CREATING EFFECTIVE GROUPS

THE ART OF SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION

RANDY FUJISHIN

THIRD EDITION

Creating Effective Groups

The Art of Small Group Communication

THIRD EDITION

Randy Fujishin

常州大学山书馆
藏书章

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham · Boulder · New York · Toronto · Plymouth, UK

Published by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

10 Thornbury Road, Plymouth PL6 7PP, United Kingdom

Copyright © 2013 by Rowman & Littlefield

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Fujishin, Randy.
Creating effective groups : the art of small group communication / Randy Fujishin.—Third edition.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4422-2249-6 (cloth : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-1-4422-2250-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-1-4422-2251-9 (electronic)
1. Small groups. 2. Communication in small groups. 3. Group decision making. I. Title.
HM736.F85 2013
302.3'4—dc23 2013018304

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

OTHER BOOKS BY RANDY FUJISHIN

Gifts from the Heart

Creating Effective Communication

Discovering the Leader Within

The Natural Speaker

Your Ministry of Conversation

Natural Bridges

For Vicky,
my gift for this lifetime.

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com

Preface

WORKING in groups is a part of your life. Whether you're the CEO of a corporation, the chairperson of a committee, a volunteer in a fund-raising group, the manager of a work team, or the head of a family reunion planning committee, you will be working with others in groups to solve problems.

The degree of success or failure these groups experience is, to a large extent, up to you. Whether you realize it or not, your participation in a group influences the effectiveness and productivity of that group. Every word you utter and every gesture you make can have an effect upon the other group members. One harsh word or angry glance can send a group into confusion and conflict. One kind word or gesture of support can cultivate cohesion, encourage cooperation, and even bring healing to a group. One act can change the direction and destiny of any problem-solving group. You can help create an effective group no matter where you are.

Working with groups, however, is one of the most demanding activities we engage in during our life. Very few of us ever receive training in group problem solving and decision making. Additionally, most of us enter into a group problem-solving effort with little or no formal communication skills training. Finally, very few of us possess the enthusiasm and optimism necessary to guide, encourage, and even inspire a group to be successful.

The purpose of *Creating Effective Groups* is to provide you with the fundamental knowledge and skills to communicate more effectively and interact more productively in any small group problem-solving activity. This text was designed to give you a simple yet comprehensive introduction to the study of small group communication, group decision making, group dynamics, leadership, or team building for college and industry.

Several features of this book distinguish it from other small group communication texts. First, *Creating Effective Groups* focuses on fundamental concepts and practical skills, without getting bogged down in lengthy theoretical discussions. Second, it is based on the idea that every group member, not just the leader, contributes in significant ways in creating the task and social dimensions of any group. Third, the writing style is warm, friendly, and encouraging, which will keep you engaged and

involved in the learning process. Fourth, utilizing the author's counseling as well as communication studies training, the psychological factors and variables of group interaction are discussed. Finally, each chapter begins with real-life stories that illustrate the need for the skills and concepts presented in the chapter.

Each chapter of *Creating Effective Groups* will provide you with the opportunity to practice, develop, and implement a variety of communication skills in the small group setting, so that your group will be effective and successful in solving problems.

You will also be given specific ways to increase your awareness, sensitivity, and supportiveness of the needs and feelings of others in your group. For what good is a group if it accomplishes its assigned tasks, but injures or diminishes the spirit of its people? To create a truly effective group, you must be attentive and responsive to the task and social dimension of the group. This book will enable you to accomplish both tasks, so you can create effective groups in your life.

I would like to thank Charles Harmon, executive editor at Rowman & Littlefield, for his guidance and assistance in the production of this third edition.

Steve Richmond has provided me with spiritual encouragement, good conversations on the road, and an introduction to the joys of riding a motorcycle to faraway places. Thank you, Steve.

And special thanks goes to Paul Sanders for being my good friend and brother for these past three decades.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation, gratitude, and love to my wife, Vicky, and our sons, Tyler and Jared. They have created the loving home that is the best place in the world for me.

Contents

Preface xi

CHAPTER 1 **Working in a Group** 1

Working in Groups 2
Four Elements of a Problem-Solving Group 3
The Small Group as a System 4
The Power of One 6
Characteristics of Groups 7
The Power of Diversity 13
Individual and Group Exercises 16

CHAPTER 2 **Discovering Yourself** 19

Being Open to Self-Discovery 20
Spending Time by Yourself 21
Self-Discovery Inventories 23
Speaking Kindly to Yourself 27
Accepting Yourself 30
Accepting Others 30
Critically Thinking About Yourself as a Communicator 31
Individual and Group Exercises 33

CHAPTER 3 **Expressing Yourself Clearly** 35

Communication Is a Learned Behavior 36
Five Roles That Prevent Clear Expression 37
The Communication Process 38
I-Statements 42

Four Levels of Communication 43
Gender Differences in Conversational Strategies 45
Guidelines for Speaking Clearly 47
Reducing Anxiety When Speaking 49
Defensive vs. Supportive Group Climates 51
Individual and Group Exercises 55

CHAPTER 4 **Listening for Understanding** 57

The Importance of Listening 58
The Process of Listening 58
Poor Listening Styles 59
Barriers to Listening 60
Acceptance: A Requirement for Listening 61
Listening for Understanding: Active Listening 63
Advantages of Active Listening 68
Guidelines for Active Listening 69
Intercultural Awareness 70
S.O.A.R. Technique 73
Individual and Group Exercises 76

CHAPTER 5 **Problem Solving in Groups** 79

Myths of Small Group Problem Solving 80
Decision-Making Techniques 82
Discussion Questions 86
The Standard Problem-Solving Agenda 87
The Circular Nature of Problem Solving 91
Being More Creative 92
Individual and Group Exercises 95

CHAPTER 6 **Preparing for Discussion** 97

You Don't Know Everything 98
We Can Always Know More 99
Where to Research 99
What to Research 103
Constructing an Information Sheet 105
Using Visual Aids 105
Testing Evidence and Reasoning 107
Recognizing Logical Fallacies 111
Ethical Communication 113
Your Time Management 116
Individual and Group Exercises 119

CHAPTER 7 **Guiding Discussion** 121

Guiding Discussion to a Shared Path 122
Task-Guiding Behaviors 123
Social-Guiding Behaviors 126
Being an Effective Follower 128
Individual and Group Exercises 131

CHAPTER 8 **Leading a Group** 133

What Is Leadership? 134
Approaches to Leadership 134
The Attitude of the Servant Leader 138
Leading an Effective Meeting 140
Impromptu Speaking 144
Taking Care of Yourself as the Leader 148
Individual and Group Exercises 150

CHAPTER 9 **Building a Cohesive Group** 153

The Social Dimension 154
Feeling Successful 155
Feeling Connected 157
Feeling Valued 159
Feeling Supported 161
Trusting Others 162
Groupthink: When Groups Are Too Cohesive 164
Individual and Group Exercises 166

CHAPTER 10 **Managing Conflict** 167

A Different Approach to Conflict 168
Myths of Conflict 169
Advantages of Conflict 170
Three Types of Group Conflict 171
Dealing with Procedural Conflict 172
Dealing with Substantive Conflict 173
Dealing with Interpersonal Conflict 175
Specific Interventions for Dysfunctional Behavior 177
The Spirit of Collaboration 181
Forgiveness 185
Individual and Group Exercises 188

Afterword 191
Resources 193
Index 197
About the Author 201

CHAPTER 1

Working in a Group

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.

—MARCEL PROUST

THE best journeys in life provide us with new ways of seeing the world. Whether it's a month-long expedition to the Himalayas or a thirty-minute visit with an old friend, we come away from these experiences with a greater understanding and appreciation of others and ourselves. We are changed. With new eyes, we see that we are capable of becoming more than we once believed—that we can be freer, happier, and stronger than we once thought.

The best journeys in life, we discover, bring us closer to our truer selves.

One such journey took place for me in a cramped, cheerless conference room in Santa Barbara many years ago. I was a part-time employee at a small electronics company during my sophomore year of college, and I was asked to participate in a problem-solving group that would recommend ways to boost employee morale.

My previous experience with problem-solving groups was limited to high school student government and two college group projects in psychology. All three experiences proved frustrating. The meetings were disorganized, adversarial, and long. Invariably one person would monopolize the discussion, while the rest of us would roll our eyes and watch the clock. We accomplished very little. At the end of these meetings, I often left the room feeling confused, frustrated, and angry.

So when I arrived at our first meeting in that small, cluttered conference room in Santa Barbara, I was not expecting to experience anything different. I was the youngest of the seven-member group. The other six were full-time employees in their 30s and 40s. I felt inadequate and unnecessary. Before we sat down, the team leader introduced himself to me and offered me a soft drink. Once the meeting began, I was surprised by the organized flow of the discussion. The leader skillfully kept us on track, occasionally summarized the ideas that were being considered,

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com

and often complimented us for contributing other ideas. He even asked me for my thoughts a number of times as I sat silently watching the dance of the discussion.

Before I knew it, the leader was highlighting the main proposals we had generated, previewing the next step in the process, and thanking us for our work. That first meeting ended in less than one hour!

There were five more meetings after this initial session, and each one ran as smoothly as the first. We had our moments of disagreement and conflict during the six hours, but our team leader was skillful in guiding the discussion and accepting of our differences, and insightful in focusing and synthesizing our ideas.

In the end, I no longer regarded working in groups as something to be avoided. Rather, working in groups was something that could be productive, exciting, and even fun. Because of that, I saw a different world and a different me.

This chapter will help you understand the basic nature and process of any problem-solving group you will participate in or lead. The most important concept you should keep in mind as you work with small groups is that you, one individual member of a group, can make a difference. Your individual contributions during the life of a group can help make or break a group, so strive to be positive, constructive, and encouraging in all that you do. Your efforts can contribute to creating effective groups.

Working in Groups

Since that journey into the conference room, I have worked with a variety of problem-solving groups, both as a leader and as a participant. As a college instructor, corporate consultant and trainer, and clinical therapist for over twenty-five years, I have worked with hundreds of groups. Of course, not every group runs as smoothly as the one I just described. In fact, I believe that problem solving in small groups can be one of the most challenging activities. But I am also convinced that you can learn skills and discover strengths within yourself to make this process more effective and rewarding.

Working in groups is a part of life. Whether you're the vice president of marketing, a member of a PTA group, or the head of the high school reunion planning committee, you will be working with others in small groups to solve problems.

At first glance, this activity may seem easy. All you do is sit around a table, talk, and accomplish things. What could be easier? But rather than experiencing unselfish cooperation, responsible preparation, and open communication in our problem-solving efforts, we are often shocked by the lack of cooperation, the inadequacy of preparation, and the poor communication skills of group members. If we are honest, we would also have to admit to our own inabilities and lack of understanding of this complicated process called group problem solving.

> A life of frustration is inevitable for any coach whose main enjoyment is winning.
>
> CHUCK NOLL

The purpose of this book is to provide you with a basic understanding of solving problems in a small group and the skills necessary to participate in and lead effective group discussions.

Four Elements of a Problem-Solving Group

A problem-solving group is three or more people who share a common task, interact face-to-face, and influence one another. Let's consider each element.

Three or More People

The minimum number of individuals needed to constitute a small group is three people. Two people do not make a group because their interaction is that of a couple, or dyad. In a dyad, one person speaks, the other listens and responds, and then the original speaker considers what is being said. No third individual witnesses the event or influences the interaction. A dyad normally encourages more self-disclosure, simply because no audience or third party is present.

Most groups have little control over the number of participants. The size of the group might be determined by group policy, management, available people, or the size of the meeting room. Group membership can range from three to thirty people or more.

I believe the ideal number of members in a small group is five to seven. In a group this size, each member is encouraged to speak without the imposition of a large number of individuals serving as an audience. Also, a group of five to seven provides more input than smaller groups, while maintaining a comfortable level of intimacy that larger groups often lack. In this book, we'll examine and discuss groups of five to seven people.

Sharing a Common Task

The second essential element of a problem-solving group is that the group shares a problem it feels is worth solving. Whether it's brainstorming ways to generate money, selecting a candidate for a committee, or planning a coworker's retirement dinner, there is an identified task or goal the group must accomplish. That task is the primary purpose for the existence of the group.

Interacting Face-to-Face

The third element of a problem-solving group is that group members interact face-to-face. This means they will be able to see one another's faces. Usually, this meeting will occur in the same room with all members physically present.

But the advent of video technology, video teleconferencing, and the Internet permits the group members to see and hear one another without being physically present

in the same room. Teleconferencing still satisfies our face-to-face criterion, although most of the nonverbal communication occurring in such interactions is lost. Nonverbal communication is all communication that is neither spoken nor written; it includes such variables as body movement, paralanguage (or the way we speak), clothing, punctuality, gestures, distancing or proxemics, facial expressions, use of time, and seating arrangements. Research has consistently reminded us that nonverbal communication has more impact on the receiver of a message than words themselves.

Ideally, the problem-solving group meets around a single table, thereby providing as much nonverbal information as possible. Being physically close to other human beings provides an immeasurable advantage as you interact and communicate. It's always better to be able to see the face and the body of the person you're interacting with, rather than hearing a tinny voice over a phone receiver, because without the nonverbal cues, much information about content and speaker can be lost.

Influencing One Another

This final element is fundamental to the definition of a problem-solving group. A group member does not exist and operate in a vacuum, isolated from the other members. Each member's statements and behavior affect every other group member in some way, be it small or great. A thoughtful compliment, a subtle criticism, a raised eyebrow, or a complaining moan can communicate a message of monumental proportions, and its effect can last a lifetime.

The reason people have gathered in groups to solve problems since the beginning of recorded history is that they benefit from the pooled skills, knowledge, resources, and experience provided by the group. The group, with its collective resources, usually stands a greater chance for survival and success.

> Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.
>
> ALBERT SCHWEITZER

An individual is also influenced and affected by the other group members. You can learn from their information and grow from their suggestions, be persuaded by their arguments and challenged by their proposals, be hurt by their remarks and healed by their praises. You can be deflated by others' bickering and inspired by their encouragement. Each member influences and is influenced by other group members, whether he or she acknowledges this fact or not.

The Small Group as a System

A common illusion is to think we are separate from the other members of the group. We tend to see our individual needs, behaviors, responses, and communication as separate, unconnected to those of our group members. Most of our behavior and

thinking are self-motivated, and we often lack awareness of the intricate and profound connections the group has established in its web of interactions.

There are two ways to look at group interactions. The first way sees each member as distinct and disconnected from any substantial and meaningful tie with the other people, like lone cowboys meeting on a hill to chat, then galloping off in different directions. In other words, I enter into the group being me, and I leave the group being me. Nothing has changed in me, except that I've spent some time with other people.

A second way of viewing group interaction is as if the group was a living organism. We are each a part of this living organism. You're the heart, I'm the lungs, and the other members serve their respective functions of the body. When something happens to one part, all the other parts feel the effects. This is the essence of the systems perspective of group interaction and is valuable in understanding and appreciating small group process.

> We are all connected to one another in ways both large and small. To deny this is to turn your back on one of life's greatest truths.
>
> KARL MENNINGER

A system is a collection of interdependent parts arrayed in such a way that a change in one of its components will effect changes in all the other components. The emphasis in a systems perspective is not on the individual members, but rather on the group as a whole. Any group of people working together to solve a problem meets this definition of a system. Now we'll consider four characteristics of a system: interdependence, mutual influence, adaptation, and equifinality.

Interdependence

The first characteristic of a system is interdependence. Interdependence means that each group member depends on all the other members in one way or another. An obvious example is the absence of four of the five members at a meeting. Even though you are present, the absence of the other group members makes it impossible for you to participate in the meeting. Another example is a group member not researching or producing a critical piece of information the group needs in order to proceed. One member's behavior, or lack of behavior, prevents the entire group from progressing. In many ways, you are connected to and dependent upon the actions of the other group members.

Yet once the individual members form a working group, they acquire a collective life. The group can take on characteristics—productivity, creativity, and responsiveness—that may not be characteristic of any one individual member. The individuals can often become energized by the collective whole. They can achieve more productivity than any member could realize alone. This is often referred to as synergy—the group product is usually superior to the best individual product. In other words, two heads are better than one.

Mutual Influence

The second characteristic of a system is mutual influence. Mutual influence implies that cause and effect are interchangeable. Each action or behavior serves as a response to a previous behavior and a stimulus for a future action. This characteristic of systems theory makes any attempt to assign blame for any problematic behavior pointless, because that behavior was in response to a previous behavior. An example of this would be the "nag/withdraw" syndrome. A wife withdraws because her husband nags. But the husband insists he nags because she withdraws. Oftentimes, it is pointless to assign blame, to point the finger at who started this whole mess, because the behaviors are so intertwined. Rather than blame, the wife and the husband should explore ways to alter or modify the pattern of "nag/withdraw." The focus is on modifying behavior patterns instead of seeking to blame or punish.

Adaptation

Adaptation means that a system will seek to adapt to fit the demands of a changing environment. The group's flexibility to modify its procedures, rules, communication patterns, even its way of thinking and feeling, is indicative of its ability to survive and is required for its overall health. The problem-solving group must remain flexible and willing to change in order to cope with the changing environment (people, issues, and circumstances). Groups that are rigid, dogmatic, and unwilling to explore and discover new ways of operating are doomed to mediocrity and often failure. The flexible group is a healthy group.

Equifinality

Finally, the fourth characteristic of a system is equifinality. Equifinality is the ability of a group to accomplish a goal in many ways and from many starting points. The group must accept the fact that there are many ways to accomplish a goal or task, not just one right way. The concept of equifinality opens up the possibility and potential for creative approaches to solving problems, which includes seeing the "problem" from a variety of viewpoints. Many roads lead to the "good life." The secret is discovering the one that feels right to you.

The Power of One

Every behavior of each individual has its effect on the group—regardless of whether the behavior is negative and counterproductive, or positive and productive. In other words, your behavior, be it negative or positive, influences the group's interaction and final product. The beauty of a systems perspective on group process is that it serves as a reminder that you have the power to influence and determine the direction and outcome of the group.

> Whatever the ups and downs of detail within our limited existence, the larger whole of life is primarily beautiful.
>
> GREGORY BATESON

Peter Senge supports this idea of the power of one in his book, *The Fifth Dimension: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organizations.* He believes that systems thinking is the key to understanding how groups and organizations work—the idea that all the parts of a group or organization are ultimately connected to one another and that "low leverage change can shift large structures within an organization." Senge encourages us to discover small ways to participate and contribute to actually affect and change large organizations and institutions. Your individual participation can play a very important role in creating an effective group.

Characteristics of Groups

To better understand how your individual participation influences the effectiveness of a group, you will need to become familiar with the basic characteristics of groups.

Group Formation

Whenever I see a group of businesspeople in a meeting, a cluster of Boy Scouts pitching tents at a campground, or a group of protesters picketing city hall, I am reminded why individuals join others to form groups—because each member receives something personally from his or her affiliation with the group. People join groups for a variety of reasons. William Schutz believes there are three basic needs that motivate individuals to become members of a group. He identifies these needs as inclusion, control, and affection.

Inclusion is the individual's need to feel wanted or to be a part of something bigger than himself. He wants to feel "in" and not "left out." The need for inclusion describes our desire to belong, to fit in, to be valued, and to be. We want to count, to matter. Inclusion in a group can often validate our worth in the world.

We want to be included in certain groups because we are attracted to the group's activities or even to the group members—not attraction in the sense of romance and love, but in terms of likeness and affinity. We join groups because of similarity in beliefs, ethnicity, economic status, or age. People join religious, social activist, or flying saucer clubs because of common beliefs. Others join groups such as the Japanese American Citizenship League, NAACP, and Mexican-American Youth Association for their ethnic similarities. Membership in a country club, the Millionaires Club, or a homeless shelter can be motivated by economic likeness. An individual might desire to join a group to participate in the activities. Groups such as a social-dancing club, a fraternity or sorority, a weight-lifting group, or a bird-watching club provide opportunities for people to gather with others and feel included.

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com