



Group Dynamics

Students are often working in groups. Sometimes these groups are able to work effectively and efficiently to accomplish their tasks. However, group settings can also lead to conflicts, which can detract from productivity.

When examining the concept of group dynamics, it is important to recognize that a group is not simply two or more people who happen to be working together to complete a project. When developed properly, the group process leads to a spirit of cooperation, coordination, and common goals, in addition to fostering an environment of exploration and innovation. Read on to find ways that you can help foster positive dynamics within your group.

Who's Who In Your Group?

Think about the personalities, work styles, and leadership styles of the members of your organization. Who would be best suited to perform the following tasks? Why?

(note that it is expected that some people would fill more than one category. Be conscious, however, that if one person is filling the majority of the categories that you may need to re-evaluate the balance within your organization).

Managing the budget:

Facilitating Meetings:

Organizing Events:

Advertising:

Motivating/energizing group members:

Resolving conflict within the group:

Communicating and collaborating with other organizations:

Communicating with administrators :

Taking care of administrative tasks (paperwork, minutes, etc.):

Remember that everyone brings a different leadership style to the table and one style is no better or worse than another. How can you and your group members work to ensure that the many different leadership styles compliment each other rather than produce conflict? How can you also make sure that each person is engaged in the group or a group activity in their best capacity?

Questions to Ponder....

When your group is in the forming stage, ask yourself:

- How can I make all members feel welcome?
- How can I promote an open and safe group environment?
- What can I do to foster unity among the group members?

When your group is in the storming stage, ask yourself:

- What members are gravitating towards which roles?
- How can I help facilitate this process?
- How can I ensure that no group members are left without a role?

When your group is in the norming stage, ask yourself:

- How can I help facilitate cooperation among the members?
- To whom can I delegate which tasks?
- How can I best collect, compile, and utilize the feedback and ideas of group members?

When your group is in the performing stage, ask yourself:

- How can I maximize the productivity of each group member?
- Which members are emerging as potential leaders for future projects?

When your group is in the adjourning stage, ask yourself:

- Did the group accomplish its goals? What worked? What didn't work?
- How can I provide opportunities for closure and reflection?

"The productivity of a work group seems to depend on how the group members see their own goals in relation to the goals of the organization."

~Kenneth H. Blanchard



Quick Tips

Pieces of Leadership
brochures are available on
the following topics:



Tips for the Wesleyan Leader

Budgeting
Communication
Conflict Resolution
Delegation
Facilitation
Goal Setting
Group Dynamics
Ice Breakers/Team Builders
Mission Statements
Motivation
Officer Transition
Peer Supervision
Program Planning
Qualities of a Good Leader
Running a Good Meeting
Stress Management
Time Management
Wellness

*The information provided in this brochure
was adapted from:*

"Groups That Work" by Gerard M. Blair,
George Mason University Center for
Service and Leadership website,
&
"25 Activities for Developing Team Leaders"

For more information on the topics
listed above or to access the
resources in our
Leadership Library,
please visit the

Office of Student Activities and
Leadership Development

Located on the
First Floor of the
Usdan University Center
860-685-2460

or check out our website at

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/stuact/>

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Groups are commonly seen as going through a five-stage developmental process.

Those five steps are as follows:

1. **Forming:** This stage occurs when the group first comes together. Group members tend to be more hesitant in this stage and look to the group leader for direction.
2. **Storming:** This stage involves the definition of members' roles. Conflict is likely to arise during this stage, as group members begin to get to know each other, voice their opinions and ideas, and figure out how they fit into the group's "big picture."
3. **Norming:** In this stage, group members have readily defined roles and feel more comfortable sharing ideas and giving feedback. Members of the group feel secure in this stage and cooperation takes precedence over conflict.
4. **Performing:** Once it has reached this phase, the group has developed its own system of functioning and problem-solving. The group's identity is complete and its morale is high. This is the stage in which members are at their most interdependent and productivity is at its highest.
5. **Adjourning:** This stage occurs when the group's work is finished and the group disbands. Closure may be necessary for some group members at this stage, as they may feel apprehension about parting with the group.

As a leader, it is important that you are able to recognize which stage your group is functioning in so that you can best help them move towards accomplishing the goals of the group. The "Questions to Ponder" section outlines some helpful questions to help your group move through the stages and move towards greater productivity, cooperation, and fulfillment.

*Building your Leadership
one piece at a time...*