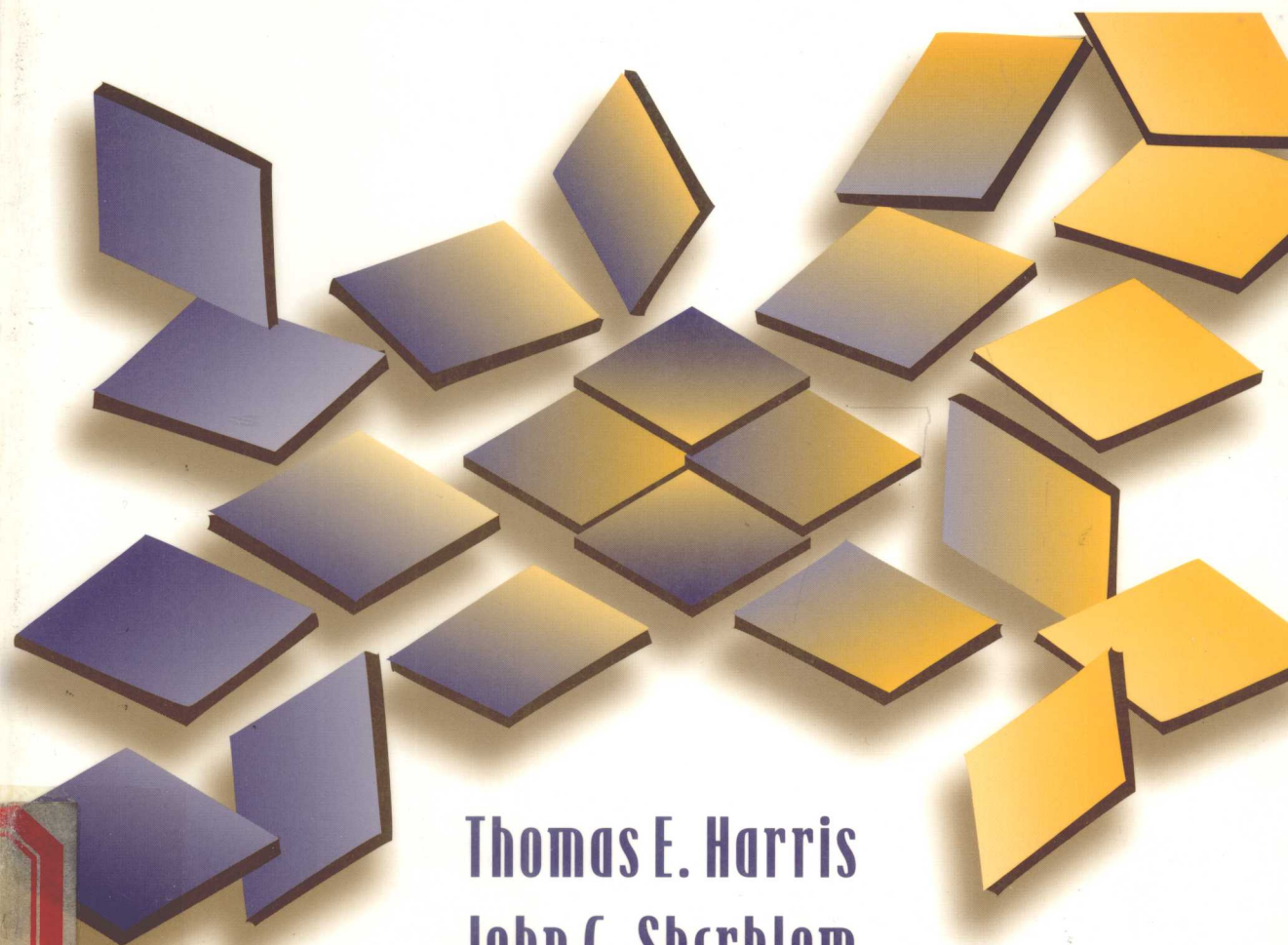


SMALL GROUP

— a n d —

TEAM COMMUNICATION



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Small Group and Team Communication

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P R E F A C E

We have worked to ground this text in the scholarly research of communication while integrating real-world examples and hypothetical situations into the discussion of each chapter's topic to make them readable, interesting, and relevant. The book uses systems theory as a basic orientation to describe small group communication as open and complex systems. In addition, it presents several perspectives for understanding group communication within this systems framework, including a focus on diversity, creativity, and teams. Diversity is treated in a chapter and then integrated into topics throughout the book, connecting diversity to communication in small groups and presenting a functional model that focuses upon how diversity can strengthen a group and its ability to perform tasks. Creativity is connected to being a group member and presented with a set of problem-solving tools that are useful to facilitating creativity in small groups. The Team chapter relates group communication to the business world, showing the importance of groups and teams beyond the classroom and school through the use of multiple examples.

Special Features

Each chapter begins with a short quotation or vignette and ends with a discussion exercise. The quotations and vignettes introduce the chapter topics in thought-provoking ways, to engage the reader and stimulate a lively classroom discussion. Whether it poses Stewart Brand's question to Gregory Bateson about the color of a chameleon on a mirror to introduce the concept of systems of interaction (Chapter 2), Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" routine to introduce listening (Chapter 7), or Thoreau's famous telling of the ants' battle in *Walden* to introduce conflict management (Chapter 12), the vignettes, quotations, and other examples introduce the chapters' concepts and provide entry points for discussion. At the end of each chapter, exercises such as "the new truck" exercise that works with group norms and roles (Chapter 3), the "diversity and living together" exercise that examines diversity of living habits (Chapter 5), and the "to catch a spy" exercise that looks at verbal and nonverbal communication (Chapter 6) are designed to move beyond the reading, in an enjoyable and engaging way, into an application and experience of the concepts presented.

The Chapters

Chapter 1 starts with The Rolling Stones' 1997, \$89.3 million Bridges to Babylon tour to introduce the concepts of the power of groups—symbolic behavior, shared meaning, interpersonal attraction, attitude similarity, need complementarity, need for affiliation, and commitment to group goals and activities. The chapter looks at

the founding of the Sony Corporation and of Hewlett-Packard Corporation, and ends with an example of the invention of the light bulb to stimulate a discussion of what constitutes a group and how many people's work goes into a single invention or creation.

Chapter 2 begins with Stewart Brand's posing of a riddle to Gregory Bateson about the color of a chameleon placed on a mirror. It uses this example to introduce the concepts of systems of interaction, of general systems theory's conceptions of open systems (wholeness, synergy, openness, transformation, interdependence, feedback, entropy, equifinality) and complex systems theory (quantum change, double-loop learning, sensitivity to initial conditions, strange attractors, phase space, bifurcation points, irreversibility). The chapter ends with an exercise discussing the systems principles involved in training elephants at the San Diego Zoo.

Chapter 3 introduces the concepts of group norms, roles, cohesiveness, and groupthink through an example of a surgical nurse working in a hospital. It ends with a role-play exercise in which participants collectively decide who gets a new company truck.

Chapter 4 introduces the common phases (forming, storming, norming, performing, and finally terminating) that groups typically go through, with an example of an international consulting team and their accomplishment of a project in South America. It concludes with an exercise in which groups form a small consulting firm that must define itself and its vision through the development of a name, logo, and slogan that all work together and project a coherent image.

Chapter 5 deals with diversity in groups and begins with a quotation from *Finite and Infinite Games* on the relationship of the individual to the community. It ends with a query and discussion of common everyday-living decisions that people make and an inquiry into the reasons behind those decisions to show that diversity of perspective is more than just thinking differently. It is based in the different experiences in life.

Chapter 6 starts with a joke and investigates the verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication. What makes things funny? What gives meaning to communication and to its interpretation? It ends with a group exercise, "to catch a spy," in which participants make judgments about others based on their verbal and nonverbal communication in a way that all can see the accuracy and inaccuracy of those predictions, as well as the aspects of that communication that are interpreted in a way that leads to those predictions.

Chapter 7 introduces listening and feedback with the Abbott and Costello routine "Who's on First?", then moves on to topics of active listening, the barriers to active listening, and ways of providing constructive feedback. It ends with a "non-debate" exercise in which participants choose one side of an issue and develop their argument, but then must listen carefully and paraphrase the other side of that issue.

Chapter 8 describes the evolution of groups into teams. It begins with Bill Russell's description of magical periods of basketball during which the game becomes more than a game, more than a competition, to really playing. This chapter describes the importance of teams, their qualities, the limitations to quality circles, and the development of self-managing work teams. It ends with an exercise designed to build a research team.

Chapter 9 begins with a simple decision to drink a cup of French vanilla coffee with a fly in it and moves through the stages of decision making and problem solving, examining brainstorming, group process, and concurrence seeking. It ends with an exercise designed to work through the critical and creative stages of decision making.

Chapter 10 investigates creativity, beginning with an interesting story from Lewis Thomas's *Lives of a Cell* about a methodical but noncreative wasp. It defines creativity and its importance in small group discussion, decision making, and problem solving. It discusses the barriers and facilitators of creative processes, and ends with an exercise designed to explore ways in which groups can develop their creative interactions.

Chapter 11 introduces group process and presentational techniques. Starting with Rod Serling's story about the selling of a Sherman tank, it moves through brainstorming, creative decision-making techniques (focus groups, nominal group technique, delphi technique, synectics, buzz sessions, idea writing, and listening teams), problem-solving tools (flowcharts, fishbone diagrams, Pareto's principle), risk and performance evaluation techniques (RISK, PERT), and small group presentation formats (forum, panel, colloquium, symposium). The exercise at the end involves practicing these techniques in a structured way.

Chapter 12 moves from a destructive ant war to constructive conflict management among humans. It deals with productive conflict management within systems of interaction, patterns of effective conflict resolution, and power within that context. It ends with a mediation exercise designed to highlight and illustrate the application of these concepts.

Chapter 13 introduces leadership as vision, credibility, and competence; provides a brief history of leadership theories, the characteristics, tasks, influences, and problems of leadership; and ends with an exercise of taking on leadership roles.

Chapter 14 uses March's quip about a U.S. Senator proposing to end the Vietnam War by having the army "declare a victory and come home" to introduce the need for observing and evaluating small group communication and process. It ends with sample evaluation forms and an exercise for using them.

Each chapter in this book is designed to focus on one aspect of communication in small groups in a way that builds on and is integrated with the other chapters.

We could not have produced the present book alone, however. We'd like to thank the people who have made this book possible. We thank our spouses who have provided social and emotional support, listening ears, and who helped with important decision-making suggestions throughout the process. They were engaged in seemingly endless reading and editing, and they even composed pieces of the book. And we thank the reviewers: Calvin Brant Short, Northern Arizona University; Freda L. Remmers, Kean University; Myrna Cornett-DeVito, Emporia State University; Rebecca A. Litke, California State University-Northridge; and Michael Mayer, Arizona State University. All made helpful comments and suggestions for the direction and development of this book. Our goal has been to write an interesting and informative book that is fun to use with small groups, as well as instructional. We hope that you enjoy it.

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CHAPTER

1

Small Groups: Power, Definition, and Attraction

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Power of Groups

Defining Small Group Communication

- Transactional Process
- Symbolic Behavior
- Shared Meaning

Why Join a Group?

- Interpersonal Attraction
- Need for Affiliation
- Commitment to Group Goals and Activities
- Assignment by Someone Else

Characteristics of Small Groups

- Interdependence and Interactivity
- Exponential Number of Interactions
- Synergy

Characteristics of Small Group Communication

- Complex Transactions
- Interactive Complexities

Types of Small Groups

Groups in Organizations

- Examples from the Automotive Industry
- Meetings

Summary

Discussion Questions

Discussion Exercise: Inventing the Light Bulb

References

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Understand the power of groups.
- Understand the reasons for joining groups.
- Explain the basis for interpersonal attraction.
- Outline the essential characteristics of small groups.
- Explain synergy.
- Map the small group communication process.
- Introduce the types of groups.
- Demonstrate the role of small groups in organizations.

KEY TERMS

Attitude similarity	Meetings	Social and casual groups
Complex communication characteristics	Need complementarity	Substance, pattern and process
Conference groups	Organizational groups	Symbolic behavior
Educational or learning groups	Physical proximity	Synergy
Exponential interactions	Primary groups	Therapeutic groups
Interactive	Problem-solving groups	Transactional Process
Interdependence	Quality circles	Work groups
Interpersonal attraction	Self-managing work groups	
Mediated communication groups	Shared meaning	
	Simultaneous sending and receiving	

When The Rolling Stones finished their worldwide Voodoo Lounge tour in 1994, they had made over 300 million dollars (Lander, 1994). Their 1997 Bridges to Babylon tour in the United States alone generated another \$89.3 million ("Rolling Stones top," 1998). The Rolling Stones had broken up in the 1980s, but Mick Jagger and Keith Richards quickly discovered that they needed the group synergy to produce their best-selling recordings. Now, as a group, they make more money than any of them could expect to make on their own. Michael P. Stone, on the other hand, earned \$20 an hour as a member of a self-managed work team in an electronics company until he was fired because his team decided that he detracted from their productivity and they could perform better without him. Not many of us will ever have the opportunity to earn \$300 million dollars as part of a rock group, but most of us have to work effectively in groups to do even ordinary, less glamorous, and less profitable jobs in today's work world.

Group work can be exciting, ego-enhancing, and creative. It can also be boring, demeaning, and extremely frustrating. The key to successful, satisfying groups is effective communication. This book is about developing communication strategies that help make group work more satisfying, effective, and successful—strategies that help produce groups that are fun to work in and that generate useful, sometimes even outstanding, results.

The Power of Groups

In 1945 in a bombed-out department store in Tokyo, Masaru Ibuka met with seven other former store employees and committed his total personal savings of \$1,600 to start a company. They had no product and no immediate plans or ideas, so the group sat together in conference in those depressing surroundings for sev-