

FIFTH EDITION

# communicating in

APPLICATIONS AND SKILLS

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Adams \* Galanes

# Communicating IN groups

## APPLICATIONS and SKILLS

**FIFTH**  
EDITION

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# Communicating IN groups

APPLICATIONS  
and SKILLS

**FIFTH**  
EDITION

*We dedicate this book to our students,  
who teach us as much as we teach them.*

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## PREFACE

*People can be motivated to be good not by telling them that hell is a place where they will burn, but by telling them it is an unending committee meeting. On judgment day, the Lord will divide people by telling those on His right hand to enter His kingdom and those on His left to break into small groups.*

**Rev. Robert Kennedy**

This quote, given to us by a student, expresses precisely how many people feel about participating in groups. In fact, it describes some of our own experiences! But the quote's sentiment focuses attention on the torture that participating in small groups can produce—and it ignores the uplifting, energizing effect that can also occur through group participation. Group participation *can* feel like torture, but it can also be incredibly rewarding and a lot of fun. Both of us have had the experience of being in a group that so excited us, made us feel alive, gave us a way to express ourselves, helped us connect with others, and so enabled us to accomplish a tremendous amount of work, that we didn't want to see the group end. Yes, that is a rare occurrence. But in this book, we hope to give students tools to help them attain those ideals by providing insight about how groups work and practical suggestions for applying those insights.

This book is designed for the first or second year student who may not have had a prior communication course and who may never take a subsequent course—but who *must* work in groups because that is the nature of corporate, educational, and civic participation in this day and age. Two overarching goals guide our writing. First, being able to work effectively in groups is not a luxury—it's a necessity. Our introductory students want to cut to the chase; they want to know what works *right now*. That is the reason for our distinctly *practical* focus of *Communicating in Groups*. Although this text uses the same research foundation as our more advanced text, *Effective Group Discussion*, we strive here to provide information in a way that is both useful and immediately usable. Second, we want students to recognize that effective group work is, to a great extent, a matter of *communication behavior*, not a matter of personality or fate. Thus, it is to a great extent within their own control. We want students to start thinking about their own communicative choices in groups and to have the tools to make wise choices so they can make the groups they belong to as rewarding and productive as possible.

To meet our goals, we have chosen to use an informal writing style and to provide many examples from our own and others' experiences. We also report research findings in much less detail, with more synthesis and distillation of findings, fewer footnotes, and less evaluation of competing theories than in our other text. This allows readers to focus on what is usually more important to them—the practical application of the research. Finally, we refer to ourselves, Kathy and Gloria, frequently throughout the text. We think of our readers as individuals with whom we are on a first-name basis and we encourage you to think of us the same way, as if we were members of the same small group.



## Overview of the Text

With each revision, the hardest thing we have to do is decide what to include and what to leave out. We try to focus on what we believe are the most important concepts, particularly those that will be most useful and practical for students to understand. In this edition, we have increased our coverage of technological changes that affect small groups, of generational differences that can impair the ability of group members to work together well, and of the socialization process as members come and go. We continue to use general systems theory as our structural framework because we believe it provides a framework that is easy to grasp. As before, the chapters are ordered in a way that is logical to us but that does not preclude other methods of organizing a small group course. Each chapter is self-contained and can be taken in an order different from what we provide here.

**Part One** provides basic information students need to understand how groups function. Chapter 1 introduces some basic terms encountered throughout the book, shows how to classify groups according to their major purpose, and introduces the concept of ethical behavior of group members. Chapter 2 presents general systems theory as a framework for understanding the complexity of group communication. We provide specific illustrations of systems concepts throughout the rest of the book as well.

**Part Two** provides the foundation for understanding communication in groups. Chapter 3, which may present review material for some readers, discusses basic communication theory, including what communication is, what constitutes effective listening, and how people interpret what they see and hear. Chapter 4 discusses the specifics of verbal and nonverbal communication. Chapter 5 discusses the creative and critical thinking skills necessary for effective group problem solving. We believe creative and critical thinking are at the heart of the group problem-solving process and that students should know something about these processes before understanding problem solving in general. Chapter 6 describes the problem-solving process and introduces the Procedural Model of Problem Solving as a helpful guideline to follow.

**Part Three** focuses on the group's throughput processes. Chapter 7 explains how a group develops into a team from an initial collection of individuals. Leadership concepts are introduced here and expanded on later. Chapter 8 celebrates group diversity, which is group strength but also presents challenges for members who must manage the diversity of member motivation, learning style, personality, culture, gender, generation, and ethnicity. The chapter also offers SYMLOG as a technique for discussing and capitalizing on member diversity. Chapter 9 explains why group conflicts occur and how they can be managed so that the group benefits instead of suffers. Chapter 10 provides a comprehensive picture of what group leaders are expected to do and also gives suggestions for applying leadership principles effectively and ethically.

**Part Four** presents information about oral presentations, the culmination of much group effort. In Chapter 11, students will learn about the types of oral presentations, how to prepare effective presentations, and criteria for evaluating presentations. We wish to acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Hal Bochin (California State University, Fresno) and Robin McGehee (College of the Sequoias—Visalia, California) to this chapter. Dr. Bochin wrote the original version and Robin McGehee revised the chapter

for us. Finally, the **appendix** presents information about a number of techniques a member or outside observer can use to gather information about a problem-solving group and help it improve its performance.

## Features

**Case Studies:** Each chapter begins with a case study that illustrates several of the major points we make throughout the chapter. These studies are based on our own experiences, situations we've read or heard about, and examples our students have given us. Each case study is a story—and stories will help you recognize and remember the chapter's main concepts.

**Apply Now Boxes:** Practical application of information is one of our main goals, and the Apply Now features provide opportunities for you to apply the concepts in the chapters to the examples found in the boxes.

**New! Ethnical Dilemma Boxes:** Being a member of a group means you have to balance your individual needs with those of the group, and sometimes those needs come into conflict. The Ethnical Dilemma boxes invite you to give more thought to typical ethical dilemmas and to think carefully about what you would do.

**New! Media and Technology Boxes:** Media and technology are changing the world around us and changing our interactions in small group communication. Media boxes are designed to help you discover how the Internet can enhance your group participation by providing information about using the chat room for GSS, socialization in online groups, and online support groups.

**New! Running Glossary:** Key terms are boldfaced in the text and defined in the margin next to the narrative to help you identify important terms and concepts.

**Tables, Figures, Cartoons:** We provide numerous summaries, examples, and humorous illustrations. These visual summaries help serve as study aids, provide practical suggestions at a glance, and also help you find the humor in many small group situations.

**Learning Aids:** Each chapter begins with a list of objectives that highlights the important information in the chapter and concludes with summaries, bulleted points that summarize the most important ideas in the chapter. Exercises at the end of each chapter provide additional ways to think about and apply the information.

**New! Online Learning Center and Small Group Supersite:** The icons at the end of each chapter and in the margins guide students to additional activities on the Web including interactive quizzes, glossary flashcards, and weblinks.

## Resources for Instructors:

**Instructor's Manual:** This manual provides exercises, sample syllabi, writing assignments, a list of transparency masters, and a test bank to help faculty, from first-time small group instructors to experienced ones, structure the course in ways that correspond with their teaching goals.



**Videos:** Two videos accompany the text. The first, *Communicating in Groups: Short Takes*, provides numerous brief video examples to help students visualize a number of concepts. The second, *Communicating Effectively in Small Groups*, provides four extended small group scenarios that are appropriate for class discussion or written analysis. Icons in the text guide students and instructors to the video clips.

**Web Sites:** The *Online Learning Center* and *Small Group Web Site* offer book-specific exercises, quizzes, supplemental content, and up-to-date links to sites with useful information for small group communication for both students and instructors.

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# Orientation to Small Group Systems

## P

art One introduces you to the study of small groups. In Chapter 1 we explain why small groups are important to understand and define many of the terms you will need in your study of small groups. We discuss the types of small groups you are likely to experience, and we explain the participant-observer perspective used throughout the book. Chapter 2 presents you with a framework, general systems theory, to help organize the many concepts important to understanding how groups function.