraction is location, or physical proximity. Proximity may mean nearby desks or offices or neighboring houses; it certainly is not unusual for people to form a group of coworkers or neighbors. Location not only provides a setting for interpersonal attraction but also can reinforce it. Nearness increases the opportunity for interactions and, in turn, for the discovery of attractive characteristics.

When people who need to coordinate their work have offices close together, informal groups may develop, leading to more interaction and feelings of closeness. From there it is a short step to better working relationships and coordination on the job. For example, grouping offices together may improve the performance of executive teams. With opportunities to interact in an informal group, busy executives may be better able to coordinate the operations of the organization and thus improve productivity.

### **(ii) The Group's Activities**

The people who have common interests form groups to satisfy the same. For example, people who are interested in poetry, games or any other such vocation would interact with like minded people. Similarly, if people have strong concern for the environment or community, they can form social service groups. By engaging in these activities, the members of the group are

able to satisfy their quest for pursuing their interests, develop contacts and fulfill their social needs.

### **(iii) The Group's Goals**

A third internal source of individual need satisfaction is identification with group goals that call for a commitment of time and effort. By identifying with the group goals, an individual is actually satisfying his own personal goals. Research has established that when the personal goals people match with the organizational goals, they give their best performance. The best example can be of the Indian cricket team, where it is observed that when players concentrate on their individual performance, the team suffers. When they see their performance in the team, they effect better coordination and achieve results.

### **(iv) Social Identification**

An individual may join a group to attain a social identity. Work, friendship, and interest groups may all offer a person a social identity. For example, when a new member is introduced to our group, we often greet the person by name and then say something about him or her, usually a group identification, to give the newcomer a social identity to the group. By joining a group, people share their joys and sorrows. In times of crisis, the group members come at the rescue. Even otherwise, individuals need a friends circle to exchange their views and make productive use of their time.

### **(v) Social Affiliation**

A final internal source of individual need satisfaction is the need for affiliation, or companionship. Group membership may be the source of a good deal of personal value and emotional

significance and may provide the foundation for a person's social identity. The group's goals and activities may be largely irrelevant in satisfying the need for affiliation.

Affiliation is at an individual level and is not much affected by the formal positions, roles, objectives that individuals hold in an organization. It is the emotional side of the individual, which reflects the form of belongingness to others. This gives a feeling that one is not alone in the times of need and makes one contented and emotionally secure.

### **1.5.2 External Sources of Need Satisfaction**

People may also join groups for reasons that are external to the group, such as interpersonal attraction to people outside the group or the pursuit of goals other than those of the group. Although this may sound contradictory, several examples exist to support it.

#### **(i) Interpersonal Attraction**

By interpersonal attraction to people outside the group, we mean that a person may be able to gain access to certain people only by affiliation with a group apart from those people. For example, people become members of clubs or social organizations, with a view to developing contacts in the society. Such an exercise fulfils their social needs and gives them a kind of social recognition, which fulfils their esteem needs.

#### **(ii) Personal Goals**

Individuals join the groups to satisfy their personal goals as well, which might not be satisfied by staying in the group. For example, a manager has a passion for flying and joins a local flying club for

a sortie every Sunday. Similarly, people seek their personal satisfaction by engaging themselves in community projects or social service etc.

It needs to be mentioned that people do not join groups for selfless or philanthropic reasons. They join them to give the image of being well connected. Membership of certain clubs is prestigious and people join them, although they might not have any interest in the activities of the group. Hence, the personal goals of people can vary significantly.

### **1.6 Stages of group development**

There are various viewpoints on group development. However, it is commonly accepted that there are five distinct stages of group formation. These stages are:

- (i) Forming
- (ii) Storming
- (iii) Norming
- (iv) Performing
- (v) Adjourning

#### **(i) Forming**

Before the group formation takes place, i.e. at the time of pre-stage, all individuals are distinct, but they do feel the need to have a group. When these individuals come together, they test the climate and behaviour of other people to see if making a group can be useful or not. The group does not have a defined purpose, structure or leadership. It is only at the end of this stage

that the individuals begin to think themselves as a part of the group.

### **(ii) Storming**

This is the stage of intergroup conflict, wherein the individuals do recognize the existence of the group, but do not readily accept the group bondages in the form of rules, regulations etc. There can be a leadership vacuum as well. However, this stage is the stepping stone to achieving an order. Towards the end of this stage, some acceptability of rules and group norms is achieved and leadership hierarchies start emerging.

### **(iii) Norming**

In this stage, close relationships start developing and the group begins to show signs of cohesiveness. The group members develop a strong sense of group identity and comradeship, leading to further cementing the group ties. The rightful conduct of the members is also defined in this stage.

### **(iv) Performing**

When the group becomes fully functional and accepted, then it is said to be in the stage of performing. The group members know each other and their roles and perform the duties assigned to them. The group begins to play a meaningful role towards the achievement of its objectives.

### **(v) Adjourning**

Not all groups are permanent. Some of them attain existence to achieve a particular purpose and once it is achieved, the group gets adjourned. The group gets disbanded and loses its existence.

Although the five stage model is a useful tool to explaining the group development. There are several limitations to this model. These stages are not clearly identifiable and do not occur in this very order in all groups. Still, this is a useful tool to conceptualize how groups are formed, before they begin to play their useful role in the society.

Not all groups go through all four stages. Some groups disband before reaching the final stage. Others fail to complete a stage before moving on to the next one. Rather than spend the time necessary to get to know one another and build trust, for example, a group may cut short the first stage of development because of pressure from its leader, from deadlines, or from an outside threat (such as the boss). If members are forced into activities typical of a later stage while the work of an earlier stage remains incomplete, they are likely to become frustrated: the group will not develop completely and will be less productive than it could be. Group productivity depends on successful development at each stage. A group that evolves fully through the four stages of development will become a mature, effective group. Its members will be interdependent, coordinated, cooperative, competent at their jobs, motivated to do them, and in active communication with one another.

Groups in organizations often receive the time and resources needed for development. For example, some top executive teams go on retreats periodically. Retreats provide a few days in an environment free from telephone calls, meetings, and other daily work pressures for the members to study information, get to know one another, and make plans for the future. A retreat may be especially useful when the membership of an executive team has changed, because it provides time for the mutual adjustment phase of the development process. By allowing the group to get

away from normal day-to-day burdens and focus on itself and its tasks, the organization can improve group productivity.

### **1.7 Factors affecting Group Performance**

The performance of any group is affected by several factors other than the reasons for its formation and the stages of its development. In a high-performing group, a group synergy often develops in which the group's performance is more than the sum of the individual contributions of its members. Several additional factors may account for this accelerated performance. The four basic group performance factors are composition, size, norms, and cohesiveness. These are further elaborated as follows:

#### **1.7.1 Composition**

The composition of a group plays an important role in determining group productivity. Group composition is most often described in terms of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the members. A group is homogeneous if the members are similar in one or several ways that are critical to the work of the group, such as age, work experience, education, technical specialty, or cultural background. In heterogeneous groups, the members differ in one or more ways that are critical to the work of the group. Homogeneous groups often are created in organizations when people are assigned to command groups based on a similar technical specialty. Although the people who work in such command groups may differ on some factors, such as age or work experience, they are homogeneous in terms of a critical work performance variable: technical specialty. The assignment of nurses to work groups in hospitals is an example of this.

### **1.7.2 Size**

A group can have as few as two members or as many members as can interact and influence one another. Group size can have an important effect on performance. A group with many members has more resources available and may be able to complete a large number of relatively independent tasks. Among groups established to generate ideas, those with more members tend to produce more ideas, although the rate of increase in the number of ideas diminishes rapidly as the group grows. Beyond a certain point, the greater complexity of interactions and communication may make it more difficult for a large group to achieve agreement.

### **1.7.3 Norms**

A norm is a standard against which the appropriateness of a behavior is judged. Thus, a norm is the expected behavior or behavioral pattern in a certain situation. Group norms usually are established during the second stage of group development (communication and decision making) and carried forward into the maturity stage. People often have expectations about the behavior of others. By providing a basis for predicting others behaviors, norms enable people to formulate response behaviors. Without norms, the activities within a group would be chaotic.

### **1.7.4 Group cohesiveness**

The cohesiveness of groups is the force, which binds the group. There can be several sources of cohesiveness. In formal groups, cohesiveness comes from the structure and the formal system of communication and delegation. Besides this, the group's mission, strategy and the personal characteristics of the group members have a lot of role in keeping the group together. In the informal



groups, personal interests, ethnic backgrounds, social status, caste etc. are some of the cohesive factors. The group performance can be directly related to group cohesiveness.

#### **1.7.5 Personal characteristics**

The personal characteristics of the group members have a lot of effect on group productivity. The age, educational status, gender and other such characteristics can greatly affect the group performance. Although no generalizations can be drawn on this, still stereotypes do prove to come true.

### **1.8 Organizational Learning**

In the rapidly changing world, learning is an integral activity of every organization. Learning organizations are those, which have developed a continuous capacity to adapt and change. They exhibit a strong tendency of self-correction, which minimizes the errors and keeps them agile and progressive. Over a period of time, such organizations have evolved various strategies for learning. However, none these can be successful if various groups within and outside the organization, do not contribute to the success. The role of group is significant because of the following reasons:

#### **(i) Shared vision**

No move to learning can be successful if the members of the group do not have a shared vision. It is very important that various groups evolve a shared vision, in order to become an effective learning organization and give way to planned change.

#### **(ii) Systems perspective**

Mere vision would not suffice. The groups need to evolve a systems perspective in their thinking, which refers to having a holistic perception of the situation. Such a perspective is not easy

because groups, as well as its members, can have very personal reasons to resist the same. Still, effective group leaders can evolve the same in a group, ensuring that it is not imposed upon them.

**(iii) Problem solving**

A planned change can be successful when the approach will be to solving a problem and not creating the same. The members understand the group inter-relationships and identify the mechanism, which facilitates such an interaction.

**(iv) Communication**

Group learning and change are highly correlated to the nature and quantum of communication within the organization and the groups. An open communication is the necessary condition for developing shared vision, a systems perspective and problem solving. It brings about group cohesiveness and synergy and helps the group members to effect the change more easily.

**(v) Goals**

The groups can be effective means of change, only when their goals are aligned to the organizational goals. Subordination of individual and group goals helps in reducing conflict and achieving harmony within the organization and leads to a harmonious change.

## **1.9 Summary**

Groups are an inevitable entity of the society. People join groups to derive a lot of personal benefits and to satisfy their needs. The groups can be classified in many ways. The groups may be categorized according to their degrees of formalization (formal or informal) and permanence (relatively permanent or relatively temporary). A group can belong to more than one category at the same time.

There can be several reasons for group formation, which can be both external or internal. The Internal sources of individual need satisfaction fall into five social categories - Interpersonal attraction, the group's activities, the group's goals, social identification and social affiliation. The external sources of group formation are the interpersonal attraction and the personal goals. Mostly, groups pass through various stages, before they achieve a formal or acceptable structure. The stages of group formation are forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning. When properly positioned, the groups can be very effective mediums of organizational learning and effecting a planned change. In the fast changing world of today, groups have a lot of responsibility on them and they have to evolve themselves to measure upto the same. The performance of a group depends upon the size, composition, cohesiveness, norms and personal characteristics of its members. IN an organization, group is an effective medium of learning and change by virtue of its systems perspective, problem solving nature and communication.

#### **1.10 Keywords**

##### *Group*

A group is two or more persons who interact with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person.

##### *Formal Groups*

Formal groups are established by the organization to do its work and usually are included in the organization chart.

##### *Informal Groups*

While the formal groups are established by an organization and informal groups are formed by their members.

### *Organisational Learning*

Organisational learning comprises of a series of activities that lead to a change in the nature and mannerism of an organisation's strategies and operations.

#### **1.11 Review Questions**

1. Define group. Why do people join groups?
2. What are various types of groups? Explain their role and functions.
3. What are various stages of group development?
4. "In the modern economy, groups are an effective medium of change." Discuss

#### **1.12 Suggested Readings**

1. Introduction to Group Dynamics (Hardcover) ,by Malcolm Knowles, Hulda Knowles , Publisher: Cambridge Book Company; Revised edition
2. An Introduction to Group Dynamics (Hardcover) by Donelson R. Forsyth ,Publisher: Thomson Brooks/Cole
3. Group Dynamics 3rd (Hardcover) by Dorwin Cartwright (Editor), Alvin Frederick Zander (Editor) Publisher: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers
4. Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (Paperback)  
by Rupert Brown, Publisher: Blackwell Publishers; 2nd Rev edition
5. Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics (Paperback)  
by Joseph Luft, Publisher: Mayfield Publishing Company; 3rd edition

**Lesson No. 2**

**GROUP COHESIVENESS AND SYNERGY;  
INFLUENCE PROCESS**

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**Structure**

- 2.0 Objective
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Determinants of Cohesiveness
- 2.3 Factors the decrease group cohesiveness
- 2.4 Effects of Cohesiveness on Group
  - 2.4.1 Positive effects of group cohesiveness
  - 2.4.2 Negative effects of Group cohesiveness
- 2.5 Group Influence
- 2.6 Informational influence
- 2.7 Summary
- 2.8 Keywords
- 2.9 Self Assessment Questions
- 2.10 Suggested Readings

**2.0 Objective**

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand the factors that make and keep a group united.
- Appreciate the effects of group cohesiveness.
- Assess the positive and negative aspects of group cohesiveness.
- Know the nature of group influence, both formal and informal.

## 2.1 Introduction

During the wartime, when a ship starts sinking, people refuse to leave the ship and let their own fellow soldiers die. They prefer to lay down their lives for the group. The martyrs of independence did not care for their life so that their countrymen

Newton saw the apple fall on the earth and wondered what force made it happen. He discovered that there is a gravitation force, which makes all heavenly bodies attracted towards each other. Similarly, there must be a force in the groups, analogous to the gravitation force, which binds it together. Such a force is known as group cohesiveness. A formal definition of group cohesiveness is:

*The degree to which members are attracted to one another and are motivated to stay in the group*

(Robbins)

Another definition of group cohesiveness is as under:

*Group cohesion, or a sense or spirit of group unity collectively held by the membership, is one of the most important constructs in group dynamics*

(Carol Losh)

As a first reaction, it would appear that groups in which there is a lot of internal disagreement and a lack of cooperative spirit would be relatively less effective in achieving their objectives, than the groups in which individuals generally agree and cooperate and where members like each other. Even research seems to be supporting this general belief of people. Researchers attribute to

group cohesiveness, a lot of significance in terms of determining group effectiveness. This lesson describes the factors, which influence group cohesiveness and then looks at the effect of cohesiveness on group productivity.

## **2.2 Determinants of Cohesiveness**

In social sciences, no two situations are similar. Researchers have observed that there are a large number of factors, which influence group cohesiveness. To name a few, cohesiveness can be affected by such factors as time spent together, the severity of initiation, group size, the gender makeup of the group, external threats, and previous successes.

1. Physical proximity
2. Difficulty of entry
3. Group Size
4. Gender of Members
5. External Threats
6. Previous Successes
7. Group composition and homogeneity
8. Age of group
9. Technology

### **1. Physical proximity**

If an individual interacts with another individual on daily basis, he is likely to come close to him. Conversely, if one rarely gets an opportunity to see or interact with another, he is unlikely to be attracted to the other. More the amount of time people spend together, friendlier do they become. They naturally begin to talk,

respond, gesture and engage in other interactions. These interactions typically lead to the discovery of common interests and increased attraction.

The opportunity for group members to spend time together depends on their physical proximity. We would expect more close relationships among members who are located close to one another rather than far apart. People who live on the same building, share a common office, meet frequently in a club, temple, morning walk etc. are more likely to become a cohesive group because the physical distance between them is minimal. For example, two neighbours work in the same office and have similar interests. They help each other in times of need. The two individuals might even forget their close relatives, who do not live near to them. "Out of sight leads to being out of mind." Hence, physical closeness is important, even in the times of information technology.

## 2. Difficulty of entry

The more difficult it is to get into a group, the more cohesive that group becomes. When people enter a group after passing through a severe testing procedure, they recognize the strengths of each other and form a cohesive group. For example, people work very hard to get admission into IIMs. When they study and after they pass out from there, they form a very cohesive group as students as well as alumni.

## 3. Group Size

Group size is one of the most important factors that influences group cohesiveness. Research has supported that if group cohesiveness tends to increase with the time members are able



to spend together, it seems logical that cohesiveness should decrease as groups size increases, since it becomes more difficult for a member to interact with all the other members. As a group's size increases, the likelihood of cliques forming also increases. The creation of groups within groups tends to decrease overall cohesiveness. Apart from interaction, bigger size of the group accommodates people with divergent views. They might not agree very frequently, making the group less cohesive. However, the perception of size is quite relative. Army units with 600 soldiers are very cohesive, while factories with 100 workers might not be very cohesive. In rural areas, joint families with dozens of members are much more cohesive than several nuclear families with only 2-3 members. The incidents of divorce are more in small families than the large families. So, there are several other variables, which can have a greater effect on group cohesiveness.

#### 4. Gender of Members

Most of the recent research has established that female groups show greater cohesion than male groups. However, the reason behind this is not very clear. A reasonable hypothesis is that women are less competitive and/or more cooperative with people they see as friends, colleagues, or teammates than men are, and this results in greater group bonding. However, a more reasonable belief, which most leaders seem to hold is that similarity of gender is more likely to make the group cohesive than the one comprising of both male and female members. There are several single-gender institutions, which are very cohesive, despite being big sized.

## 5. External Threats

The research also supports the proposition that a group's cohesiveness will increase if the group comes under attack from external sources. Management threats frequently bring together an otherwise disarrayed union. The labour unrest at Gurgaon is a good example of how workers became united when they felt threatened by the management. Similarly, management also consolidated its stand and did not deter from the same for long.

While a group generally moves toward greater cohesiveness when threatened by external agents, this does not occur under all conditions. If group members perceive that their group may not meet an attack well, then the group becomes less important as a source of security, and cohesiveness will not necessarily increase. Additionally, if members believe the attack is directed at the group merely because of its existence and that it will cease if the group is abandoned or broken up, there is likely to be a decrease in cohesiveness.

History provides examples of both the situations stated above. In times of crisis, several kingdoms and societies have become united and have faced the threat. In 1857, Indian soldiers revolted against the British officers because they felt threatened. However, the movement subsided after the top leaders were liquidated and the entire country accepted the domination of the British rule.

## 6. Previous Successes

If a group has a history of successes, it builds an esprit de corps that attracts and unites members. Successful firms find it easier to attract and hire new employees than unsuccessful ones. The

same holds true for successful research teams, well-known and prestigious universities, and winning athletic teams.

When cohesiveness of groups has led to success, the members are likely to become more cohesive. For example, during a conflict with the management, if the labour union is able to successfully negotiate the conditions, then the same is likely to emerge as a stronger group than the past.

#### 7. Group composition and homogeneity

The groups with a homogenous composition in terms of age, qualification, ethnic background, caste, region, economic status etc., are likely to be more homogenous than the ones, which are composed of people with diverse characteristics. People with similar characters also behave in similar fashion. They think and act on same lines. Their perception, precognitions, beliefs, rituals etc. are similar. They can exhibit more predictability of responses. Hence, the groups are likely to become more cohesive. In most informal groups, similarity of characteristics is the major factor, which keeps them united.

#### 8. Age of group

The age of a group give it the maturity, which makes the group more cohesive. Most of the groups disband in the very first years of their formation because the members do not accept the rules and regulations. However, in mature groups, the members readily accept the group norms. Hence, they become more cohesive. Most of the long surviving institutions are more cohesive than the new ones. However, the age would not foster cohesiveness, if the group does not have the resilience to accept newer challenges, which might emerge when the environment changes with time.

## 9. Technology

Technology can play a very constructive role in fostering group cohesiveness. Technology helps in free, fast and reliable communication between the group members, thereby reducing group problems. Technologically enabled MIS also facilitates informal communication, which can be a powerful tool in reducing group stress and keeping the group united. People develop friendship and work beyond their formal roles to keep the group going. The use of corporate emails, corporate mobile phone communication systems are some of such technology-enabled measures.

### **2.3 Factors the decrease group cohesiveness**

Just as there are a wide variety of the factors, which enhance group cohesiveness, there can be several factors, which decrease group cohesiveness. Some of these can be stated as under:

1. Organizational goals
2. Organizational structure
3. Organizational climate
4. Leadership styles
5. Group heterogeneity

1. Organizational goals

In certain organizations, the goals themselves could be a source of cohesiveness. Alternatively, when the organizational goals do not match with the personal goals of most of the group members,

then the cohesiveness of that group is likely to be compromised.

## 2. Organizational structure

The organizational structure has a lot of effect on group cohesiveness. The inter-group relationships between the group members, if not properly designed on the basis of authority and responsibility, can hamper the group cohesiveness. It may be appreciated that Fayol's fourteen principles of management need to be recapitulated while designing the organizational structures. There have been many cases where the groups have been restructured and their performance has increased and the groups have become more cohesive.

## 3. Organizational climate

The organizational climate is the indicator of the environment prevailing in the organization. It is a reflection of the group's formal and informal norms, shared value systems, top management's philosophy and general feeling of the group members. If the organizational climate generates negatives such as a feeling of threat, scare, backbiting etc., then the group is unlikely to remain cohesive. People in such a group will try to avoid sharing personal association with the group, making their relationships highly transactional and need-based. Once they get an opportunity, they are likely to desert the group.

## 4. Leadership styles

Leaders bear the highest responsibility in keeping the group united. Their leadership styles can have a lot of effect on group cohesiveness. A group under an autocratic leader is likely to be fragile because people would not like to work under him. A group headed by a benevolent leader is likely to be quite cohesive

because the leader will be in a position to exert his authority and at the same time will not harm the interests of the group members. This is likely to cement the ties between the members. The democratic and participative styles can have a mixed effect. When the group members are highly educated and take the group norms and the decision making process in the right spirit, then the group is likely to be cohesive, otherwise these two styles might be ineffective in keeping its members together. Democratic and participative leadership styles can foster weakness and the members might overshadow the leader and work for their own self-interests, often at the cost of group's advantage.

## 5. Group heterogeneity

Heterogeneity of group members can harm the cohesiveness. People might interpret the group norms according to their cultural backgrounds. Diversity in this can lead to the gaps in cementing their ties, thereby harming group cohesiveness.

### **2.4 Effects of Cohesiveness on Group**

Group cohesiveness has both positive and negative effects on the group, discussed as under:

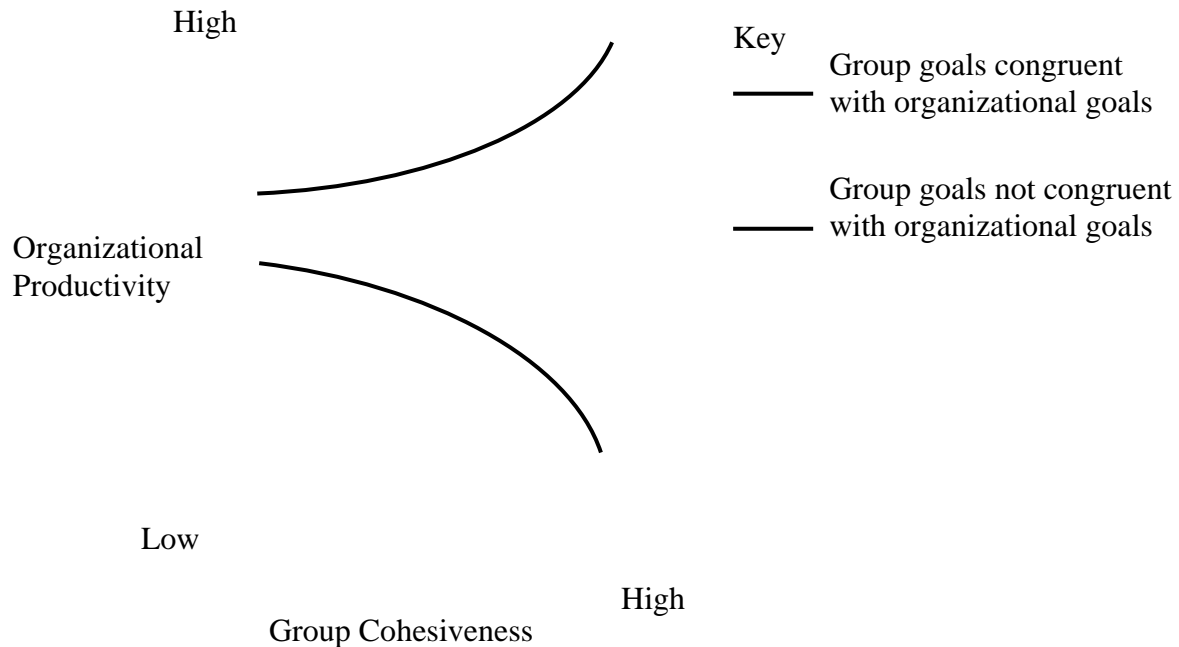
#### **2.4.1 Positive effects of group cohesiveness**

Research has generally shown that highly cohesive groups are more effective than those with less cohesiveness, but the relationship is more complex than merely allowing us to say high cohesiveness is good. First, high cohesiveness is both a cause and an outcome of high productivity. Second, the relationship is moderated by performance-related norms.

Cohesiveness influences productivity and vice versa. Friendship and comradeship reduces tension and provides a supportive

environment for the successful attainment of group goals. However, the successful attainment of group goals, and the members' feelings of having been a part of a successful unit, can serve to enhance the commitment of members. For example, in sports, no team can win if it lacks team spirit.

More important has been the recognition that the relationship of cohesiveness and productivity depends on the performance-related norms established by the group. The cohesive the group, the more its members will follow its goals. If performance-related norms are high (for example, high output, quality work, cooperation with individuals outside the group), a cohesive group will be more productive than a less cohesive group. But if cohesiveness is low and performance norms are low, productivity will be low. If cohesiveness is low and performance norms are high, productivity increases, but less than in the high cohesiveness, high norms situation.



**Figure 2.2 Factors Affecting Group Cohesiveness and Consequence of Group Cohesiveness**

Where cohesiveness and performance-related norms are both low, productivity will tend to fall into the low to moderate range. These conclusions are summarized in figure 2.2

The figure also shows that group cohesiveness can be increased by competition or by the presence of an external threat. Either factor can serve as a clearly defined goal that focuses members' attention on their task and increases their willingness to work together.

Finally, successfully reaching goals often increases the cohesiveness of a group because people are proud to be identified with a winner and to be thought of as competent and successful. This may be one reason for the popular phrase "Success breeds success". A group that is successful may become more cohesive and possibly even more successful.

Research on group performance factors has focused on the relationship between cohesiveness and group productivity. Highly cohesive groups appear to be more effective at achieving their goals than groups low in cohesiveness. However, highly cohesive groups will not necessarily be more productive in an organizational sense than groups with low-cohesiveness.

When a group's goals are compatible with the organizational goals, a cohesive group probably will be more productive than one that is not cohesive. In other words, if a highly cohesive group has the goal of contributing to the good of the organization, it is very likely to be productive in organizational terms. But if such a group decides on a goal that has little to do with the business of the organization, it probably will achieve its own goal, even at the expense of any organizational goal.



In general terms, some of the positive effects of group cohesiveness can be stated as under:

- Members remain in cohesive groups longer when a choice is available.
- Cohesive groups appear to provide a buffer against stress and thus may positively contribute to individual mental and physical health.
- Members of cohesive groups less often report feeling lonely or isolated.
- Identity with the group is stronger in more cohesive groups.
- On the average, members are more satisfied in cohesive groups.
- Some cohesive groups are more productive.

#### **2.4.2 Negative effects of Group cohesiveness**

Despite the positive effects, there are also several negative effects of cohesion. The major culprit in the group cohesiveness is the desire among group members to remain in the group and to please other group members. This gives groups an enhanced ability to influence members. There can be a problem in the organizational structure that discourages or fails to encourage interaction between the group and its outside environment.

Highly cohesive groups can enforce group norms much more effectively than less cohesive groups. Internal pressures to conform are greater in cohesive groups, because of which, there is a difference between conformity and compliance. Since group

members value their membership in cohesive groups, they are willing to adjust their behavior to group standards.

Cohesive groups put more pressure on deviants to accept group norms than less cohesive groups do. As a result, cohesive groups tend toward high surface harmony, which might even be superficial. To avoid confrontation and other forms of ill-will, members may publicly agree even when they privately disagree. Even if a member speaks up in opposition, cohesive groups can be very cruel toward the dissidents. If they remain in the group, they tend to become isolated and may even become scapegoats. When group members are aware of these sanctions, they engage in self-censorship, either avoiding contentious topics or carefully monitoring their verbal responses.

Surface harmony combined with perceived group enemies can contribute to group insularity or insulation, the tendency of group members to interact primarily with each other and to avoid cross-group contacts. Once an imposed group homogeneity emerges, the group has closed itself off from cross-fertilization of ideas or from corrective input for its mistakes. Further, since members largely interact with one another, they may begin to feel invulnerable and superior to those who are not group members. There aren't any discrepant voices at that point to provide a different opinion.

Given such self-protective strategies, members can propose extreme ideas and face neither challenges nor corrections from other group members or from outsiders. Problems may be ignored or glossed over. The group faces the risk of bad decision making.

Another major negative effect of group cohesiveness is the groupthink. This can lead to a progressive cycle of bad decision-

making. Bad decisions occur because group members are only exposed to limited and asymmetric information, typically information that supports the group's decisions. Opposition from within is effectively stifled. Opposition from outside is never even referenced. Disaster occurs, leaving group members to shake their heads, wondering what went wrong.

Group productivity may drop significantly and the outside authorities may be called in, while the remaining members refuse to even acknowledge that there are any problems at all.

To sum up, the negative effects of group cohesiveness can be stated as under:

- Group cohesiveness may lead to scapegoating, hostility and aggression toward dissidents.
- Individual identity may be more restricted in cohesive groups because members are typically closer to one another.
- If group goals diverge from organizational goals, not only may the group as a whole become less productive (by organizational standards), it may also reject members who *are* productive by organizational standards (e.g., ostracizing the "class brain" or "binging" workers viewed as "over-productive.")

Thus, the negative effects of group cohesion depend heavily on the group norms.

## **2.5 Group Influence**

Before discussing group influence, it is important to differentiate between conformity and compliance. Group conformity is typically

internally motivated, such as normative or informational influence. People accept influence from others because they want to do so. As expected, when people accept influence by choice, the attitudes and behaviors are more likely to generalize and do not require surveillance. The results from conforming could be instrumental (rewarding), contribute to our self-identity (value-expressive), or they could make life more meaningful (accepting religious doctrines or political ideologies, for example). Generally people who hold leadership roles *in organizations* are more likely to conform to that organization's norms.

On the other hand, compliance is externally driven. People accept influence from others because they feel that they must do so. Compliance is often fueled by punishment and may require surveillance.

It is very costly for a society to use compliance to achieve the desired behaviors from its members instead of conformity. Compliance often means a large, expensive, internal army or police force, and constant rewards or punishments must be dangled in front of members to make them behave. If a society can get its members to accept influence because they want to, then it will have resources to use for many other purposes, not just "enforcement." The difficulty, of course, is that many things that are required just aren't fun. One possibility is to hold out the promise of individual or collective reward.

Another is to stress legitimate authority, wherein individuals conform because they ought to (rather than "want to" or "must").

Everybody conforms at times, no matter how "individualistic" we may think we are: try driving without it! Cultures and subcultures vary in terms of how much conformity they expect from their

members and how much they expect members to live in groups rather than apart. These expectations may be age- or gender-graded.

Group "deviants" often receive much initial pressure to conform. However, if individuals stay deviant after persuasion attempts, other members will isolate them. Deviants may also be expelled if group rules and norms allow this. Groups can create conformity norms.

## **2.6 Informational influence**

This occurs through comparative reference groups who provide social standards. Similarity among group members is important here and issues of self-identity with the group are also important. This relates to the social comparison processes.

Conformity effects increase with a large proportional majority, an unfamiliar task, spontaneous or confrontational situations, cross-pressures, high cohesiveness and a commitment to future interaction. However, it needs to be noted that just one dissident is often all it takes to reduce conformity. And, a minority can influence the group and introduce innovation, especially if the minority has something special to offer or bargain with or minority members are able to create coalitions.

## **2.7 Summary**

Group cohesiveness is one of the most important variables that can influence group productivity. It can be defined as the degree to which members are attracted to one another and are motivated to stay in the group. It is influenced by several factors, such as physical proximity, difficulty of entry, group Size, external threats, previous successes, group composition and homogeneity, age of

group, technology etc. At the same time, it can be decreased by the factors such as clash of organizational goals, organizational structure, organizational climate, leadership styles and group heterogeneity. A cohesive group is found to have a positive impact on group productivity. Hence, the group leaders must manage it carefully. On one hand, they must have certain amount of cohesiveness in the groups. On the other hand, they must not allow the same to hamper group productivity. Similarly, group influences also need to be monitored in the groups.

## 2.8 Key Words

### *Group Cohesiveness*

The degree to which members are attracted to one another and are motivated to stay in the group.

### *Organisational Goals*

The goals that are set by the organization for itself, which all the members of the organization are expected to achieve.

### *Organisational Structure*

The intergroup relationships, determined on the basis of authority and responsibility.

### *Group conformity*

Group conformity is typically internally motivated, such as normative or informational influence.

## **2.9 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. What do you understand by group cohesiveness?
2. What is the impact of group cohesiveness on group productivity?  
Is the effect always positive?
3. Explain the factors that increases group cohesiveness.
4. Write a note on role dynamics in organizations.
5. What are various types of group interactions?

## **2.10 Suggested Readings**

1. Group dynamics: The psychology of small group behavior (McGraw-Hill series in psychology) by Marvin E Shaw, Publisher: McGraw-Hill; 2d ed edition
2. An Introduction to Group Dynamics (Hardcover) by Donelson R. Forsyth ,Publisher: Thomson Brooks/Cole
3. Group Dynamics 3rd (Hardcover) by Dorwin Cartwright (Editor), Alvin Frederick Zander (Editor) Publisher: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers

# **OBH 312 MANAGING INTERPERSONAL & GROUP PROCESSES**

## **Lesson No. 3**

### **INPERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION**

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Vetter: Prof. M.S. Turan

#### **Structure**

- 3.0 Objective
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives of Communication in Organizations
- 3.3 Uncertainty and the Role of Information
- 3.4 Methods of Interpersonal Communication
- 3.5 Communication Networks
- 3.6 Factors Influencing Communication Networks
- 3.7 Managing Organizational Communication
- 3.8 Summary
- 3.9 Key Words
- 3.10 Self Assessment Questions
- 3.11 Suggested Readings

#### **3.0 Objective**

This lesson aims at familiarizing you with the following:

- The objectives of organisational communication.
- Methods of interpersonal communication.
- Managing organisational communication

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Communication is the process by which two or more parties exchange information and share meaning. In organizational settings, communication becomes very important because its whole functioning is dependent on the same. A breakdown in the formal communication process bears the risk of even destroying



the organization. Communication is an essential element of the manager's job. Managers must communicate with people at many levels—those above, those below, and those at the same level in the hierarchy. A manager's communication with those who work for him or her may be the most important, because all aspects of the work—training, task assignment, and performance appraisal—are delivered through communication. Employees have reported higher levels of job satisfaction and work performance when they are pleased with the way their supervisor communicates and the personal feedback they get. Communication has been studied from many perspectives.

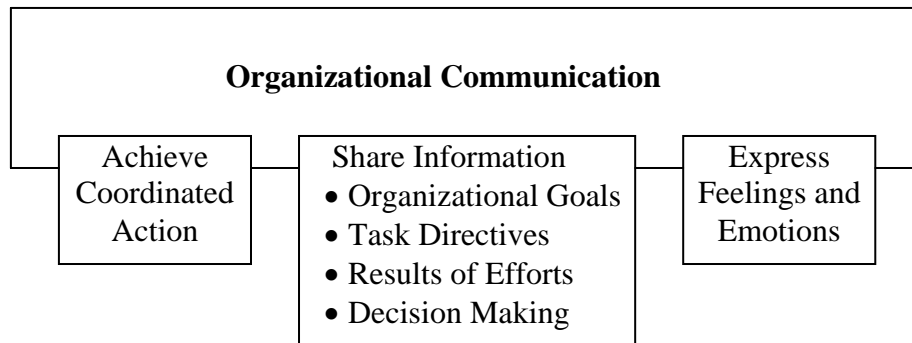
In this lesson, we shall discuss the complex and dynamic communication process. The basic discussion on the process of communication has been skipped and the student is advised to refer to that discussion contained in the lessons on management concepts.

### **3.2 Objectives of Communication in Organizations**

Communication among individuals and groups is vital in all organizations and its objectives can be stated differently in different settings. Some of the purposes of organizational communication are listed in Figure 3.1.

#### **(i) Coordinated action**

The primary purpose is to achieve coordinated action. Just as the human nervous system responds to stimuli and coordinates responses by sending messages to the various parts of the body, communication coordinates the actions of the parts of an organization. Without communication, an organization would be merely collection of individual workers attending to separate tasks. Organizational action would lack coordination and be oriented toward individual rather than organizational goals.



**Figure 3.1**

### **Three Purposes of Organizational Communication**

#### **(ii) Information sharing**

A second purpose of communication is information sharing. The most important information relates to organizational goals, which provide members with a sense of purpose and direction. Another information-sharing function of communication is the giving of specific task directions to individuals. Whereas information on organizational goals gives employees a sense of how their activities fit into the overall picture, task communication tells them what their job duties are and what they are not. Employees must also receive information on the results of their efforts, as in performance appraisals.

Communication is essential to the decision-making process as well. Information, and thus information sharing, is needed to define problems, generate and evaluate alternatives, implement decisions, and control and evaluate results.

#### **(iii) Expression**

Communication is also a medium for expressing feelings and emotions. Organizational communication is far from a collection of facts and figures. People in organizations, like people

anywhere else, often need to communicate emotions such as happiness, anger, displeasure, confidence, and fear.

Thus, communication is involved in many activities of the organization. Above all, it is the process through which individual and group activities and interactions are coordinated for the improvement of organizational effectiveness.

### **3.3 Uncertainty and the Role of Information**

Decisions must be made under uncertainty when little information is available on the outcomes of alternative actions. Uncertainty may also be defined in a more general sense as “the difference between the amount of information required to perform the task and the information already possessed by the organization”. The greater the uncertainty regarding the tasks of a work group, the more information the group needs to operate effectively and efficiently. In other words, when task uncertainty is high, the information processing of the individual or group responsible for the task must be correspondingly high to reduce the uncertainty. If the uncertainty is not reduced, task performance will suffer.

Uncertainty occurs in organizations because of size, changes in the environment, and interdependencies among departments. A large organization must coordinate a substantial number of people and tasks. The complexity inevitably creates uncertainty and thus necessitates more information processing. Changing customer demands, likes, and dislikes represent increasing uncertainty, to which the organization must respond with more innovative products and services. The need for a response or for more coordinated action among interdependent units requires managers to process more information, make decisions, and communicate them to other organization members.

### 3.4 Methods of Interpersonal Communication

There are three primary methods of communicating in organizations:

- (i) Written
- (ii) Oral
- (iii) Nonverbal communication

Often the methods are combined. Considerations that affect the choice of method include the audience (whether it is physically present), the nature of the message (its urgency or secrecy), and the costs of transmission. Some of the forms of these methods are shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**  
**Methods of Communication in Organizations**

Written	Oral	Nonverbal
Letters	Information conversations	Human Elements
Memos		Facial Expression Body Language
Reports	Task-Related Exchanges	Environmental Elements
Manuals	Group Discussions	Office Design
Forms	Formal Speeches	Building Architecture

#### (i) Written Communication

Typically organizations produce a great deal of written communication of many kinds. A letter is a formal means of communicating with an individual, generally someone outside the organization. Probably the most common form of written communication in organizations is the *office memorandum*, or *memo*. Memos usually are addressed to a person or group inside the organization. They tend to deal with a single topic and are

more impersonal (as they often are destined to more than one person) but less formal than letters.

Other common forms of written communication include reports, manuals, and forms. Reports generally summarize the progress or results of a project and often provide information to be used in decision making. *Manuals* have various functions in organizations. Instruction manuals tell employees how to operate machines; policy and procedures manuals inform them of organizational rules; and operations manuals describe how to perform tasks and respond to work-related problems. Forms, such as performance appraisal form, are standardized documents on which to report information.

## (ii) Oral Communication

The most prevalent form of organizational communication is oral. Oral communication takes place everywhere—in informal conversations, in the process of doing work, in meetings of groups and task forces, and in formal speeches and presentations. This form of communication is particularly powerful because it includes not only speakers' words but also their changes in tone, pitch, speed, and volume. As listeners, people use all of these cues to understand oral messages. Moreover, receivers interpret oral messages in the context of previous communications and, perhaps, the reactions of other receivers. Quite often top management of the organization sets the tone for oral communication.

One particularly difficult communication situation occurs when an employee must give the boss some bad news, such as when results do not meet expectations or goals, when plans go awry, or when an unforeseen event has occurred. Most experts agree that face-to-face communication works best when giving bad news.

However, it may also be useful to include some form of written documentation of facts and figures to back up the verbal message and to show some alternative ways to get out of the jam or work around the problem.

### (iii) Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication includes all the elements associated with human communication that are not expressed orally or in writing. Sometimes it conveys more meaning than words. Human elements include facial expressions and physical movements, both conscious and unconscious. Facial expressions have been categorized as interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, surprise-startle, distress-anguish, fear-terror, shame-humiliation, contempt-disgust, and anger-rage.

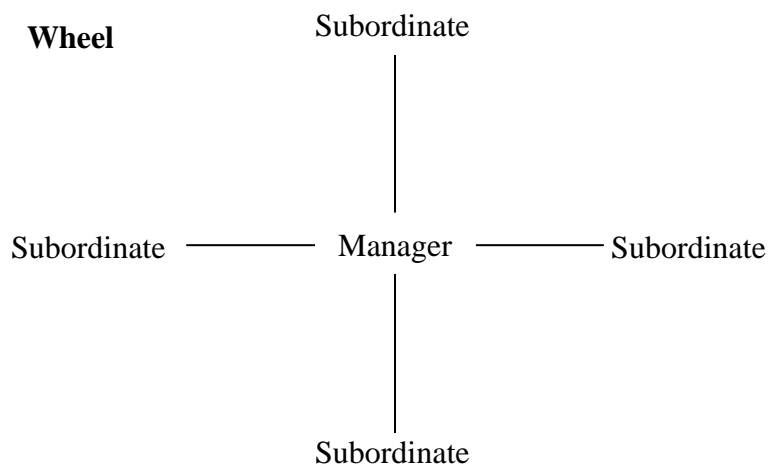
The eyes are the most expressive component of the face. Physical movements and “body language” are also highly expressive human elements. Body language includes both actual movement and body positions during communication. The handshake is a common form of body language. Other examples include making eye contact that expresses a willingness to communicate; sitting on the edge of a chair, which many indicate nervousness or anxiety; and sitting back with arms folded, which may mean an unwillingness to continue the discussion.

Environmental elements such as buildings, office space, and furniture can also convey messages. A spacious office, expensive draperies, plush carpeting, and elegant furniture can combine to remind employees or visitors that they are in the office of the President and CEO of the firm. On the other hand, the small metal desk set in the middle of the shop floor accurately communicates the organizational rank of a first-line supervisor. Thus, office arrangements convey status, power, and prestige and create an atmosphere for doing business. The physical

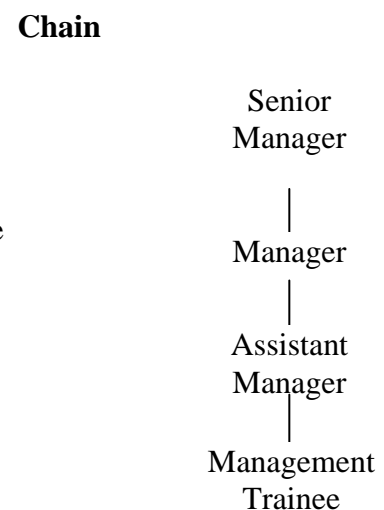
setting can also be instrumental in the development of communication networks, because a centrally located person can more easily control the flow of task-related information.

### 3.5 Communication Networks

Communication links individuals and groups in a social system. Initially, task-related communication links develop in an organization so that employees can get the information they need to do their jobs and coordinate their work with that of others in the system. Over a long period, these communication-relationships become a sophisticated social system composed of both small-group communication networks and a larger organizational network. These networks serve to structure both the flow and the content of communication and to support the organizational structure. The pattern and content of communication also support the culture, beliefs, and value systems that enable the organization to operate.

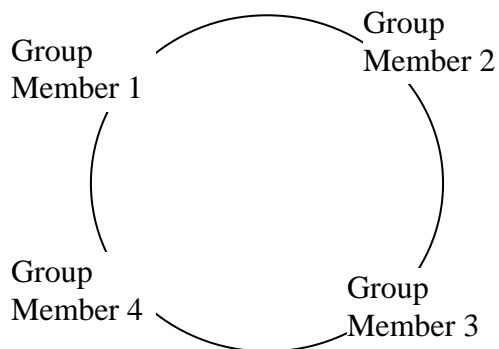


**Figure 3.2(a) Wheel Communication**

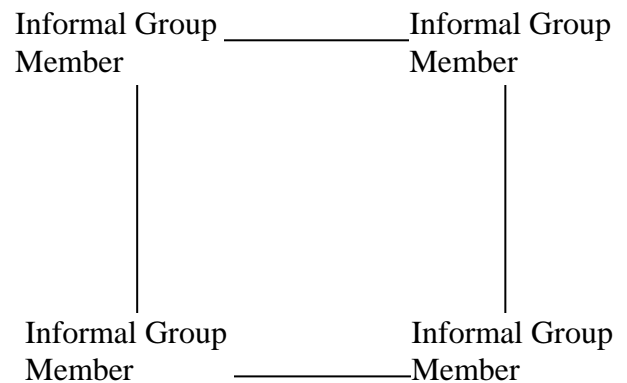


**Figure 3.2(b) Chain Communication**

**Circle**



**All Channel**



**Figure 3.2(c) Circle Communication**

**Figure 3.2(d) All Channel Communication**

To examine interpersonal-communication in a small group, we can observe the patterns that emerge as the work of the group proceeds and information flows from some people in the group to others. Four such patterns are shown in Figure 3.2. The lines identify the communication links most frequently used in the groups.

(i) Wheel Network

The wheel network describes a pattern in which information flows between the person at the end of each spoke and the person in the middle. Those on the ends of the spokes do not directly communicate with each other. The wheel network is a feature of the typical work group, where the primary communication occurs between the members and the group manager. This network is shown in Figure 3.2 (a).

(ii) Chain Network

In the chain network, each member communicates with the person above and below, except for the individuals on each end, who communicate with only one person. The chain network is typical



of communication in a vertical hierarchy, in which most communication travels up and down the chain of command. A typical chain network is shown in Figure 3.2 (b).

(iii) Circle Network

Each person in the circle network communicates with the people on both sides but not with anyone else. The circle pattern often is found in task forces and committees and is shown in Figure 3.2 (c).

(iv) Circle Network

In a circle network (Figure 3.2, d), all the members of an all-channel network communicate with all the other members. The all-channel network often is found in informal groups that have no formal structure, leader, or task to accomplish.

In each of these types of small-group network, communication can be described in terms of four characteristics:

1. The *density* of the communication—the quantity of communication among members;
2. The *distance* between members—how far the message must travel through the network to reach the receiver.
3. The *relative freedom* of a member to use *different paths to communicate* with others—the ease with which members communicate with one another.
4. The centrality of the positions of members-how central or peripheral a member is to the, group. Those members with central positions usually are more committed to the work of the group than those in less central positions.

### **3.6 Factors Influencing Communication Networks**

In a high-density situation or a situation in which communication must travel a great distance, there is a greater chance that the communication will be distorted by noise. Improvements in electronic communication technology, such as computerized mail systems, are reducing this effect. Still, communication networks are influenced by a wide variety of factors, as discussed below:

#### **3.6.1 Formal positions of individuals**

Position in the group refers to the place of one person in the communication network relative to the others. A relatively central position provides an opportunity for the person to communicate with all of the other members. Thus, a member in a relatively central position can control the information flow and may become a leader of the group. This leadership position is separate and distinct from the formal group structure, although a central person in a group may also emerge as a formal group leader over a long period. Communication networks form spontaneously and naturally as the interactions among workers continue. They are rarely permanent, since they change as the tasks, interactions, and memberships change.

#### **3.6.2 Group and individual tasks**

The task of both the groups and individuals in a group is crucial in determining the pattern of the network. If the group's primary task is decision making, an all-channel network may develop to provide the information needed to evaluate all possible alternatives. If, however, the group's task mainly involves the sequential execution of individual tasks, a chain or wheel network is more likely, because communication among members may not be important to the completion of the tasks.

### 3.6.3 Office environment

The environment (the type of room in which the group works or meets, the seating arrangement, the placement of chairs and tables, the geographical dispersion, and other aspects of the group's setting) can affect the frequency and types of interactions among members. For example, if most members work on the same floor of an office building, the members who work three floors down may be considered outsiders and develop weaker communication ties to the group. They may even form a separate communication network.

### 3.6.4 Technical factors

If a group is engaged in highly technical and sophisticated work, then its members would include technical experts. Consequently, the nature of communication in the group would depend upon the technical expertise, openness, speaking ability, and the degree to which members are acquainted with one another. For example, in a group concerned mainly with highly technical problems, the person with the most expertise may dominate the communication flow during a meeting.

### 3.6.5 Group performance factors

The group performance factors that influence the communication network include composition, size, norms, and cohesiveness. For example, group norms in one organization may encourage open communication across different levels and functional units, whereas the norms in another organization may discourage such lateral and diagonal communication.

### 3.6.6 Information Technology

One other factor that is becoming increasingly important in the development of communication networks is the advent of

electronic groups, fostered by electronic distribution lists for computer network systems. Known as electronic group mail, this form of communication results in a network of people (or computers) who may have little or no face-to-face communication but still may be considered a group communication network.

### **3.7 Managing Organizational Communication**

As simple as the process of communication may seem, messages are not always understood. The degree of correspondence between the message intended by the source and the message understood by the receiver is called communication fidelity. Fidelity can be diminished anywhere in the communication process, from the source to the feedback. Moreover, organizations may have characteristics that impede the flow of information. Table 3.2 summarizes the most common types of breakdowns and barriers in Organizational communication.

The method to improve communication would depend upon the nature of the problem. The problems lie in the process of communication i.e. the operational barriers and also in the organization itself, i.e. the organizational barriers. Various methods to improve the same are discussed as under:

#### **3.7.1 Overcoming operational barriers**

An understanding of potential problems is essential to improving organizational communication. Using the basic communication process, we can identify several ways to overcome typical problems.

**Table 3.2**  
**Communication Problems in Organizations**

Origin of the Problem	Type of Problem
Source	Filtering
Encoding and Decoding	Lack of Common Experience Semantics; Jargon Medium Problems
Receiver	Selective Attention Value Judgements Lack of Source Credibility Overload
Feedback	Omission
Organizational Factors	Noise Status Differences Time Pressures Overload Communication Structure

(i) Problems originating at the source.

The source may intentionally or even unintentionally withhold or filter information on the assumption that the receiver does not need it to understand the communication. With holding information, however, may render the message meaningless or cause an erroneous interpretation. For example, the source may intentionally give an incomplete information so that the receiver cannot act upon it. Alternatively, it may twist the presentation of the information in such a manner that it is not likely to be understood in the right perspective. Distortion at the level of source can also happen because of semantic problems or the sender's precognitions and objectives.

To avoid filtering, the communicator needs to understand why it occurs. Filtering can result from lack of understanding of the receiver's position, the sender's need to protect his or her own power by limiting the receiver's access to information, or doubts

about what the receiver might do with the information. The sender's primary concern, however, should be the message. In essence, the sender must determine exactly what message she or he wants the receiver to understand, send the receiver enough information to understand the message but not enough to create an overload, and trust the receiver to use the information properly.

(ii) Problems in encoding and decoding

Encoding and decoding problems occur as the message is translated into or from the symbols used in transmission. Such problems can relate to the meaning of the symbols or to the transmission itself. Typical problems originating at the level of encoding and decoding include lack of common experience between source and receiver, problems related to semantics and the use of jargon, and difficulties with the medium.

The source and the receiver must share a common experience with the symbols that express the message if they are to encode and decode them in exactly the same way. People who speak different languages experience problems in this category. But even people who speak the same language can misunderstand each other. Semantic problems relate to the problems in language and originate occur when people attach different meanings to the same words or language forms.

Another barrier can be the use of jargon, which is the specialized or technical language of a trade, field, profession. Jargon may be a hybrid of standard language and the specialized language of a group. The use of jargon makes communication within a close group of colleagues more efficient and meaningful, but outside the group it has the opposite effect. Sometimes a source who is comfortable with jargon uses it unknowingly to communicate with receivers who do not understand it, thus causing a

communication breakdown. In other cases, the source may use jargon intentionally to obscure meaning or to show outsiders that he or she belongs to the group that uses the language.

The use of jargon is acceptable if the receiver is familiar with it. Otherwise, it should be avoided. Repeating a message that contains jargon in clearer terms should help the receiver understand the message. In general, the source and the receiver should clarify the set of symbols to be used before they communicate. Also, the receiver can ask questions frequently and, if necessary, ask the source to repeat all or part of the message.

### (iii) Problems of receiver

Several communication problems originate at the end of the receiver and include the problems with selective attention, value judgments, source credibility, and overload. Selective attention exists when the receiver attends to only selected parts of a message a frequent occurrence with oral communication. For example, in a college class some students may hear only part of the professor's lecture as their minds wander to other topics. To focus receivers attention on the message, senders often engage in attention-getting behaviors such as using multimedia for communication, varying the volume, repeating the message, and offering rewards.

Value judgments involve the degree to which a message reinforces or challenges the receiver's basic personal beliefs. If a message reinforces the receiver's beliefs, he or she may pay close attention and believe it completely, without examination. On the other hand, if the message challenges those beliefs, the receiver may entirely discount it. Thus, if a firm's sales manager had predicted that the demand for new baby care products will

increase substantially over the next two years, he may ignore reports that the birthrate is declining.

The credibility of the sender has a lot of impact on the effectiveness of communication. If the sender is perceived to be unbiased and an expert in the field, the listener may pay close attention to the message and believe it. On the other hand, if the receiver has little respect for the source, he may ignore the message. The receiver considers both the message and the source in making value judgments and determining credibility.

Lastly, overloading the receiver with information beyond his ability to process the information can be a major cause of ineffective communication. Modern IT tools are particularly susceptible to this problem. The solution lies in determining the receiver's capacity to handle information and then act accordingly.

#### (iv) Problems in feedback

The basic purpose of feedback is to verify whether the message has been understood and acted upon in the right perspective, as was desired by the sender, or not. The lack of feedback can cause at least two problems. First, the source may need to send another message that depends on the response to the first; if no feedback is received, the source may not send the second message or may be forced to send the original message again. Second, the receiver may act on the unverified message; if the message was misunderstood, the final outcome may not be as desired.

Because feedback is so important, the source must actively seek it and the receiver must supply it. It is very much an integral part of the entire communication process.



### 3.7.2 Overcoming organizational factors

Organizational factors that can create communication breakdowns or barriers include noise, status differences, time pressures, and overload. Disturbances anywhere in the organization can distort or interrupt meaningful communication. Noise created by a rumored takeover can disrupt the orderly flow of task-related information. Status differences between source and receiver can cause some of the communication problems just discussed. Time pressures and communication overload are also detrimental to communication. When the receiver is not allowed enough time to understand incoming messages, or when there are too many messages, he may misunderstand or ignore some of them.

The solution to overcoming organizational barriers lies in reducing noise, fostering informal communication and developing a balanced information processing system.

### 3.8 Summary

Interpersonal communication has a lot of impact on an organization's working efficiency. There can be various objectives for interpersonal communication in organizations. The important objectives of organisational communication are information sharing, coordinated action and expression. Communication can be made by a variety of means, such as written, oral and non-verbal communication. Each of these has its own merits and demerits and is used, depending upon the purpose of communication. Over a long period, the communication-relationships become a sophisticated social system composed of both small-group communication networks and a larger organizational network. Primarily, four types of communication networks emerge in the organizations. These are the chain, wheel, circle and all channel communication networks. Each of these has its own characteristics and emerges in the conditions that are conducive for its growth. The communication networks

are influenced by several factors, such as formal positions of individuals, group and individual tasks, office environment, technical factors, group performance factors and information technology. The factors that can hinder the process of communication can be both organisational and operational. The operational problems include the problems originating at the source, problems in encoding and decoding, problems of receiver and the problems in feedback. The managers have to remove these problems to achieve the true benefits of the an effective communication. This will ensure that the communication flows are properly regulated within the organization and contribute to the efficiency.

### **3.9 Key Words**

#### *Communication*

Communication is the process by which two or more parties exchange information and share meaning.

#### *Communication Network*

Over a long period, the communication-relationships become a sophisticated social system composed of both small-group communication networks and a larger organizational network.

#### *Wheel Network*

The wheel network describes a pattern in which information flows between the person at the end of each spoke and the person in the middle. Those on the ends of the spokes do not directly communicate with each other.

### *Chain Network*

In the chain network, each member communicates with the person above and below, except for the individuals on each end, who communicate with only one person.

### *Circle Network*

Each person in the circle network communicates with the people on both sides but not with anyone else. In a circle network, all the members of an all-channel network communicate with all the other members.

### *All-channel Network*

The all-channel network often is found in informal groups that have no formal structure, leader, or task to accomplish.

## **3.10 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Why is information so important in organisations? What are some of the purposes of communication ?
2. What are various methods of interpersonal communication in organisations? State the merits and demerits of each ?
3. What are communication networks ? Explain the condition in which they are formed.
4. How can corporate managers improve the communication in organisations?

## **3.11 Suggested Readings**

1. Group Processes : A Developmental Perspective (2nd Edition) (Paperback) by Susan A. Wheelan, Publisher: Allyn & Bacon; 2 edition
2. Group Dynamics for Teams (Paperback) by Daniel Levi,

Publisher: SAGE Publications; 1st edition

3. Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics (Paperback)  
by Joseph Luft, Publisher: Mayfield Publishing Company;  
3rd edition
4. Team Work and Group Dynamics (Paperback) by Greg L. Stewart, Charles C. Manz, Henry P. Sims , Publisher: Wiley
5. Organizational Behavior (Hardcover) by Fred Luthans ,  
Publisher: McGraw-Hill/Irwin; 10 edition
6. Organizational Behavior (Hardcover) by Robert Kreitner ,  
Publisher: McGraw-Hill (Tx); 6th edition

## **OBH 312 : Managing International and Group Process**

### **Lesson No. 4**

## **INTERPERSONAL AWARENESS AND FEEDBACK**

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### **Structure**

#### **4.0 Objective**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

#### **4.2 The Functions of Feedback**

#### **4.3 Process of interpersonal feedback**

#### **4.4 Strategies for Making Feedback Effective:**

Giving Feedback

#### **4.5 Strategies for Making Feedback Effective :**

Receiving Feedback

#### **4.6 Summary**

#### **4.7 Key Words**

#### **4.8 Self Assessment Questions**

#### **4.9 Suggested Readings**

### **4.0 Objective**

After reading this lesson, you shall be able to:

- Understand the concept of interpersonal feedback.
- Know the functions and process of interpersonal feedback.
- Identify the strategies for making feedback more effective

### **4.1 Introduction**

In most organizational situations individuals interact with other individuals. Individuals also communicate to each other their impressions of various things. Such interactions can be the basis of effectiveness. If better solutions are evolved, as a result of

such interactions, and if the decisions are implemented with earnestness, they may contribute both to the effectiveness of the organization and to the effectiveness of managers and others working on the goals and tasks.

When persons work together and they interact, they need to communicate to one another their feelings, impressions, and views on various matters. When such feelings and perceptions are communicated to a person, especially regarding his behaviour, style of working, etc., it is called feedback. In simple terms, feedback is the communication of feelings and perceptions by one individual to another individual about the latter's behaviour and style of working. Such interpersonal feedback is involved in everyday life in various situations. Consider the example when the boss sits with his subordinate and gives him necessary counseling on the latter's performance. He shares his perceptions about the latter's achievements, strengths as well as the areas in which there is scope for improvement. Opinions about styles and ways of behaviour are expressed so that such information may be used. A subordinate may also do the same. If his boss rebukes him up in the presence of others, he may go and tell him how bad he felt about such a happening. This may help the boss to improve his ways of communicating such matters to his subordinates.

## **4.2 The Functions of Feedback**

Interpersonal feedback involves at least two persons, one who gives feedback and the other who receives it. Feedback, thus, has two dimensions. The functions of feedback can be considered from the point of view of these two dimensions. Although the main purpose of feedback is to help a person in increasing his personal and interpersonal effectiveness, the functions can be considered separately in relation to giving and receiving feedback.

#### **4.2.1 Function of giving feedback**

The main function of giving feedback is to provide data about a person's style of behaviour and its effect on others. Such data can be verified by the individual by either collecting more data from other sources or by checking some aspects with others. The feedback also provides several alternatives to the individual, out of which, he can choose one or two to experiment upon. Interpersonal feedback contributes towards the improvement of communication between two persons involved in feedback through the establishment of the culture of openness and promoting interpersonal trust. Continuous feedback helps in establishing norms of being open. Eventually the effective communication of feedback helps in increasing the autonomy of the individual who receives feedback, since such feedback does not give any prescriptions, but helps the individual through information to have wider choices for increasing his effectiveness.

#### **4.2.2 Functions of receiving feedback**

Similarly, receiving feedback fulfils several purposes. It primarily helps the individual (recipient) to process the behavioural data he has received from others (the perceptions and feelings people have communicated to him about the effect of his behaviour on them). It helps him to have a better awareness of his own self and behaviour. Getting information about how his behaviour is perceived, and what impact it makes on others, increases his sensitivity, i.e., his ability to pick up cues from the environment to indicate what perceptions and feelings people have about his behaviour. Such sensitivity is very useful. It encourages him to experiment with new behaviour to find out ways of increasing his personal and interpersonal effectiveness. Effective use of feedback helps in building and integrating the self. One who

receives feedback is encouraged to give feedback to others in turn, and thus, it encourages both openness and mutuality. It is assumed that feedback is given and received with enough openness and sensitivity. A balance of these two is necessary for effectiveness. These functions of feedback, for both the dimensions of giving and receiving are summarised in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1**  
**Function of Feedback**

<b>Giving Feedback</b>	<b>Receiving Feedback</b>
Provides verifiable data about behaviour	Helps in processing behavioural data
Encourages collecting data from several sources	Increases self-awareness
Suggests alternatives to be considered	Increases sensitivity in picking up cues
Improves interpersonal communication	Encourages experimenting with new behaviour
Establishes culture of openness	Helps in building an integrated self
Promotes interpersonal trust	Encourages openness
Facilities autonomy	Develops mutuality

### **4.3 The Process of Interpersonal Feedback**

The process of interpersonal feedback is a transactional process i.e. the transaction being between two individuals or their groups as a unit. The transactions are fairly complex. For the sake of simplicity, consider the example of two individuals X and Y, who are in the process of interpersonal feedback.

The feedback in this sense is not merely the communication of impression by X to Y, but it is in establishing an understanding and a trusting relationship between two individuals. In order to



understand the details, the process of a feedback episode is examined in detail. A feedback episode is an act of communicating information by an individual X to another individual Y about how the former has seen the latter. The process of a feedback episode is diagrammatically shown in Exhibit 4.1.

#### a) Psychological Make-up

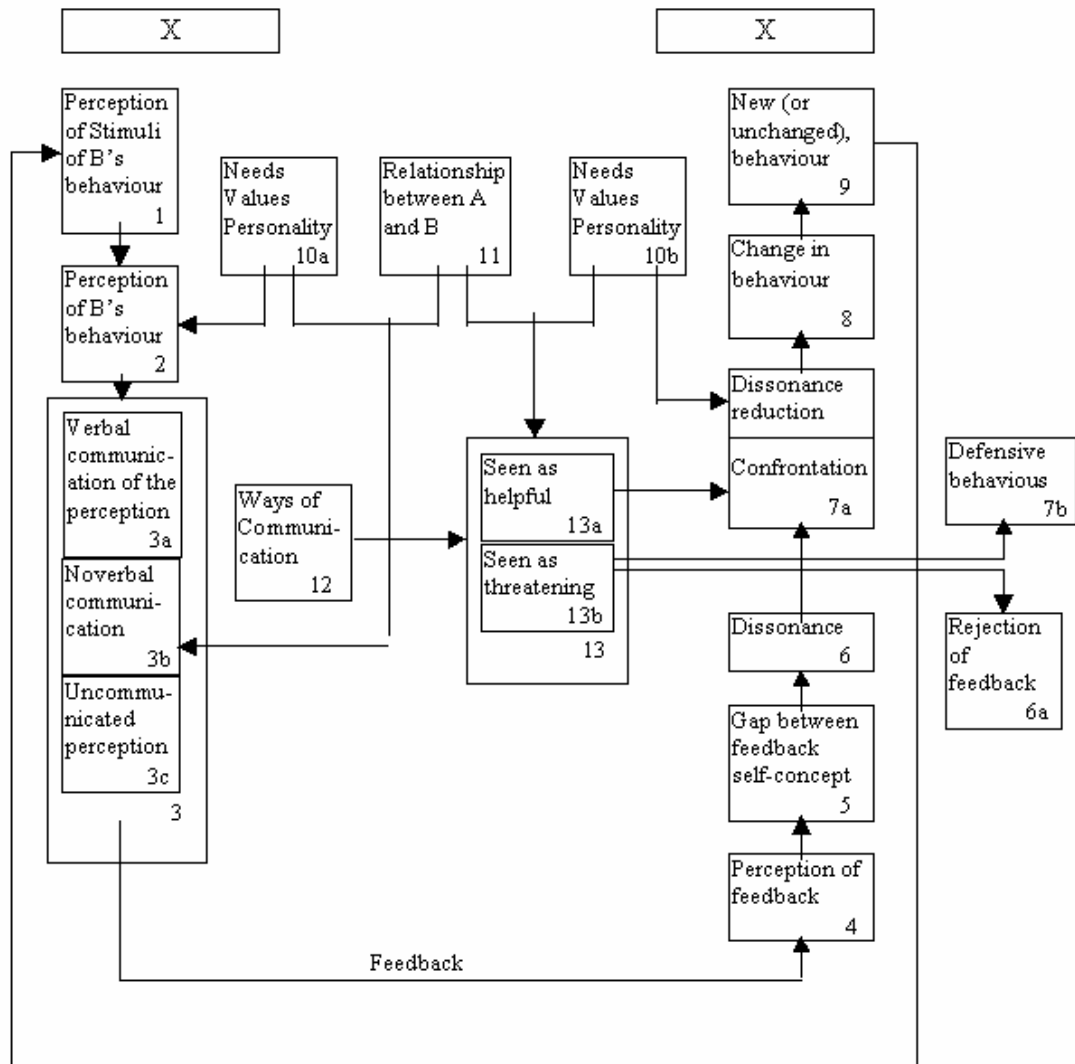
The first stage of interpersonal awareness and feedback relates to mapping the psychological makeup of the persons involved in the feedback. In the example, this stage is shown in the boxes numbered 10a, 10b and 11. The logical and chronological beginning of a feedback episode is with X's perception of Y's behaviour. But the psychological backgrounds of both X and Y function as intervening variables of which one should be aware in the beginning. Both individuals have their own needs, value systems, and several aspects of their personality. An individual may have a high need of dependency. Both the individuals (one who is giving and the other who is receiving feedback) will behave in entirely different ways. In addition to their needs and other psychological background, they may have a pattern of relationship (Box 11). They may either like each other or may hate each other. They may have either accepting or non-accepting relationships. These factors are important in influencing several aspects of the feedback episode.

#### b) Behavioural perception of Y

In the next stage, one of the individuals i.e. X, forms the perception of the other's (i.e. Y's) behaviour. This is represented in Boxes 1 and 2 of the diagram. In an incident where X and Y are involved, and where Y has shown some behaviour, X perceives the behaviour with a certain meaning. He receives the stimuli of  
The various parts of the process are discussed as follows :

## EXHIBIT 4.1

### The Process of a Feedback Episode



Y's behaviour. For example, he listens to what Y has said, and observes how he has said it. In receiving both the verbal and nonverbal stimuli (Box 1), A gives meaning to them (Box 2). The way he perceives or interprets the stimuli he has received from Y depends to a great extent on his psychological make-up as well as the relationship he has with Y.

#### c) Communicating Perception to Y

Henceforth, X communicates his perception to Y and this is what is usually called feedback. Communication may either be verbal (Box 3a) or nonverbal (Box 3b). Usually verbal communication will be more open. If A is clear about what he wants to communicate and has no hesitation in communicating it, he will usually communicate verbally. However, more messages may be communicated through nonverbal cues. If X does not feel free to communicate with Y, he may still succeed in communicating his resentment by his expression or body language, which may be more important than even the verbal language. At times, there may be a lack of compatibility between the two modes of communication. Such contradictory verbal and nonverbal messages may distort communication and the effectiveness of feedback. There are many perceptions, however, which remain uncommunicated (Box 3c). An individual may feel highly agitated and yet he may not communicate his resentment or anger either in the verbal form or through non-verbal cues. Such uncommunicated perceptions may distort the communication further and may come in the way the effectiveness of feedback. As shown in Exhibit 4.1, the message is other communicated verbally or nonverbally, or some perceptions remain uncommunicated. This process is greatly influenced, by an individual's personal background and his relationship with the other individual.

#### d) Y's Communication

One important variable in the feedback episode is the way X communicates his perceptions to Y. Again Y's personal background and his relationship with Y influence this. Many ways of communication contribute to the effectiveness of feedback. Whether X communicates his judgment and, therefore, his

criticism and, disapproval of Y, or whether he only communicates how he has been affected by X's behaviour would make a tremendous difference to the feedback being either effective or ineffective.

e) Y's Perception of the Feedback

Consider the situation, as shown in Box 4. After X has given feedback, usually verbally, Y receives it and he perceives the feedback in a particular way. He may see it as X had intended, or his perception may be quite different from what X. wanted to communicate. These perceptions do not get clarified unless they are checked, and, one important part of feedback is the checking of such perceptions of messages.

f) Y's Perception of X's Style of Communication

Along with the perception of the message, Y also reacts to the way the message is sent by X. If the communication is more descriptive and personal, providing personal data by X. about how he feels in relation to Y's behaviour, or is helpful in encouraging Y to try new behaviour, the latter may see the communication as helpful (Box 13a). On the other hand, if Y's communication is more accusing or judgmental, Y may see the communication as threatening (Box 13b). Such a perception is a crucial factor in determining what Y will do with the feedback he receives.

g) Gap between the Received Feedback and Y's Self-concept

When Y receives feedback from X, the feedback may be quite close to what Y thinks of himself. For example, X communicates to Y that the former sees the latter as emotional, Y's reaction to this feedback will depend to some extent on whether he perceives himself as emotional or not. The feedback may either confirm or

contradict Y's self-concept. This is represented in Box 5 of the diagram.

#### g) Consequent Dissonance

If the feedback received from X matches with what Y thinks of himself, it may reinforce his behaviour. If, however, the feedback received from X contradicts what Y thinks of himself, it may cause dissonance. Dissonance has been found to be an important factor in either producing change or in the rejection of feedback. If the feedback is seen as threatening, and if it produces dissonance, it is more likely to be rejected (Box 6a).

#### i) Reducing Dissonance

Quite often, the feedback is not rejected outright. Dissonance has to be reduced because an individual cannot live in a state of dissonance for long. Dissonance may either be reduced by confrontation or through defensive behaviour. If Y sees the feedback as helpful, he may explore further with X, and, as a result of such exploration, he may do something about this feedback. This is confrontation (7a). However, if he sees it as threatening, he may use all the defence mechanisms possible to deal with the feedback (7b).

#### j) Change in Y's Behaviour

Depending on the personality background of the individual and whether the feedback received is seen as helpful, Y may take the decision to tryout new behaviour and therefore, change a part of his behaviour (Box 8). Such experiments in change may satisfy him. Change in behaviour as a result of feedback will depend on how X gives feedback and whether Y sees it as helpful.

#### k) Y's Behaviour after Feedback

As indicated in the foregoing analyses, Y may either continue to show his old behaviour if feedback has been rejected, or he may even use some defence mechanisms to deal with it, or, if he finds the feedback useful, and X has taken care to make it usable Y, he may indicate change in his behaviour and may show, new behaviour. This behaviour starts a new cycle of communication. X perceives the post-feedback behaviour. Then a new episode starts beginning with the perception of Y's behaviour by X. This cycle process is indicated in the figure by an arrow going from Box 9 to Box 1.

The feedback episode starts with X's perception of Y; his background of needs, values, etc.; his communication of his perception to Y; Y's perception of feedback as helpful or threatening, Y's ways of dealing with the feedback (either by confronting it or by rejecting it or using defence mechanisms), and B's undergoing some change. As already stated, the transaction is much more complex than depicted here. But this paradigm does show the basic elements in such a transaction.

### **4.4 Strategies for Making Feedback Effective:**

#### **Giving Feedback**

Feedback is an interpersonal transaction in which two persons are involved. The effectiveness of this transaction will depend on the behaviour and response of both the persons, the feedback provider and the feedback receiver. One who is giving feedback can do several things to ensure the effectiveness of feedback. Some characteristics of effective feedback are discussed as follows.

##### **4.4.1 Descriptive feedback**

The person who gives feedback should describe what he sees

happening rather than passing judgment over it. The description can be either of the effect of the behaviour of the other person (Y) on himself (X). X may clearly say that he is annoyed with Y's carelessness. Such descriptive feedback may provide enough data for Y to think and take some decisions. On the other hand, feedback can also be evaluative does not help a person. Descriptive feedback is helpful in making a person more autonomous in taking decisions about what he would like to do.

#### **4.4.2 Behavioural vs personal feedback**

The feedback is to help a person think about his behaviour and take a decision to change it. The feedback given on the person as a whole— “you are sharp” or “you are dumb”, is not helpful because it takes the form of being an evaluative feedback and the person does not know what he can do about it. When feedback is given about the behaviour of a person — “Your handling the client was not proper”, the receiver is in a position to decide what can be done about his behaviour.

#### **4.4.3 Giving facts**

Effective feedback gives specific information about his behaviour to an individual and provides him data in the form of observations, feelings that his behaviour has evoked, and various other facts observed. These help the person. However, if feedback is general and merely based on impressions, it tends to be more judgmental. Even if it is non-judgmental, it may not help a person to prepare a strategy for changing his behaviour:

#### **4.4.4 Reinforcing Positive New Behaviour.**

Effective feedback helps a person to decide which style of behaviour he should continue to use. When a person is experimenting with new behaviour, positive feedback is likely to

reinforce his effective behaviour and he is able to stabilize it as a part of his personality. In this sense, positive-feedback is very helpful. Criticism or negative feedback does not help. It only increases the chances of a person becoming defensive. Positive feedback has to be genuine and specific.

#### **4.4.5 Suggestive**

In many cases, the person giving feedback may suggest alternative ways of improving. For example, when the feedback indicates that Y is not able to confront people in the group, members may like to make suggestions for him to improve—"speak out your feelings as soon as you feel bad about something"; "you can work out an arrangement with one or two members in the group to act as your alter ego, so that they may speak out what they think your feelings are at that time, and later you take these up for further exploration". Such suggestions, however, should be in the form of, alternative ways open to Y for increasing his confronting ability. Feedback given in the prescriptive form, i.e. what exactly the person should do, does not help the person and it only makes him either dependent or such advice is ineffective since the person himself is not involved in the decision taken.

#### **4.4.6 Continuity**

Usually effective feedback does not stop with one act of feedback. It establishes a relationship of openness. The relationship is a continuing one, usually resulting in continuous feedback. Moreover, feedback when repeated is likely to produce better results. The repeated feedback may reinforce what was initially communicated and may give an opportunity to the subject to discuss the feedback.



#### **4.4.7 Need based**

Feedback which is solicited by a person is much more effective than if it is given without such a need. In the former situation, the motivation to listen carefully to and use such feedback is high. The main responsibility for the use of feedback is of course of the person receiving feedback. If he is on the defensive (does not accept feedback genuinely and honestly and only justifies his action), feedback may not serve much purpose. The person giving feedback should assess the need of the person for whom feedback is meant. If, for example, a person needs more understanding and empathy, it may be better to give him more positive feedback and then he may be helped to see some aspects on which he can improve. Feedback without sensitivity on the part of the person imparting it may become ineffective.

#### **4.4.8 Positive intention**

The basic motivation of the person who is giving feedback is important. If his motivation is to be critical, negative, or merely to convince the other person about the accuracy of the giver's perception, then the feedback will not be effective. If however, the feedback is genuinely intended to help the other person, then this aspect itself will influence the way feedback is given and it is likely to be very helpful.

#### **4.4.9 Targeting Modifiable Behaviour**

The purpose of feedback is to help the other person to do something about his behaviour and to increase its effectiveness. This is possible when the feedback focuses on such an aspect of behaviour about which a person can do something. For example, feedback given to a person on his stammering may not be useful because it would only reinforce his negative self-image, and he cannot do anything about his stammering in the normal course.

#### **4.4.10 Timeliness**

Feedback should be well-timed. Timing means several things. Firstly, it should be given immediately after the relevant event has occurred. The advantage of immediate feedback is that the person has a higher motivation to reflect on the event, and can examine several dimensions of the event without much distraction. Secondly, accurate timing also means that the person should be in a position to receive feedback and use it. For example, in a group situation, negative feedback can be effective only after a minimum level of trust has been established among the group members. In timing a feedback the main criterion used should be whether it is likely to evoke defensiveness. In circumstances where feedback is likely to be perceived as an attack or criticism, it may not be helpful.

#### **4.5 Strategies for Making Feedback Effective :**

##### **Receiving Feedback**

As discussed earlier, feedback has two aspects – giving and receiving. Various strategies for making ‘giving feedback’ have been discussed earlier. However, ‘receiving feedback’ is as important as giving feedback. Hence, there is a need to look for the strategies, which make it effective. As discussed in the process or a feedback episode, if the feedback disconfirms the self-image or expectation, dissonance is caused. According to the dissonance theory, when an expectation is disconfirmed, psychological tension is caused. Experimental evidence is available on subjects receiving discrepant outcomes as being more tense and more uncertain about the permanence of the outcome. Dissonance may result either in change of behaviour, or in conflict and threat which may lead to defensive behaviour. Broadly speaking, the person receiving feedback may use either

defensive behaviour or confronting behaviour to reduce dissonance. Table 4.2 gives the summary of two sets of behaviour, defensive and confronting. These are discussed in some detail in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2**  
**Behavioural types in Dealing with Feedback**

<b>Defensive Behaviour</b>	<b>Confronting Behaviour</b>
Denial	Owning
Rationalisation	Self-analysis
Projection	Empathy
Displacement	Exploration
Quick acceptance	Data collection
Withdrawal	Expressing feelings
Aggression with authority	Help seeking
Humour	Concern
Competition with authority	Listening
Cynicism	Positive critical attitude
Intellectualisation	Sharing concern
Generalisation	Experimenting
Pairing	Relating to group
<b>Results in conflicted self</b>	<b>Results in integrated self</b>

When the individual feels threatened by the feedback he receives (for example, if he is criticized or blamed, or given what he may consider as negative feedback which he does not agree with), he may build some defence around himself so that he can protect himself from the threat. The use of defensive behaviour to deal with threatening feedback is like using pain-killing drugs to deal with the pain experienced by a person. These reduce the awareness of the pain; but they do not deal with the main cause of the pain. The same is true of defensive behaviour. Defensive behaviour may create an illusion of having dealt with the situation, but it does not change the situation or behaviour. For example, if a subordinate receives negative feedback from his superior officer saying that his motivation in the past year has been low, he may feel threatened by this feedback. He may reduce the threat by projecting his anger to the superior officer

and say that the feedback is based on prejudice. This may satisfy him and he may not feel threatened any more. This, however, neither changes the situation (the superior officer will continue to feel that his subordinate has low motivation), nor the behaviour of the subordinate (the subordinate will continue to feel that his superior officer is prejudiced, and therefore, he need not change his behaviour). Defensive behavior, therefore, does not serve the purpose, although it may merely reduce anxiety. The conflict in the self is not resolved. Excessive use of defensive behaviour is likely to result in a “conflicted self”. On the other hand, if confronting behaviour is used, the conflict is reduced and continued use of such behaviour will result in an “integrated self”, and processes of effectiveness.

It needs to be appreciated that the righteousness or wrongfulness of defence behaviour is situational. If the main purpose of feedback is to develop mutuality, and if both the person involved in giving and receiving feedback are interested in a relationship of trust and openness, the more defensive behaviour is used, the less effective the feedback will be. In order to make feedback effective, an attempt should be made to move away from defensive behaviour toward confronting behaviour. The individual receiving feedback should examine what defensive behaviour he uses more often, and he should prepare a plan (preferably taking the help of some other person or persons) for reducing this behaviour and moving toward the corresponding confronting behaviour as indicated in Table 4.2. These pairs of defensive and confronting behaviour are discussed as follows:

### **1. Denial Versus Owning**

If a person receives a negative feedback which threatens him, the first tendency is to deny it. Denial will certainly reduce the anxiety because he may convince himself that what he was told

was wrong and he need not bother about it. But it does not help the individual change, nor the situation to improve. The corresponding confronting behaviour in such a situation would be owning up the feedback even if it is disturbing.

Owning up of behaviour is much more difficult and is at a higher level in the hierarchy of behaviour contributing to interpersonal competence. Owning up does not mean readily accepting the feedback. As indicated later, quick acceptance is also a defensive behaviour. Owning up means being open to accepting the limitations after examining and collecting necessary data from various sources so that the individual then may be able to, do something about it. Owning up indicates the respect the person has for himself, and only highly self-respecting persons are prepared to own up their behaviour which may be seen as their limitations or weaknesses.

## **2. Rationalisation Versus Self-analysis**

The usual tendency with 'negative feedback is to find the reason to explain one's own behaviour. For example, if an employee receives the feedback that his motivation was low, he may find a reason to explain this low motivation, and thereby absolve himself of the responsibility of the low motivation. This is called the process of rationalisation. He may, for example, ascribe it to his physical ill health, or to some problems in his family and so on. Not that there may not be genuine reasons for low motivation, but quickly finding reasons or justification for some behaviour prevents a person from owning up that behaviour and being responsible for it. Rationalisation, therefore, does not help.

Instead, if the person does some self-analysis, and finds why this kind of behaviour has been picked up or what is the meaning of the feedback in relation to what he usually does, he may get some ideas of improving his behaviour.

### **3. Projection Versus Empathy**

In most cases, negative feedback causes anxiety and resentment in the person. If the source from which the feedback is received is not trustworthy, and if it is difficult for the individual receiving feedback to openly explore with him, he is likely to feel resentful and angry. A person cannot be angry without any cause otherwise, it will create dissonance and conflict. In order to reduce this conflict, and in order to justify resentment, the person receiving feedback may project his feeling of resentment to the person giving the feedback. Then onwards he may see the person who gave feedback as angry, biased, etc. This is the process of projection. In projection, the person projects his own feelings about the other person to the latter. Projection is a defensive behaviour and may help reduce anxiety. But like other defensive behaviour, it does not help.

Instead of being angry, and therefore, projecting resentment to the other person, it may be useful for the person receiving feedback to empathise with the other person, try to see his point of view and understand why such negative feedback has been given. This may help in increasing understanding.

### **4. Displacement Versus Exploration**

Another well-known defensive behaviour is that of displacement. For example, if an individual cannot express his anger or resentment to a person who has given feedback because the latter may be in a powerful position, he expresses his anger to somebody else who is weaker than himself. An employer who becomes much more strict with his own subordinates after he gets negative feedback from his boss is an example of displacement. Displacement is usually used in situations in which the person giving feedback is, in a stronger position, and the

person receiving feedback cannot easily express his resentment to him.

A more helpful behaviour may be to explore with the person who has given the feedback by asking him where and how this behaviour was seen. Discussing the details with him may help getting more evidence and dispelling some of the misgivings of the feedback provider also.

## **5. Quick Acceptance Versus Data Collection**

Quickly accepting a feedback is one of the forms of rejecting the feedback. The best way to kill an idea is to feed it on sweet words. When a person accepts feedback without much reflection, he wants to escape the possibility of exploring and doing something about it.

Instead of quickly accepting the feedback given, it may be better to collect data on the different aspects of the feedback both from the person who is giving it and from other sources. This may help in increasing interpersonal effectiveness.

## **6. Withdrawal Versus Expressing Feelings**

When a person feels helpless, and finds himself in a position where he cannot express his resentment, he reacts by losing interest in his work, cutting out his interaction with the person who is giving feedback, and generally showing signs of withdrawal. Such withdrawal behaviour may not be helpful and may, in fact, deteriorate the situation.

The more confronting behaviour which may be helpful in such a case is the expressing of feelings of being hurt to the person who is giving the feedback. It is a difficult thing to do; but if the person tries to express the feelings in a matter-of-fact way, communicating that certain things hurt him, he may find it increasingly easy to continue to do this in the future.

## **7. Aggression Versus Help-seeking**

Another form of defensive behaviour is the expression of aggression towards the person who has given the feedback. After receiving the feedback from a person who is seen in a lower or less powerful position, the person receiving feedback who is in a more powerful position may shout at him or may express aggression in various other forms. This may be easier to do; but it does not solve the problem.

Instead of showing aggression, if the person receiving the feedback seeks the help of the person giving the feedback in knowing more about that part of behaviour, and in planning ways of dealing with it, the feedback is likely to be used for changing the behaviour for the better.

## **8. Humour Versus Concern**

In some cases, humorous ways of dealing with feedback are also employed. Humour is a great quality. However, when it is used to cover up something and to reduce anxiety caused by dissonance, it does not help, and it becomes dysfunctional. Instead, the person may show concern and this concern will help him explore further in the direction of improvement of behaviour.

## **9. Competition with the Authority Versus Listening**

In a group situation, a member who receives negative feedback is likely to deal with it by competing with the trainer (the symbol of authority), for example, by proposing alternate theories to challenge the trainer, or by suggesting different ways of interpretation, etc. This may be highly satisfying to him. However, this may be dysfunctional. The member may be benefited if he listens to what has been said about him.



### **10. Cynicism Versus Positive Critical Attitude**

Negative feedback can be brushed aside by a cynical attitude that most people say things which do not deserve consideration and that, in general, things are pretty bad. On the other hand, a positive critical attitude helps a person examine what feedback is given and sort out those parts which seem to make sense and reject others which do not come up to the criteria he sets to examine. Such an attitude is helpful.

### **11. Intellectualisation Versus Sharing Concern**

In a group situation, or in some other group situations, negative feedback is ignored by a process of intellectualisation spinning theories in explaining matters when the real need may be to share the concern the person has with others and take their help in dealing with the problems he may be facing.

### **12. Generalisation Versus Experimentation**

One form of defensive behaviour to deal with negative feedback is to generalise what has been said. If a person, for example, receives the feedback in a group that he used words indicating that he was scolding the other person, and that his tone was also authoritarian, the individual receiving such feedback may say that this is true in general about people who have been brought up in the Indian culture and in the Indian family. Such generalisations may not help.

Instead, if the individual experiments with a different kind of behaviour to see whether he can change his behaviour, in spite of it being culturally-determined or influenced, he may be benefited.

### **13. Pairing Versus Relating to Group**

In groups, a person receiving feedback has the tendency to pair with another person (or/other persons) in the groups who also

seem to have received such negative feedback, and ire feeling threatened. This may give a comforting feeling to people being together under such “attacks”.

The confronting and helpful behaviour in such a situation may be to relate to the group by exploring with several members of the group and taking their help instead of pairing with one or a few. This may help in further explorations and experimentation. The use of confronting behaviour may help a person build relationships for getting further helpful feedback. The way a person receives and uses feedback will, to some extent, also influence the way persons give helpful feedback. The person may plan to test the ideas and experiment on a limited basis and may further seek feedback to know whether his ways of improving himself are seen as effective. This may set a cycle of self-improvement and increase his interpersonal effectiveness. If feedback is given in the spirit of helping the other person in building a relationship of trust and openness, if it is received in the spirit of learning from the situation to increase Interpersonal effectiveness and to contribute to such relationship of trust and openness, feedback can be an effective instrument in building linkages of mutuality between persons and amongst various members in a group. If however, feedback is not promptly or properly received, it may contribute to the disruption of relationships and may undermine the development of the group. Feedback, therefore, is a powerful instrument and can be used effectively. It depends on the person who is giving it and the person who is receiving it that this instrument can be used for forging bonds of mutuality.

#### **4.6 Summary**

Feedback is the communication of feelings and perceptions by

one individual to another individual about the latter's behaviour and style of working. The main function of giving feedback is to provide data about a person's style of behaviour and its effect on others. Receiving feedback fulfils several purposes. It primarily helps the individual (recipient) to process the behavioural data he has received from others. The process of interpersonal feedback is a transactional process i.e. the transaction being between two individuals or their groups as a unit. The effectiveness of this transaction will depend on the behaviour and response of both persons, i.e the feedback provider and the feedback receiver. The feedback can be made more effective by being descriptive, giving facts and giving feedback on the behavioural aspects instead of being personal and reinforcing positive new behaviour. Dissonance may result either in change of behaviour, or in conflict and threat which may lead to defensive behaviour. The person receiving feedback may use either defensive behaviour or confronting behaviour to reduce dissonance.

#### 4.7 Keywords

##### *Feedback*

Feedback is the communication of feelings and perceptions by one individual to another individual about the latter's behaviour and style of working.

##### *Prescriptive Feedback*

Prescriptive feedback is the feedback, which tells a person what he should do in a given situation. However, it only makes him either dependent or such advice is ineffective since the person himself is not involved in the decision taken.

##### *Defensive Behaviour*

If a person receives a negative feedback which threatens him, the first tendency is to deny it. When the individual feels threatened by the feedback he receives he may build some defence around himself so that he can protect himself from the threat, which is called as defensive behaviour.

#### *Confronting Behaviour*

When a person confronts with the cause of negative feedback, then it is called as confronting behaviour.

### **4.8 Review Questions**

1. What is interpersonal feedback? Why is it so important in organizational settings?
2. Write an essay on the process of interpersonal feedback.
3. How can the process of giving feedback be made effective?
4. Is receiving feedback as important as giving feedback? Explain its process.

### **4.9 Suggested Readings**

1. Organizational Behavior (10th Edition) (Hardcover) by Stephen P. Robbins, Publisher: Prentice Hall; 10 edition
2. Organisational Behaviour and Analysis: An Integrated Approach (Paperback) by Derek Rollinson, Aysen Broadfield, Publisher: Pearson Education
3. Organisational Behaviour (Paperback) by G. A. Cole , Publisher: Continuum International Publishing Group
4. Management and Organisational Behaviour (Paperback) by Laurie J. Mullins , Publisher: Financial Times/Prentice Hall; 6th edition

# **OBH 312 MANAGING INTERPERSONAL & GROUP PROCESSES**

## **Lesson No. 5**

### **INTERPERSONAL TRUST**

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#### **Structure**

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#### **5.0 Objective**

This lesson shall acquaint you with the concept of interpersonal trust, its consequences and the mechanisms to develop it in the organizations.

## **5.1 Concept of interpersonal trust**

Interpersonal trust is the perception of a person that the other person will not intentionally, or unintentionally, do anything that harms his/her interests. It is the feeling that one can depend upon that other person to meet his/her expectations when one is not able to control or monitor the other person's behavior. Interpersonal trust always involves one person making him/herself vulnerable to another person's behavior. It has been studied from many perspectives, including sociology and psychology. Some other definitions of interpersonal trust are:

*Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another.* (Rousseau)

*Trust is an individual's belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another.* (Lewicki)

It is the human tendency that what is lost is seen as more significant than what is gained by a company. So, interpersonal trust becomes very important, as people feel greatly hurt when it is violated. Trust is violated when one does not get the expected behavior from others.

For Example. A banker hires someone for managing the cash available in the branch. The entire process of selection of the person would depend on the extent of trust he commands in the eyes of the Branch Head. Similarly, there are a large number of

jobs, where trust is the deciding factor. Even in normal professional interactions within groups of persons, both formal and informal, trust has an important place. Teams that have high interpersonal trust show much better results than those without the same. So, it becomes the prime responsibility of the team leader to develop and maintain the level of trust within the teams.

## **5.2 Importance of interpersonal trust**

Interpersonal trust is important because of the following reasons:

1. It influences all the relationships between two or more people. Irrespective of the formal position of the group members, the presence of trust is vital to carry out the organizational functions.
2. High trust within a group sustains its members during the times of crisis. It helps in developing an attitude of belongingness within the group members.
3. In the business setting, high interpersonal trust is associated with an open culture rather than one heavy on control and restricted information flow. High systemic trust is the collective attitude that stimulates innovation, creativity and risk taking.
4. In organizations of low systemic trust, there is less accurate information sharing and a reduced ability to recognize good ideas. Low trust among project team members is often the precursor to eventual project failure because the team does not have the cohesion to overcome the challenges to success.
5. Even in the present times, when people claim to be more professional in their perspective, interpersonal trust cannot be ignored for the smooth functioning of the organization.

The need for trust arises from the *interdependence* of the group members with others. We often depend on other people to help us obtain, or at least not to frustrate, the outcomes we value (and they on us). As our interests with others are intertwined, we also must recognize that there is an element of *risk* involved insofar as we often encounter situations in which we cannot compel the cooperation we seek. Therefore, trust can be very valuable in social interactions. Trust has been identified as a key element of successful conflict resolution (including negotiation and mediation). Trust is also associated with enhanced cooperation, information sharing, and problem solving.

### **5.3 Origins and Development of Trust**

The theory on the origins of interpersonal trust has developed broadly along three lines:

- (1) Explaining differences in the individual propensity to trust,
- (2) Understanding dimensions of trustworthy behavior,
- (3) Suggesting levels of trust development.

### **5.4 Individual propensity to trust**

Personality theorists have developed one of the oldest theoretical perspectives on trust, and argued that some people are more likely to trust than others. Viewed as a fairly stable trait over time, trust is regarded as a generalized expectancy that other people can be relied on. This expectancy is a function of the degree to which trust has been honored in that individual's history of prior social interactions, and may have its most pronounced effect in novel or ambiguous situations. While this expectancy shapes perceptions of the character of people in general, more recent work has identified



the characteristics of trustees that allow for the formation of trust and its growth to higher levels.

### **5.5 Dimensions of trustworthy behavior**

Our trust in another individual can be grounded in our evaluation of his/her ability, integrity, and benevolence. That is, the more we observe these characteristics in another person, our level of trust in that person is likely to grow.

#### *(i) Ability*

This refers to an assessment of the other's knowledge, skill, or competency. This dimension recognizes that trust requires some sense that the other is able to perform in a manner that meets our expectations.

#### *(ii) Integrity*

The term integrity describes the degree to which the trustee adheres to principles that are acceptable to the trustor. This leads to the development of trust on the basis of consistency of past actions, credibility of communication, commitment to standards of fairness, and the congruence of the other's word and deed.

#### *(iii) Benevolence*

This is one's assessment that the trusted individual is adequately concerned about one's welfare. Only when one is sure of the honesty in relationship and the safety of interests, that he/she is likely to trust the other person.

## **5.6 Levels of trust development**

In the early theories of trust, it as looked upon as a unidimensional phenomenon.. However, more recent approaches to trust suggests that trust builds along a continuum of hierarchical and sequential stages. It becomes stronger over a period of time. Trust development can be explained in the form of the following stages.

### **Stage 1 : Calculus based trust**

At early stages of a relationship, trust is at a *calculus-based* level. In other words, an individual will carefully calculate how the other party is likely to behave in a given situation depending on the rewards for being trustworthy and the deterrents against untrustworthy behavior.

### **Stage 2: Identification based trust**

Over a period of time, the parties come to a deeper understanding of each other through repeated interactions. They begin to understand the shared values and goals. This allows trust to grow to a higher and qualitatively different level. This stage of trust is known as identification based trust.

## **5.7 Violation of trust**

Trust violation occurs when a person's positive expectations from the other person are disconfirmed. These violations reduce the level of trust. In some cases, a single trust violation may seriously damage or irreparably destroy trust. In other cases, one trust violation may not be that damaging when considered in isolation. Rather, a pattern of violations may be needed to create serious damage to the relationship. In other words, not all trust violations

are created equally. The extent of damage to trust, due to violations depends upon the following factors:

- a) Magnitude of the offense.
- b) Number of prior violations.
- c) Specific dimension of trust that was violated.

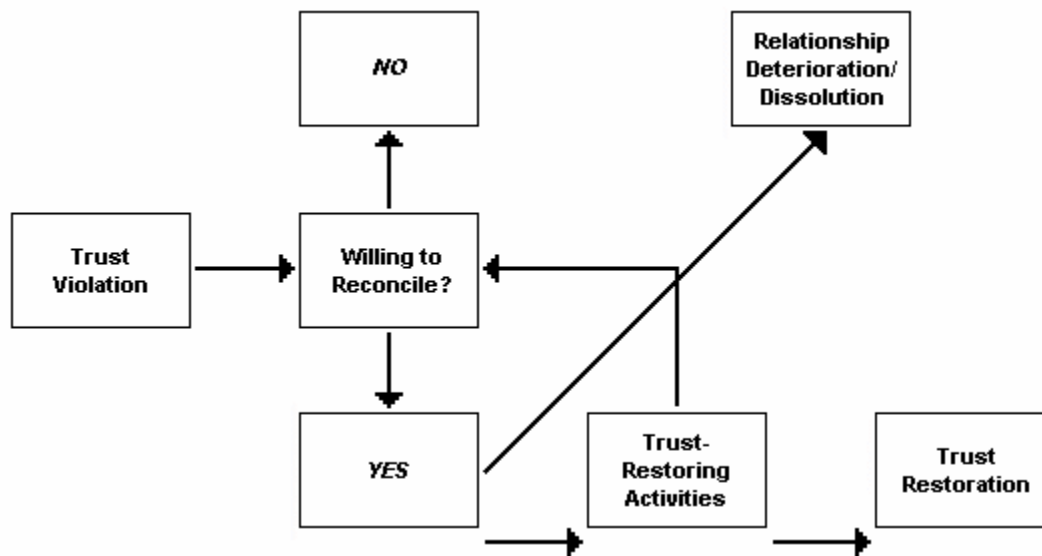
## **5.8 Rebuilding Trust**

Although some scholars believe that broken trust cannot be repaired, recent research has proved to be otherwise, although the same is not an easy task to be achieved. The victims either reconcile or forgive the offender. The strategy for rebuilding trust is different for calculus based trust (CBT) and identification based trust (IBT).

### **5.8.1 Rebuilding Calculus Based Trust**

In CBT, relationships, the victim's decision on forgiveness or otherwise depends on his willingness. In case of willingness, the offender has to do a series of confidence building measures, which can reestablish confidence of the victim in him. In case the offender is successful in the same, he is quite likely to win back the trust. Otherwise, the relationship can head towards break-down. The process of rebuilding trust in such relationships can be shown in the form of Figure 5.1.

At the CBT level, individuals can take several steps to strengthen another's trust in them, particularly when these steps are performed repeatedly and within several different contexts of the relationship.



(i) *Perform competently.*

One should perform one's duties and obligations competently. Individuals should continuously strive to demonstrate proficiency in carrying out their obligations. In some cases, this may entail updating skills and abilities as technology advances.

(ii) *Establish consistency and predictability.*

One can enhance the degree to which others will regard us as trustworthy when we behave in consistent and predictable ways. Every effort should be made to ensure that one's words are congruent with our subsequent actions and that one honor his commitments.

(iii) *Communicate accurately, openly and transparently.*

In addition, one should act openly--that is, be clear about the intentions and motives for one's actions. This helps the other party

calculate our trustworthiness accurately, because we are willing to act transparently and to be monitored for compliance.

(iv) *Share and delegate control.*

Trust often needs to be given for it to be returned. There is symbolic value in soliciting input and sharing decision control with others. Likewise, when such control is hoarded and others feel that they are not trusted (such as with monitoring and surveillance systems), they may be more likely to act out against this with behaviors that reinforce a distrustful image.

(v) *Show concern for others.*

The trust others have in you will grow when you show sensitivity to their needs, desires, and interests. Acting in a way that respects and protects other people, and refraining from engaging in self-interested pursuits to the detriment of others will also contribute greatly to the trust others place in oneself. When one violates someone's trust, they deem that he is acting in one's own self-interest. Accordingly, their attention will be diverted to their own self-interest and self-protection rather than on conflict resolution.

### **5.8.2 Rebuilding IBT**

In contrast, in IBT relationships, trust of the other party is grounded in the shared interests and values of the parties and their collective emotional investment in the relationship. Thus, violations may lead the victim to conclude that the parties are not as 'together' as they once may have appeared. Compared to the exchange of tangible resources in a CBT relationship, IBT relationships are more heavily grounded in intangible resources such as perceptions of mutual attraction, support and caring for each other. Therefore, in contrast

to the focus on impact in CBT violations, violations of IBT lead the victim to question the *intent* (i.e., motives and desires) of the other party that prompted the perceived betrayal.

At the IBT level, an individual has to work harder to reestablish the trust. In addition to the steps in case of CBT, some of the additional steps for IBT are as follows.

(i) *Establish a common name and identity.*

Nurturing a common identity creates a sense of unity that can further strengthen trust. Engage in talk and actions that build a sense of 'we' rather than 'me'. A common name and shared identity reduces divisiveness and encourages individuals to work together.

(ii) *Capitalize on co-location*

As conflicting parties co-locate, their more frequent interaction can help them get to know one another better, strengthen their perceived common identity, and reduce distrust by exposing false stereotypes and prejudices. When used in conjunction with the recommendation above, co-location may demonstrate to the parties that they have more commonalities than differences.

(iii) *Create joint products and goals.*

Working toward the collective achievement of superordinate goals fosters a feeling of "one-ness" that can bring the parties together in a way that strengthens a salient, shared identity. Parties create and build products, services and activities that define their commonality and uniqueness.

(iv) *Promote shared values and emotional attraction.*

Individuals should model a concern for other people by getting to know them, engaging in active listening, showing a focus on their interests, recognizing the contributions of others, and demonstrating confidence in other's abilities.

## **5.9 Distrust- Overview**

To a layman, distrust is the absence of trust. In technical terms, distrust is the confident expectation that another individual's motives, intentions, and behaviors are sinister and harmful to one's own interests. In interdependent relationships, such a situation of distrust leads to a sense of fear and anticipation of discomfort or danger. It prompts the individuals to take steps that reduce our vulnerability in an attempt to protect our interests. Accordingly, distrust of others is likely to evoke a competitive (as opposed to cooperative) orientation that stimulates and exacerbates conflict. Distrust has also been linked to lower job satisfaction, commitment, and motivation.

## **5.10 Origins and Development of Distrust**

Some of the situations, which lead to the origin of distrust are:

1. Distrust may arise due to differences in group membership: individuals identify and are positively attached to their in-groups, yet assign negative stereotypes to out-group members and may view them with suspicion and hostility.
2. Distrust can also arise directly as the result of personal experiences among individuals, such as when one person breaks a promise to another. Distrust is likely to increase with the magnitude of the violation, the number of past

violations, and the perception that the offender intended to commit the violation.

### **5.11 Consequences of distrust**

Once distrust develops among individuals, it forms a powerful frame on subsequent events in the relationship, such that even good-faith efforts by the offender to restore the relationship are met with skepticism and suspicion. The result is a "self-fulfilling prophecy," where every move the other person makes is interpreted as additional evidence that justifies an initial decision to distrust him/her. This distrust not only inhibits cooperation in the relationship, but also may result in retaliation that causes the conflict to escalate. When the other person reciprocates this sentiment, there is mutual distrust that further fuels the escalation of conflict.

### **5.12 Functional distrust**

Although distrust has generally been regarded as patently harmful, it should be acknowledged that there are potentially valuable benefits of some distrust. Some of the possible benefits of distrust are:

#### **(i) Prevent from being Cheated**

Almost all individuals have experienced at some point of time, when they have misjudged another as credible and trustworthy, only to be exploited. Hence, distrust can be a valuable mechanism that prevents them from falling a prey to a naive view of other people that allows them to be blind to clues of their untrustworthiness and thus making them willing co-conspirators to our own exploitation.



## (ii) Rational decision making

A certain level of distrust is vital to preventing excessive group cohesion that precludes sound decision-making. In addition, a certain amount of distrust allows the individuals to set boundaries around another's behavior in a way that limits their freedom yet permits functional interaction

For example, One might trust his friend to take his scooter, but not trust him with a key to his car because he is skeptical about the likely damage. Such a level of distrust would keep the person vigilant and reduce the chances of damage as well. Hence, at certain point, distrust has a positive role to play as well. It defines the boundaries of behaviour expected from the individuals, which can help in making the relationships more strong and lasting.

### **5.13 Dysfunctional distrust**

Although the above discussion enlists some benefits of distrust, there can some adverse effects as well, discussed as under:

#### (i) Hampering group performance

As noted earlier, distrust is associated with a lack of cooperation, lower satisfaction and commitment, and possibly even retribution and actively hostile behavior. Taken to its extreme, distrust can give rise to dangerous situations as well.

#### (ii) Hypervigilance and rumination

Perceptions of distrust drive individuals to the point of hypervigilance (excessively trying to make sense of every action the other person takes) and rumination (brooding or stewing on the

meaning of the other person's behavior and their intentions), resulting in a faulty diagnosis about whether the other can be trusted or not.

(iii) Secretiveness

Distrust leads the parties to reduce their willingness to share information and engage in problem solving in conflict situations, and hence to distributive bargaining approaches with the other party, an approach that usually overlooks integrative, value-creating opportunities.

(iv) Conflict

Distrust can also cause conflicts to escalate to the point of intractability, as positions harden and the parties become increasingly reluctant to yield concessions. The negative emotions that emerge with distrust, such as fear, suspicion and anger, which can cause the trustor to vilify and demonize the other party, and can even produce paranoid cognitions. This view becomes especially damaging when the parties use these perspectives of each other to justify retaliatory actions that cause the conflict to escalate out of control.

(v) Reduced communication

Communication becomes less effective as a means of extricating the parties from the conflict, as messages are assumed to be distorted or deceptive rather than honest and candid. Hence, even bona-fide opportunities to create integrative agreements and/or heal the relationship are ignored or discounted.

### **5.14 Managing Interpersonal Trust and Distrust**

Trust indicates a willingness to become vulnerable to another based on confident positive expectations of their conduct. It has often been praised as the "glue" that holds relationships together and enables individuals to perform more efficiently. Trust reduces uncertainty over future outcomes and simplifies decision processes, and provides us with peace of mind.

Unfortunately, when conflict escalates to a dysfunctional level, trust in the other party is often one of the first casualties, and this can inhibit the effective resolution of the conflict.

If the parties to a conflict desire to reverse the conflict escalation process, they must find a way to restore an atmosphere of trust, and manage the level of distrust. Trust building is important in de-escalating conflict because it allows individuals to accept the risk of being vulnerable and making conciliatory initiatives to the other with some degree of assurance that they will not be exploited. Until the parties can alleviate their predominant concern for self-protection against the other, they will be reluctant to work together in resolving their conflict. In contrast to distrust, where conflict escalates due to each party's sinister attributions toward the other, trust building is a process that can replace suspicion and defensiveness with benevolence and cooperation. The ultimate objective is to reduce tension and hostility.

### **5.15 Trust-distrust continuum**

In order to illustrate the dynamics involved trust and distrust, a recent research has observed a continuum between trust and distrust, which can be used to distinguish the two.

The research does not agree with the traditional notion of trust, which looks upon it as a unidimensional construct i.e., that trust and distrust are bipolar opposites. The recent research has found that trust and distrust exist along separate dimensions, as shown in Figure 5.2 . Whereas trust is seen as the trustor's confident *positive* expectations regarding the trustee's conduct, distrust is defined as the trustor's confident *negative* expectations regarding the trustee's conduct. While both trust and distrust involve movements toward certainty of another's conduct, the nature of that certainty and the emotional and behavioral reactions that come with it will differ considerably. That is, trust evokes a feeling of hope and a demonstrated willingness to become vulnerable to the trustee. Distrust, on the other hand, evokes fear and actions to buffer oneself from the harmful conduct of the other party.



Figure 5.2 Trust-distrust continuum

Viewing trust and distrust as existing along separate dimensions also recognizes that relationships are complex and multifaceted. In other words, we may trust another in some contexts, but not in others, and similarly distrust them in some contexts and not others.

One may trust another individual to arrive on time for a meeting, but not to complete required paperwork by the deadline.

### **5.16 What Individuals Can Do**

While the presence of distrust is usually obvious, it may not always be apparent when distrust has become more dysfunctional than beneficial. Thus, the first step in managing dysfunctional distrust is for the parties to recognize its presence. Some common indicators may include: (a) persistent suspicion about the other's motives and intentions; (b) chronic denial of benefits from cooperation and continued interdependence, based on over-generalizing or overestimating the degree of distrust, (c) need to closely monitor the other's actions, and (d) unwillingness to engage in risks that might lead to opportunities for productive collaboration. If the parties cannot recognize or understand these symptoms, third party assistance may also be helpful. Third party assistance may take the form of mediation or arbitration; third party tactics may assist the parties in achieving a deeper understanding of the substance of the conflict, or in devising a process to manage the distrust more effectively.

Identification of distrust should be followed by an analysis of its origins. Again, the assistance of a discovery or questioning process by neutral third party can help identify the source of distrust, which may stem from a variety of causes: the greed of one of the parties, an excessively competitive orientation of one of the parties, or a reaction to unfair treatment by one of the parties. In the latter case, for example, A may commit some type of transgression against B in response to a perceived injustice. If B does not recognize and label this behavior accurately, it will be viewed as a reason for B to distrust A, and hence deny B the opportunity to correct the source of

the distrust. Instead of the distrust being resolved, it is further fueled by misperception and miscommunication in a manner that leads to conflict escalation.

If a third party is unavailable, the parties may attempt perspective taking by temporarily stepping out of their role to consider how the other party views the conflict. This approach can create the empathy necessary to overcome any distorted perceptions that vilify the other party, and pave the way for distrust reducing and trust building activities.

### **5.17 Methods to reducing distrust**

Depending on the level of distrust in the relationship, there are several guidelines that can be followed to reduce distrust. Various researchers have suggested the following:

#### **(i) Punishment**

Distrust is likely to be reduced if the other party is apprised of the likely damage that might be caused to him because of the same. Even, punishment can be used as a deterrent to the other party. A party will be less likely to disrupt the trust building process to the extent that the other party has some power over the actor. One way that other party can maintain power is by being able to communicate about the potential violator's reputation. When individuals value their reputation, they are sensitive to the risk of adverse publicity regarding their trustworthiness, and hence may be less likely to violate trust.

## (ii) Finding alternatives

Another way of gaining power is to cultivate alternative relationships to satisfy our interests. If we can have our needs met by others, we do not need the relationship with the potential trust violator. Having other ways to get our needs met reduces our vulnerability, and hence the risks we might have to take by continuing to work with the other. This strategy of generating other options is often referred to as one's Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA), which provides a plan to fall back on if an agreement cannot be reached with the other party in a conflict.

## (iii) Creating reasonable expectations

Parties should actively discuss and manage the other's perceptions and expectations of what has been agreed to, and who is expected to follow through with specific actions. Eliminate any ambiguity about expectations, and make sure to commit and follow through.

## (iv) Monitoring procedures

If proper procedures are established to monitor the performance of each party, then also the distrust is likely to be reduced. The procedures can have provisions for open communication and hence reduce the conflict.

## (v) Increasing mutual awareness

Mutual awareness is a potent means of reducing distrust because the two parties become aware of each other's strengths and weaknesses and this can help them in forming right kind of perceptions to reduce distrust.

## **5.18 Summary**

Interpersonal trust is the perception of a person that the other person will not intentionally, or unintentionally, do anything that harms his/her interests. It is an individual's belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another and influences all the relationships between two or more people. High trust within a group sustains its members during the times of crisis. The origin of interpersonal trust entails explaining differences in the individual propensity to trust, understanding dimensions of trustworthy behavior and suggesting levels of trust development. The trust in another individual can be grounded in our evaluation of his/her ability, integrity, and benevolence. That is, the more we observe these characteristics in another person, our level of trust in that person is likely to grow. Trust development can be explained in the form of two stages - Calculus based trust, and identification based trust. Trust violation occurs when a person's positive expectations from the other person are disconfirmed. These violations reduce the level of trust. The extent of damage to trust, due to violations depends upon the magnitude of the offense, number of prior violations and specific dimension of trust that was violated. Distrust not only inhibits cooperation in the relationship, but also may result in retaliation that causes the conflict to escalate. When the other person reciprocates this sentiment, there is mutual distrust that further fuels the escalation of conflict. The distrust can be removed by punishment, finding alternatives, creating reasonable expectations, monitoring procedures and increasing mutual awareness.



## 5.19 Key Words

### *Trust*

Trust is an individual's belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another.

### *Calculus-based trust*

At the *calculus-based* level of trust, an individual carefully calculates how the other party is likely to behave in a given situation depending on the rewards for being trustworthy and the deterrents against untrustworthy behavior.

### *Identification based trust*

Identification based trust develops over a period of time, the parties come to a deeper understanding of each other through repeated interactions. They begin to understand the shared values and goals. This allows trust to grow to a higher and qualitatively different level.

## 5.20 Review Questions

1. Define trust. Why is it important in the organizations?
2. Explain the process of origin and development of trust in organizations.
3. What are consequences of violating trust? How can the same be rebuilt in organizations?
4. Define distrust. Is it just the reverse of trust? Explain in light of trust-distrust continuum.
5. What are various methods to reduce distrust in organizations?

### **5.21 Suggested Readings**

1. An Introduction to Group Dynamics (Hardcover) by Donelson R. Forsyth ,Publisher: Thomson Brooks/Cole
2. Group dynamics: The psychology of small group behavior (McGraw-Hill series in psychology) (Unknown Binding) by Marvin E Shaw, Publisher: McGraw-Hill; 2d ed edition
3. Group dynamics: research and theory (Unknown Binding) by Dorwin Cartwright , Publisher: Row, Peterson; 2d. ed edition
4. Organisational Behaviour and Analysis: An Integrated Approach (Paperback) by Derek Rollinson, Aysen Broadfield, Publisher: Pearson Education

**Lesson No. 6**

**GROUP DECISION MAKING**

Author : Dr. Tejinder Sharma  
Vetter : Prof Harbhajan Bansal

**Structure**

- 6.0 Objective
- 6.1 Decision Making in Organizations
- 6.2 Types of Decisions
  - 6.2.1 Classifying decisions on the basis of frequency
- 6.3 The Decision-Making Process
  - 6.3.1 Rational approach
  - 6.3.2 Behavioural approach
  - 6.3.3 Practical approach
- 6.4 Individual versus Group Decision Making
  - 6.4.1 Physical factors
  - 6.4.2 Group size and composition
  - 6.4.3 Power relations in groups
  - 6.4.4 Group polarization
  - 6.4.5 Group participation
- 6.5 Techniques of Group Problem Solving
  - 6.5.1 Brainstorming
  - 6.5.2 The nominal group technique
  - 6.5.3 Delphi technique.
- 6.6 Decision Making by Consensus
  - 6.6.1 Impediments to reaching consensus
  - 6.6.2 Methods to facilitate consensus
- 6.7 Summary
- 6.8 Key Words
- 6.9 Self Assessment Questions
- 6.10 Suggested Reading

**6.0 Objective**

This lesson aims to explain the following:

- The process of decision making in organizations

- Power relationships and types of decision making in groups
- Techniques of group problem solving and decision making by consensus

## **6.1 Decision Making in Organizations**

In general terms, decision making is choosing one alternative from the several others. However, this is not an easy task as the decision making process comprises of several elements, as shown in Figure 6.1. The basic driver of all decisions is the goal. Each of several alternative courses of action is linked with various outcomes. Information is needed for the alternatives, the probability of occurrence of each outcome, and the value of each outcome relative to the goal. On the basis of the evaluation of the information, the decision maker chooses one alternative.

## **6.2 Types of Decisions**

Decisions made in organizations can be classified according to frequency and information conditions. In a decision-making context, *frequency* describes how often a particular decision recurs and *information conditions* describe how much information about the predictability of various outcomes is available.

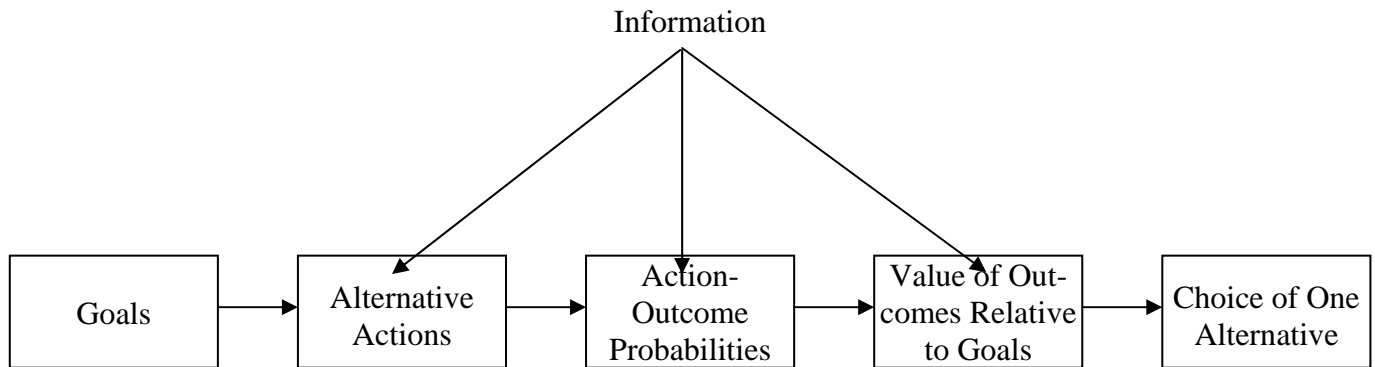
### **6.2.1 Classifying decisions on the basis of frequency**

The frequency of recurrence determines whether a decision is programmed or non-programmed.

#### **(i) Programmed decision**

A programmed decision recurs often enough for a decision rule to be developed. A decision rule tells the decision maker as to which alternative to choose once he or she has information about the decision situation. Whenever the situation is encountered, the appropriate decision rule is used in the programmed decisions, the goals are clear and well known, the decision-

making procedure is already established, and the sources and channels of information are clearly defined.



**Figure 6.1 Elements of decision making**

## **(ii) Un-programmed Decision**

However, when a problem or decision situation has not been encountered before the decision maker cannot rely on a previously established decision rule. Such a decision is said to be a un-programmed decision, and it requires problem solving. Problem solving is a special form of decision-making in which the issue is unique; it requires development and evaluation of alternatives without the aid of a programmed decision rule. Un-programmed decisions are poorly structured, because information is ambiguous, there is no clear procedure for making the decision, and the goals often are vague. Such decisions are made amidst uncertainty and the managers do not have enough resources to predict the future. In general terms, the managerial decisions made at the top level of management are often called as un-programmed decisions. At times, even the goals cannot be specified in clear terms and over a period of time, these emerge themselves. The effort required for making unprogrammed.

**Table 6.1 Difference between programmed and un-programmed decision**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Programmed Decisions</b>	<b>Un-programmed Decisions</b>
<b>Type of decision</b>	Well structured	Poorly structured
<b>Frequency</b>	Repetitive and routine	New and unusual
<b>Goals</b>	Clear, specific	Vague
<b>Information</b>	Readily available	Not available, unclear channels
<b>Consequences</b>	Minor	Major
<b>Organizational level</b>	Lower levels	Upper levels
<b>Time for solution</b>	Short	Relatively long
<b>Basis for solution</b>	Decision rules, set procedures	Judgement and creativity

decisions is much more than the one, which is required for making programmed decisions. The differences between programmed and un-programmed decisions are shown in Table 6.1.

### **6.3 The Decision-Making Process**

While some generalizations have been drawn to establish the steps of decision making, yet. There are several approaches to the same, various approaches to decision making are :

6.3.1 Rational approach

6.3.2 Behavioural approach

6.3.3 Practical approach

#### **6.3.1 The rational approach**

The rational decision-making approach is a systematic process. It assumes that organization is economically based and managed by decision makers, who are entirely objective and have complete information. In other words, the decision makers using this approach rely on their head and not their heart. Hence, the steps of this approach are also sequential and rational. Various steps of the rational approach to decision making are shown in Figure 6.2.

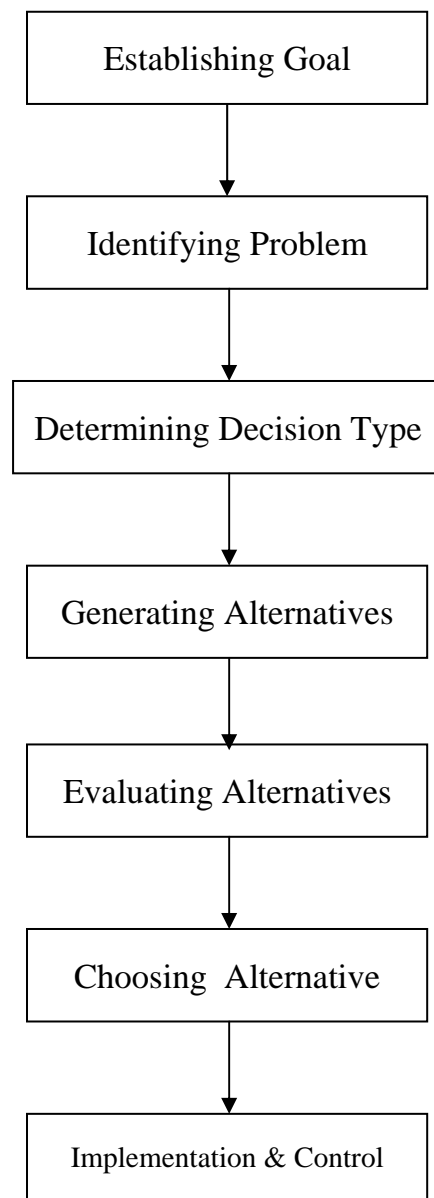
##### **(i) Establishing goal**

The rational decision-making process begins with the statement

of the situation goal, or desired end state. The goal of a marketing department, for example, may be to obtain a certain market share by the end of the year. The goal of production department might be to achieve a particular standard of productivity.

**(ii) Identifying problem**

The next step is to identify the problem, because this is the basis on which rest of the activities are to be done.



**Figure 6.2 Steps in rational approach to decision making**

An incorrectly defined problem can hamper the entire process. The purpose of problem identification is to gather information that bears on the goal. If there is a discrepancy between the goal and the actual state, action may be needed to rectify the situation.

**(iii) Determining of decision type**

Next, the decision makers must determine whether the problem requires a programmed or an un-programmed decision. If a programmed decision is needed, the appropriate decision rule is invoked, and the process moves on to the choice among alternatives. Although it may seem simple to diagnose a situation as programmed, apply a decision rule, and arrive at a solution, yet mistakes can occur. Choosing the wrong decision rule or assuming the problem calls for a programmed decision when a programmed decision actually is not required can result in unacceptable decisions. The same caution applies when the un-programmed decision is called for. If the situation is wrongly diagnosed, the decision maker wastes time and resources seeking a new solution to an old problem.

**(iv) Generating alternatives.**

The next step in making a un-programmed decisions is to generate alternatives. The rational process assumes decision makers will generate all possible alternative solutions to the problem, however, as even simple business problems can have scores of possible solutions, this assumption is unrealistic. Decision makers may rely on education and experience as well as knowledge of the situation to generate alternatives. In addition, they may seek information from other people such as peers, subordinates, and supervisors. The decision maker can also rely on creativity and intuition for generating the alternatives.



#### **(v) Evaluating alternatives**

Evaluation of alternatives involves the assessment of all possible alternatives against predetermined decision criteria. The most common decision criterion is whether the chosen alternative brings the organisation nearer to the goal or not. In each case, the decision maker must examine an alternative for evidence that it will reduce the discrepancy between the desired state and the actual state. The evaluation process usually includes describing anticipated benefits, evaluating anticipated costs and estimating the risks associated with each alternative. In most decision situations, the decision maker does not have perfect information regarding the outcomes of all alternatives.

#### **(vi) Choosing an alternative**

The choice of an alternative is the crucial step in the decision-making process. Choice consists of selecting the alternative with the highest possible payoff, based on the benefits, costs, risks, and uncertainties of all alternatives.

#### **(vi) Implementation and control**

Implementation puts the decision into action. It uses the commitment and motivation of those who participated in the decision-making process. To be successful, implementation requires the proper use of resources and good management skills. In the final stage of the rational decision-making process, the outcomes of the decision are measured and compared with the desired goal. If a discrepancy remains, the decision maker may restart the decision-making process by setting a new goal (or reiterating the existing one). The decision maker, unsatisfied with the previous decision, may modify the subsequent decision-

making process to avoid another mistake. Changes can be made to any part of the process.

### **Merits and Demerits of the Rational Approach.**

The rational approach has several strengths. It forces the decision maker to consider a decision in a logical, sequential manner, and the in-depth analysis of alternatives enables the decision maker to choose on the basis of information rather than emotion or social pressure.

However, the rigid assumptions of this approach often are unrealistic. The amount of information available to managers usually is limited by either time or cost constraints, and most decision makers have limited ability to process information about the alternatives. In addition, not all alternatives lend themselves to quantification in terms that will allow for easy comparison. Finally, because they cannot predict the future, it is unlikely that decision makers will know all possible outcomes of each alternative.

### **6.3.2 The behavioral approach**

The rational approach is most logical and sequential. However, man is not always in the state of rationality. Man is often guided by 'heart', and not by 'head' alone. On the basis of this fact, the researchers have proposed another approach to decision making, known as behavioural approach.

The basic assumption of the behavioral approach is that the decision makers often operate with bounded rationality, as against perfect rationality, as is assumed by the rational approach. The assumption rests on the argument that although individuals seek the best solution to a problem, choosing the single best solution is beyond the capabilities of most decision makers. Thus, they accept less than ideal solutions based on a

process. They limit the inputs to the decision-making process and base their decisions on judgment and personal biases as well as on logic. The characteristics of this approach are :

- (i) The use of procedures and rules of thumb,
- (ii) Sub optimizing, and
- (iii) Satisficing.

The use of procedures and rules of thumb are used to reduce the uncertainty. Sub optimizing is knowingly accepting less than best possible solution, due to organizational and environmental constraints. Satisficing means examining the alternatives only until a solution that meets minimal requirements is found and then ceasing to look for a better one. This is a short-term and a contingent approach.

### **6.3.3 The practical approach**

Owing to the limitations of rational and behavioural approach, decision makers also rely on the practical approach, which contributes the good features of both the approaches. The steps in this process are the same as in the rational approach; however, the conditions recognized by the behavioral approach are added to provide a more realistic process. For example, the practical approach suggests that rather than generating all alternatives, the decision maker should try to go beyond rules of thumb and satisficing limitations and generate as many alternatives as time, money, and other practicalities of the situation allow. In this synthesis of the two approaches, the rational approach provides an analytical framework for making decisions, whereas the behavioral approach provides a moderating influence

#### **6.4 Individual versus Group Decision Making**

Both individuals and groups make decisions in organizations. Individuals and groups are subject to different types of pressures as they make decisions. Considerable research has been done to compare the decision-making success of individuals and groups in various situations. When is it better to have a group make a decision than an individual? Researchers have found that the answer depends on several factors, including the type of decision, the knowledge and experience of the people involved, and the type of decision process involved. In tasks that require an estimation, a prediction, or a judgment of accuracy- usually referred to as *judgmental tasks*, groups typically are superior to individuals simply because more people contribute to the decision-making process.

In problem-solving tasks, groups generally produce more and better solutions than do individuals. But groups take far longer than individuals to develop solutions and make decisions. It is also found that small groups may be able to accomplish some things much faster than a large, bureaucratic organization. It also creates greater interest of the group members to accomplish the goals.

However, one capable individual may make a better judgment than a group. In addition, individual decision-making avoids the special problems of group decision-making. If the problem to be solved is fairly straightforward, it may be more appropriate to have a single capable individual concentrate on its solution. On the other hand, complex problems are more appropriate for groups. Such problems can be divided into parts and the parts assigned to individuals, who bring their results back to the group for discussion and decision making. A comparison of individual and group decision-making is made in Table 6.2

**Table 6.2**

**Comparing of group and individual decision-making**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Individual</b>
Slow process	Fast process
More people to contribute ideas	More appropriate for some judgmental tasks
Ability to divide complex tasks	Avoids special problems of group decision making, such as groupthink
More thorough search for alternatives	Ideas limited to an individual's capacity other team members
More alternatives generated	may not show interest in the
Greater interest stimulated	decision.

**Factors Influencing Group Decision Making**

Being different from individual decision making, the process of group decision making is influenced by several factors, as listed below:

- 6.4.1 Physical factors
- 6.4.2 Group size and composition
- 6.4.3 Power relations in groups
- 6.4.4 Group polarization
- 6.4.5 Group participation

The group factors such as physical environment, size and composition, characteristics of members, and norms and cohesiveness, have a lot of impact on the effectiveness of group decision-making.

**6.4.1 Physical factors**

The physical aspects of group meetings must be conducive to open discussion, with conference rooms, IT gadgets, tables,

chairs, and any necessary equipment available and in working order. In an in-appropriate working environment, it can be significantly more difficult for group members to cooperate in the problem-solving process. However, these can easily be acquired. The advances in information technology have helped a lot in group decision-making.

#### **6.4.2 Group size and composition**

The size of the group greatly influences the group decision-making process. Larger the size, the more complex is the decision making as too many people might contribute diverse ideas and may not reach to a consensus easily. In addition to size, heterogeneity of a group also makes this process more complex. Individuals of diverse background, knowledge and skills might reach to a consensus much slower than a group, which comprises of homogenous members.

#### **6.4.3 Power relations are interest in every group**

Individuals with more status or power may have a particularly strong influence on the group's decision. Other members may believe these higher-status individuals have superior insight; or the higher-status members may influence reward allocation or may have some coercive power they can wield in the future. Depending on how they are managed, these and other sources of individual influence can assist or impede the group decision-making process.

#### **6.4.4 Group Polarization**

Members' attitude and opinion with respect to an issue or a solution may change during the group discussion. This tendency, termed group polarization, which is influenced by several factors

such as persuasiveness of some members, rigid stand taken by some individuals and vested interests.

Polarization can greatly affect group decision-making. If group members are known to lean toward a particular decision before a discussion, it may be expected that their post-decision position will be even more extreme. Understanding this phenomenon may be useful for one who seeks to affect their decision.

#### **6.4.5 Group participation**

A major issue in group decision making is the degree to which employees should participate in the process. Early management theories, such as those of the scientific management school, advocated a clear separation between the duties of managers and workers: Management was to make the decisions, and employees were to implement them. Other approaches have urged that employees be allowed to participate in decision-making to increase their ego involvement, motivation, and satisfaction. Numerous research studies have shown that whereas employees who seek responsibility and challenge on the job may find participation in the decision-making process both motivating and enriching, other employees may regard such participation as a waste of time and a management imposition. Properly designed organizational structures encourage group participation and make the decision making process easier.

### **6.5 Techniques of Group Problem Solving**

The most commonly used techniques for problem solving by groups are:

- 6.5.1 Brainstorming

- 6.5.2 The nominal group technique

- 6.5.3 Delphi technique.

### **6.5.1 Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is most often used in the idea generation phase of decision making and is intended to solve problems that are new to the organization and have major consequences. In brainstorming, the group convenes specifically to generate alternatives. The members present ideas and clarify them with brief explanations. Each idea is recorded in full view of all members, usually on a flip chart. To avoid self-censoring, no attempts to evaluate the ideas are allowed. Group members are encouraged to offer any ideas that occur to them, even those that seem too risky or impossible to implement. (The absence of such ideas, in fact, is evidence that the group members are engaging in self-censorship.) In a subsequent session, after the ideas have been recorded and distributed to members for review, the alternatives are evaluated.

The intent of brainstorming is to produce totally new ideas and solutions by stimulating the creativity of group members and encouraging them to build on the contributions of others. Brainstorming does not provide the resolution to the problem, an evaluation scheme, or the decision itself. Instead, it should produce a list of alternatives that is more innovative and comprehensive than one developed by the typical interacting group.

### **6.5.2 The nominal group technique**

The nominal group technique (NGT) offers another means of improving group decision making. Whereas brainstorming is used primarily for alternative generation, NGT may be employed in other phases of decision making, such as identification of the problem and of appropriate criteria for evaluating alternatives. In NGT, a group of individuals convene to address an issue. The issue is described to the group, and each individual writes a list



of ideas; no discussion among the members is permitted. Following the five-to-ten-minute idea generation period, individual members take turns reporting their ideas, one at a time, to the group. The ideas are recorded on a flip chart, and members are encouraged to add to the list by building on the ideas of others. After all ideas have been presented, the members may discuss them and continue to build on them or proceed to the next phase. This part of the NGT process can also be carried out without a face-to-face meeting, for example, by mail, telephone, or computer. A meeting, however, helps members develop a group feeling and puts interpersonal pressure on the members to do their best in developing their lists.

After the discussion, members privately vote on or rank the ideas or report their preferences in some other agreed-upon way. Reporting is private to reduce any feelings of intimidation. After voting, the group may discuss the results and continue to generate and discuss ideas. The generation-discussion-vote cycle can continue until an appropriate decision is reached. The nominal group technique has two principal advantages. It helps overcome the negative effects of power and status differences among group members, and it can be used in the problem exploration, alternative generation, and evaluation phases of decision making. Its primary disadvantage lies in its structured nature, which may limit creativity.

### **6.5.3 The Delphi technique**

The Delphi technique is a method of systematically gathering the judgments of experts for use in developing forecasts. It is designed for groups that do not meet face to face. The Delphi technique is useful when experts are physically dispersed, anonymity is desired, or the participants are known to have difficulty communicating with one another because of extreme

differences of opinion. This method also avoids the intimidation problems that may exist in decision-making groups. On the other hand, the technique eliminates the often fruitful results of direct interaction among group members.

## **6.6 Decision Making by Consensus**

When a decision is made by a group, where members are face to face, every member is a potential contributor to the process of decision making. Ideally, the group should focus on making a good decision, generating resources in the group, and pooling and using the resources.

In the process of decision-making, the group may range between two extremes. In this situation, instead of being concerned with the problem on which a decision is to be made. The group members may be more concerned about the personal influence they can wield. They may use various methods of testing the strength and power different members have. It can be broadly said that decision making in a group can be either by the process of division or by the process of consensus. In the process of division, the strength of various members is tested and the group gets divided. In the process of consensus the strength of various members is pooled and brought to bear on the best possible decision.

Consensus does not necessarily mean unanimity. It means sharing of differences, listening to each other, accepting the final choice in spite of the differences, which may still exist. As a result of consensus all members of the group do not come to the same conclusion. The differences may continue. However, members have an opportunity to express such differences, discuss the rationale behind the different points of view, and have the satisfaction that the members of the group listened to them and they in turn listened to the logic put forward by the other

members. At the end of such a discussion the members come to a conclusion that one optimum solution is to be selected. And this helps them to accept one solution out of several alternatives, even though some of them may not agree with that alternative completely. The commitment of the members to the implementation of the solution is assured.

#### **6.6.1 Impediments to reaching consensus**

Although, decision making by consensus has several advantages, still there are several factors, which can impede a group from reaching to a consensus. Some of these impediments are explained in the following discussion.

##### **a) Domination**

Where there is a tendency by some members to dominate in a group and influence the decision, consensus is difficult to reach. Other members may not accept their domination and may not reach to a consensus.

##### **b) Withdrawal**

One natural result of domination by a few may be withdrawal by some of other members when they do not see an opportunity to express themselves freely and influence the process of decision making. Even if such members become silent, their silence would not mean accepting the decision. This may hinder the working of the group.

##### **c) Tendency to make quick decision**

When members of the group rush to make decisions very fast the possibility of consensus decreases. Consensus requires patience and members' inclination to pay attention to the opinions of others. This process takes time.

**d) Tug of war**

In the process of decision-making, some members use various ways to show their strength. The show of strength may either be on the basis of numerical strength or strength of argument. In such a situation, the group gets splintered. Instead of moving towards consensus, there is always a tendency to move towards division in the group. Voting is one way of testing strength, usually used in a group to find the majority and minority of opinion. Voting does not help the group to move towards consensus. It only divides the group into majority and minority, and members in the minority usually fail to commit themselves to the decision, which is taken by the majority.

**e) Bargaining**

Sometimes people, in order to get their suggestion or point of view accepted, bargain their point of view with some others so that they come to an agreement that the suggestion given by one member will be accepted in exchange of another suggestion given by another member. This kind of bargaining, trading or compromising reduces the possibility of consensus.

**6.6.2 Methods to facilitate consensus**

It is not that reaching a consensus is altogether an impossible task. There are several groups, which have endured for years by decision making on the basis of consensus. Modern research has brought several instruments and suggestions, which can help in reaching to consensus in groups. Some of the ways to facilitate group decision-making are as under.

**a) Showing concern for others**

The basis of consensus is the respect and concern people have for others. This also helps them to look for expertise and resources available with the various members.

**b) Listening**

A consequence of respect and concern for others leads people to listen carefully to what others say, instead of being obsessed with their own ideas about a problem. Listening creates a congenial atmosphere for the exchange of ideas and understanding the viewpoint of other group members.

**c) Avoiding confrontation**

When members of a group avoid confronting differences in making the choice by continuous discussion the possibility of consensus decreases. One way to avoid confrontation is to use a third party intervention or using some alternatives, where the confrontation is reduced.

**d) Identifying and using resources**

People in the group need to realize that each member is a special resource. In order to make a good decision it is necessary that all the resources are utilized. The group takes active steps to find out what the dimensions of the problem are, and if anyone in the group seem to have the necessary resources on the various dimensions. It is recognized that different members have different skills. Without necessarily formal discussions on the matters, an effective group begins to use these skills in order to perform its task effectively.

**e) Logical discussion**

When people discuss not only their own suggestions and ideas but also why they are proposing these and what the underlying

rationale of these suggestions and ideas is, movement towards a common understanding becomes easier and the group is able to move towards consensus. The group leaders must encourage members to give logical arguments and motivate them to avoid short-term and personal interests.

**f) Testing consensus**

Consensus is helped when after substantial discussion the members of the group test if there are still some disagreements, and such disagreements are allowed to be expressed and discussed. If, however, agreements are not discussed and are avoided, or are not voiced it would be difficult to develop consensus. From time to time the group may stop and see whether enough consensus exists about what is to be decided.

**g) Developing processes**

The group, which spends some time on developing the process, is able to develop consensus faster. Instead of being concerned only with the task, the group is also concerned about the way the people are feeling, whether some people have withdrawn as a result of some hot exchange of words; the number of people, speaking and the number remaining silent; the speed at which the group has been going, etc. Such matters when discussed from time to time help the group to move towards consensus.

**6.7 Summary**

Decision-making is an essential activity of every group. Although, individual decision-making is much easier, group have to learn this art. The frequency of recurrence determines whether a decision is programmed or non-programmed. A programmed decision recurs often enough for a decision rule to be developed. When a problem or decision situation has not been encountered

before the decision maker cannot rely on a previously established decision rule. Such a decision is said to be a un-programmed decision. Various approaches to decision making are the rational approach, the behavioural approach and the practical approach. The rational decision-making approach is a systematic process. It assumes that organization is economically based and managed by decision makers, who are entirely objective and have complete information. However, the basic assumption of the behavioral approach is that the decision makers often operate with bounded rationality, as against perfect rationality, as is assumed by the rational approach. Owing to the limitations of rational and behavioural approach, decision makers also rely on the practical approach, which contributes the good features of both the approaches. The physical and group factors such as physical environment, size and composition, characteristics of members, and norms and cohesiveness, have a lot of impact on the process and effectiveness of group decision-making. The most commonly used techniques for problem solving by groups are brainstorming, the nominal group technique and the Delphi technique.

Some of the ways to facilitate group decision-making are showing concern for others, listening, avoiding confrontation, identifying and using resources, logical discussion, testing consensus and developing processes.

## **6.8 Key Words**

### *Programmed Decision*

A programmed decision is the type of decision, which has to be taken in routine, for solving the reoccurring problems.

### *Unprogrammed Decisions*

Unprogrammed decisions are taken when a problem or decision situation has not been encountered earlier and the decision maker cannot rely on a previously established decision rule.

#### *Rational Decision Making Approach*

The rational decision-making approach is a systematic process. It assumes that organization is economically based and managed by decision makers, who are entirely objective and have complete information.

#### *Behavioural Decision Making Approach*

The basic assumption of the behavioral approach is that the decision makers often operate with bounded rationality, as against perfect rationality. Hence, the decision making must account for such situations as well.

#### *Delphi Technique*

The Delphi technique is a method of systematically gathering the judgments of experts for use in developing forecasts.

### **6.9 Self Assessment Questions**

1. What is a decision? What are various types of decisions made in groups?
2. What are various approaches to decision making in organizations?
3. What is the difference in the decision making process of individuals and groups?
4. Explain various techniques for group problem solving.

### **6.10 Suggested Readings**



1. Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (Paperback) by Rupert Brown, Publisher: Blackwell Publishers; 2nd Rev edition
2. Introduction to Group Dynamics (Hardcover) ,by Malcolm Knowles, Hulda Knowles , Publisher: Cambridge Book Company; Revised edition
3. An Introduction to Group Dynamics (Hardcover) by Donelson R. Forsyth ,Publisher: Thomson Brooks/Cole
4. Group dynamics: research and theory (Unknown Binding) by Dorwin Cartwright , Publisher: Row, Peterson; 2d. ed edition
5. Organizational Behavior (10th Edition) (Hardcover) by Stephen P. Robbins, Publisher: Prentice Hall; 10 edition

**Lesson No. 7**

**TEAM BUILDING**

Author: Dr. Tejinder Sharma  
Vetter : Prof Harbhajan Bansal

**Structure**

- 7.0 Objective
- 7.1 Defining team
- 7.2 Common goals
- 7.3 Characteristics Of High Performing Teams
- 7.4 Building the Winning Team
- 7.5 Essentials of Team building
- 7.6 Restricted actions for Teams
- 7.7 Managing the Norms of Informal teams
  - 7.7.1 Transforming informal team norms
- 7.8 Summary
- 7.9 Key Words
- 7.10 Self Assessment Questions
- 7.11 Suggested Readings

**7.0 Objective**

After reading this lesson, you would be able to:

- Understand the concept of a team
- Know the characteristics of a winning team
- Appreciate the strategies for building effective teams

## 7.1 Defining team

Being a social animal, man has lived in groups, ever since he descended on the earth. In the present times, the survival of mankind owes to man's ability to work as a team, which represents an evolution of a group. A team may be defined as:

*"A group organized to work together to accomplish a set of objectives that cannot be achieved effectively by individuals."*

Three things emerge from the above definition, which show the characteristics of the teams and also explain the process of team building. These characteristics are shown in the form of the following table:

TABLE 7.1 : CHARACTERISTICS OF TEAMS

A group of people	Synergy	Having one aim
Whole > Sum	Co-operation	Flexibility
Working together	Reporting to one boss	Serving one customer

In actual practice, team structures are often complicated, and people can be members of several teams, because *a team is a group of people working together towards a common goal.*

## 7.2 Common goals

The most important feature of a team is commonality of the goals. This can be shown in the form of the example of a financial services organisation, selling pensions. If we were to identify as to who are the members of the sales team, we cannot infer that they confine to those selling the financial products. All those who are a part of the common goals are the members of a sales team. Hence, the

members of the sales team would consist of all those, shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7. 2: Members of a sales team  
(on the basis of common goals)

Sales people	Sell to clients
Sales Manager	Ensures the Sales People are equipped to sell properly
Marketing Manager	Designs a product that is attractive to potential buyers
Accountants	Control the costs of the product to keep it competitively priced
Investment Analysts	Maximise the return on the client's investment, making the product more attractive to buy
Administrators	Process the applications quickly so that the client does not lose patience and move to a competitor company
Personnel	Recruit high performing sales people, and provide training to maximise sales
Stationery suppliers	Provide marketing literature that looks professional and makes the product seem attractive
Cleaning staff	Keep sales offices looking attractive, so that clients and prospects feel comfortable visiting the branches

It is important to differentiate between the groups and teams and also between the staff and the team. The differences have been shown in the form of the following tables:

TABLE 7.3 COMPARING GROUPS WITH TEAMS

#### Groups

- Little communication
- no support
- lack of vision
- exclusive cliques
- the whole is less than the sum of its parts
- seeks to hide its identity

#### Teams

- Plenty of opportunity for discussion
- plenty of support
- process of discovery supported by openness and honesty
- tactical and work groups combine easily into a single team

- leaves new members to find their own way but insists on conformity
- leader manipulates team to own ends
- the whole is greater than the sum of its parts
- seeks to discover its identity
- welcomes new members by showing them existing norms and openness to change leader seeks team decisions by serving the team as a focus for two way communication

There is a difference between the staff and team, which is shown in the form of the following table.

TABLE 7.4 COMPARING STAFF WITH TEAMS

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Staffs</b>	<b>Teams</b>
Goals and decisions	Made by the boss	Made jointly by team and boss
Assignments	Made by the boss	Made jointly by the boss and subordinates
Communications	In a meeting are primarily between the boss and a subordinate	Are open among all team members
Role of subordinate	Primarily to carry out assignments	Team members initiate action, make suggestions, and help in planning
Primary virtues	Loyalty and being a "good soldier"	Trust, helping, and creativity
Sharing of data	Data shared on the basis of what people feel the boss wants	All relevant data shared
Critical feedback	Rare and anxiety provoking	Regarded as important to improvement
Differences and conflicts	Avoided or smoothed over	Regarded as enriching, worked through
Work	Each staff person responsible for own work	Team members feel responsible for one another
Goal	Boss's primary goal is to get the job done	Team leader works to get results and develop team members

### **7.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS**

A lot of research has been conducted on finding out the characteristics of a high performing team. Although the findings of the studies are different, some of the common characteristics of a winning team are:

7.3.1 Participative Leadership

7.3.2 Aligned on Purpose

7.3.3 Task Focused

7.3.4 Shared Responsibility

7.3.5 Innovative

7.3.6 Problem Solving

7.3.7 Communicative

7.3.8 Responsive

#### **7.3.1 Participative Leadership**

Envisioning leadership and organizing leadership and a clearly defined leadership role enables people to make choices. Shared norms and shared values draw members into the teams.

#### **7.3.2 Aligned on Purpose and Vision**

Common shared purpose and a clearly shared vision among the self-directing high morale team have the goals aligned with personal goals of its members. The approach is on problem solving and not laying the blame.

#### **7.3.3 Task Focused**

The teams must remain focused on the values, on which they have been built.

#### **7.3.4 Shared Responsibility**

The team can become effective if and only if, its members share the responsibility and do not pass on the buck.

#### **7.3.5 Innovative**

The teams have to be creative and innovative to stay ahead from their competitors. Otherwise, other teams will outsmart them.

#### **7.3.6 Problem Solving**

The teams must confront with the issues and look for solutions to the problems, instead of creating more problems for the teams.

#### **7.3.7 Communicative**

Communication is a must for any team. Open communication removes the misunderstandings and helps to build cohesive teams.

#### **7.3.8 Responsive**

The team members should be responsive, not only among the team members, but also with other groups of individuals, who come in contact with the people.

### **7.4 Building the Winning Team**

"Everyone wants to feel that they are on a winning team, that the company is moving ahead, and that they are an integral part of the group." Some of the guidelines for building winning teams are suggested as follows:

#### a) Recruiting right people

Building the winning team requires more than just recruiting and hiring of talented people. It means hiring people who will work well together and developing their shared vision and commitment. Physically bringing the people together in formal group meetings for open discussion of broad-based issues improves communication and builds effective teams. The leaders of winning teams must encourage positive, informal interactions between group members, who must develop a "winning" attitude throughout the organization.

In order to have sustained performance, there is a need to watching for and quickly trying to reverse team-building problems such as jealousy, cynicism, and defensive behavior. To build the winning team, the team leader not only needs to show people what direction the team is headed in, but also convinces them to work in the direction, otherwise he cannot expect people to support him.

Specifically, a leader needs to show people:

- The vision for the future.
- The strategy for getting there.
- Why this is the best strategy.
- Every achievement that indicates this team is winning.

#### b) Physical meeting of team members

Physical meeting of the team members is an indispensable aspect of an effective team. The team leaders can provide formal and informal forums, where the team members can come together and develop shared vision and understand each other. Formal meetings are one such exercise.. Meetings, or even parties or celebrations, with as



many people as possible from the entire organization, help build a feeling of solidarity throughout the organization.

But it is also important to have everyone participate in smaller group meetings where some work is done or some decisions are made. This makes people feel that they aren't just part of some big group, but that they are an active, important part of a team. There must be interactive meeting periodically. The meeting should not be one where the leaders just make announcements and summarize the work that's been done and needs to be done. Every member of the team must have an opportunity to give feedback on substantive issues.

#### c) Getting People To Work Together

One of the most difficult part of building a winning team is encouraging positive, informal interaction between team members when the team leader is not present. This is easier said than done because people tend to get deviated in the absence of the top leadership. Effective team leaders can follow some of the following suggestions to develop the systems, which work, even in their absence.

- Having team members take part in the hiring process of new team members.
- Assigning specific projects for two team members to work on together.
- Trying to arrange for close proximity of offices.
- Creating an incentive-pay plan based on common goals such as profitability.
- Having a specific part of the salary review dependent upon "interaction with others."

- Taking the team off-site for formal meetings as well as casual get-togethers to build a sense of bonding.

d) Checking negative influences

The negative forces creep into every team-building exercise. It is the responsibility of the team leader to check the negative influences, otherwise the entire effort of team building shall be wasted. Some of the common problems of any team building exercise are:

Jealousy

Jealousy occurs when the goals of the team members are not compatible, or when one team member feels left out in terms of achievements. It is a negative state of mind and the persons cannot perform to best of their efforts, if there are some team members, who harbour this emotion. It becomes the responsibility of the team leader to check this.

Cynicism

Some people are just negative by nature. Others might feel that the team cannot possibly prosper or they might not like other teams, groups or organizations. There can be no real reasons for the dislike. People might feel like disliking others because of their nationality, ethnic origin, caste, colour, language or any such reason. These states are often irrational behaviour of the team members and can hamper the process of team building. The leader has to be sure that he is emphasizing the team's positive achievements to the group as a whole. The leader must show the power to confront any openly cynical individual and demand their behavior change at once.

## Lack of confidence

Some people lack confidence in themselves and view attacks on their opinions as attacks on themselves. Typically, they might respond with statements like "Are you telling me my fifteen years of experience does not matter?" The leader must not harm the feelings of such employees and must not point this openly. Such people might be explained to be more responsive and confident, when they meet the team leader alone.

## **7.5 Essentials of Team building**

Team building is a tedious task, which requires a lot of patience and interpersonal skills. The leaders learn the act of team building over the years. There can be no readymade tips for team building, which fit in all situations because of the diversity of each situation. Still, some of the general guidelines for building effective teams are listed as below:

- a) A way of life
- b) The responsibility of every team member
- c) A continuous process
- d) About developing a clear and unique identity
- e) Focused on a clear and consistent set of goals
- f) Concerned with the needs and ambitions of each team member recognizing the unique contribution that each individual can make

Each of these is explained in the following discussion.

a) A way of life

Team building is not an isolated exercise, which needs to be undertaken at one point. It is a continuous exercise and happens everyday and at all times. Team members and team leaders have to undertake the team building activity as a natural occurrence, which happens along with all other activities. Team members have to appreciate that building teams is a way of life because the years of efforts to build teams can be shattered by a few incidents. So all efforts to build teams must be a part of the system. At the same time, it is important to have an inbuilt check to ward off the negative influences. Only then, can the teams be effective in their functioning.

b) The responsibility of every team member

Team building is not the responsibility of any single person, or groups of persons. It is the responsibility of each and every member of the organization. Only when the team members realize the subordination of the individual goals over the team goals, they become the useful members of the teams. Leaders have to ensure that the team members understand this and feel motivated enough to be a part of the team building exercise.

c) A continuous process

As discussed earlier, team building is a continuous process and must happen at all times. The leaders must focus on building systems that enhance the comradeship and strengthen the teams. If the leaders take this as a fire fighting activity only, they are unlikely

to achieve any meaningful results. Hence, the act of team building must be a part of the mission and planning exercise.

d) About developing a clear and unique identity

Team members must feel important. They must realize that they enjoy a unique position within the team. Only then, they will be able to develop their own position and define their individual role in a team. They will realize that they contribute to achieve the team goals.

e) Focused on a clear and consistent set of goals

A team is solely guided by the goals. These goals must be clearly specified and understood by the team members. The team members work in a team only when they feel their individual goals match with the team goals. If the team goals are not communicated to them, they are likely to feel that there is a gap between their individual goals and the team goals. They might not perform effectively and might even consider leaving the team. Such developments can be disastrous for a team. The leaders have to ensure that such a situation does not arise in a team.

f) Concerned with the needs and ambitions of each team member recognizing the unique contribution that each individual can make

Although, subordination of individual goals over the team goals is often advocated, in actual practice, this cannot be sustained for very long. Each member of the team has to be understood. His needs and ambitions need to be satisfied. His individual talent must be identified and put to the best use. The unique contribution of each

member must also be acknowledged. Only when these activities are undertaken, will the teams be more effective and cohesive.

g) An awareness of the potential of the team as a unit

The team members have to understand that as a part of the team, their team is a unit, a system, and an entity. The team has to function as a system, in association with other systems. This is possible only when the team members are aware of their position and role and they appreciate that their team has a unique position in the social and business system.

h) Results oriented

No team, which is not result oriented, can expect to be successful in realizing its objectives. The results are the benchmarks of performance and have to be achieved by the teams. The team members have to be aware of the goals and must have drive of achievement, which is directly related to their propensity towards being result oriented.

i) Enjoyable

Team members shall put in their best effort, if and only if, they find their team enjoyable. They must feel pleasure in their work and also when they are in the company of their team members. This will motivate them to work more and spend more time as members of the team. The enjoyment to a member is likely to accrue only when his individual goals shall match with the organizational goals. The team leader has to build such bridges to make the task enjoyable.

## **7.6 Restricted actions for Teams**

While there are a lot of prescriptions on what the team members should do, as members of the team, there are also several negative issues that deserve attention. There are several actions, which should not be done. Otherwise, all the synergy accrued to the teams shall get wasted. Some of such issues are discussed as under:

### **a) A short term perspective**

The leader of a team should not have a short-term view. He should not be parochial in his outlook, nor should immediate gains or losses influence his decisions unduly.

### **b) Hurting peoples' feelings**

Team members must learn the task of respecting the feelings of other team members. If they hurt the feelings of others, they are unlikely to get their cooperation, thereby defeating the very purpose of making a team.

### **c) Nepotism**

Favouritism and nepotism can harm the very existence of the teams. The team leaders must give equal treatment to all their team members. In case they do not adhere to the principles of equality, the teams are likely to break away, or they might have some members, who play negative role.

### **d) Match action with words**

The words must match with the actions. Otherwise, the team members shall develop a sense of suspicion and shall not believe in what is promised to them.

The actions must reflect the team vision and the shared values.

## **7.7 Managing the Norms of Informal teams**

Informal groups are an inevitable part of every organization and the informal norms develop in every situation. In order to make effective teams, these informal norms must be clearly channelized to achieve the overall team goals. The following discussion explains how leaders can mould the norms of informal groups for team building.

### **7.7.1 Transforming informal team norms**

A team leader should attempt to encourage norms that positively affect a team's goals, and to alter those that are negative. If this is accomplished, the informal group/ team will direct its energies toward desired goals.

Three distinct stages have been identified to foster team norms that are congenial to the organization.

#### **First Stage**

The first stage involves determining what the team norms are, and then getting team members to recognize their existence and influence.

Observing the behavior patterns of the team, interviewing the team members, or asking them to identify their own norms can often accomplish this. It must be noted that people frequently respect and follow norms unconsciously.

The predetermined set of determinants for team building among informal groups is discussed as follows:



- Organizational and Personal Pride.

Satisfaction or pleasure taken in attaining personal or organizational achievements.

- Performance and Excellence.

Manner or quality of functioning when striving to meet or beat standards of performance. This includes setting personal standards when none are set/ defined.

- Teamwork and Communication.

The perception that organizational goals and objectives are communicated to and shared by members of the group. The organization has effectively shared its vision or sense of purpose so that all employees can articulate and subscribe to.

- Leadership and Supervision.

The style of management / supervision in engaging employees to deliver willingly their best towards organizational goals.

- Profitability and Cost Effectiveness.

Awareness of employees of their roles and actions to the organizations 'bottom line'.

- Interpersonal Relations.

Personal connections or dealings between or among individuals and groups.

- Customer and Client Relations.

Personal and group attitude towards clients, both internal (i.e. other departments in the case of service departments) and external suppliers and customers.

- Innovation and Creativity.

To be aware of, appreciate the need for and strive for new ways of performing a function, process, procedure or the organization's business model in terms of the need flowing from constant changes in the external environment, the need to be competitive and the need to retain customer loyalty and confidence.

- Training and Development.

The opportunities within the organization and the climate set that promote personal growth and development.

- Openness.

The willingness to promote open, honest and direct dialogue by all employees at all levels on issues that affect individuals, groups and the organization as a whole. This includes the sharing of information, respect for the diverse backgrounds and experiences of members, the absence of 'competition over territory' and the agreement of goals and levels of performance/ quality.

## **Second Stage**

Having identified the team's norms, the next stage is to measure the norms and establish a norm profile. The difference between where the team is versus where the desired norms of the group should be,

denotes the normative "gap." These gaps provide the starting point for determining where changes should occur.

### **Third Stage**

The final stage is to bring about normative change. A systematic change process consists of six steps:

- Demonstrate the importance of norms in achieving organizational and group/ team effectiveness.
- Create positive norm goals through cooperative effort.
- Establish normative change priorities.
- Determine a plan of action to bring about change.
- Implement and monitor the change strategy.
- Review the effectiveness of the strategy periodically and modify where necessary.

### **7.8 Summary**

Team building is an essential training, which every team leader has to learn. As the economies become more competitive, there shall be increased pressure on the teams to show results. This is possible only when the leaders are able to keep their teams cohesive and directed towards achieving the objectives. Some of the common characteristics of a winning team are participative Leadership, alignment of purpose, focus on task, shared responsibility, innovativeness, problem solving approach and an open communication. Responsive Team building is both a science and an art because there are scientific studies that have shown path to building effective teams. Some of the guidelines for building winning teams are recruiting right people, physical meeting of team members, getting people to work Together and checking negative influences. However, the application of the knowledge remains the

skill of the team leader. Hence, the leaders have to use their ingenuity to keep their teams at high levels of performance.

## **7.9 Key Words**

### *Team*

A group organized to work together to accomplish a set of objectives that cannot be achieved effectively by individuals."

### *Informal teams*

The groups of people, that emerge within the formal teams are known as the informal teams. When aligned with the formal teams, they can contribute significantly towards goal achievement.

### *Participative Leadership*

The leadership style where the team leader takes into account the views of others while making the decisions that influence the whole team.

## **7.10 Self Assessment Questions**

1. Define a team. How does it differ from a group?
2. What are the characteristics of winning teams?
3. What are the restricted actions, which must not happen in teams? Discuss the role of the team leader to control such actions.
4. Briefly explains how the norms of informal groups can be matched with the norms of the formal groups.

### **7.11 Suggested Readings**

1. Group Dynamics (Hardcover) by Dr. Donelson R. Forsyth  
Publisher: Wadsworth Publishing; 3rd edition
2. Making Groups Effective (Jossey Bass Business and Management Series) (Hardcover) by Alvin Zander , Publisher: Jossey-Bass; 2 edition
3. by Susan A. Wheelan, Publisher: Allyn & Bacon; 2 edition
4. An Introduction to Group Dynamics (Hardcover) by Donelson R. Forsyth ,Publisher: Thomson Brooks/Cole
5. Team Work and Group Dynamics (Paperback) by Greg L. Stewart, Charles C. Manz, Henry P. Sims , Publisher: Wiley
6. Group Dynamics for Teams (Paperback)by Daniel Levi,  
Publisher: SAGE Publications; 1st edition