STRATEGIES & TOOLS FOR GROUP WORK

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TODAY YOU WILL GAIN...

- An understanding of how groups work and why
- Strategies for repairing conflict when it arises
- Strategies for preventing conflicts in group situations
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What are some challenges you have faced when working in a group?
• What benefits have you gained from working in a group?
• Group work is grounded in *constructivism*
  - Constructivism: theory that knowledge is constructed through experience and reflection. We learn by building on our existing/previous knowledge.
  - Social constructivism: theory that learning is socially situated and occurs through interactions with others

• Sociocultural approach to learning: Lev Vygotsky
  - Learning takes place when students solve problems beyond their own developmental level, with the support of peers
If a group project is well-designed, teamwork will be one of its outcomes.
CASE STUDIES:
GOOD AND LESS GOOD GROUP PROJECTS

• Read your case study
• Discuss your case with members of your group
  • What went wrong?
  • What went right?
  • What is missing?
• Designate one person from your group to report your ideas to the larger group
TUCKMAN –
STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

• **Forming** – members are polite and positive; dominant leader emerges to help establish roles

• **Storming** – pushing against boundaries, jockeying for positions, *often to do with different working styles*

• **Norming** – members resolve differences, appreciate strengths, provide constructive feedback

• **Performing** – absence of friction, achievement of goal; team functions easily

• **Adjourning** – team disbands when project is finished
GROUP WORK CONFLICTS

ISSUES

• Lack of focus
• Unequal division of responsibilities and share of work
• Scheduling issues
• Personality issues (including grudges, mistrust)
• Faulty communication

TYPES

• Relationship conflict (personality issues)
• Task conflict (decisions about the group’s task)
• Process conflict (disagreement on how to perform the task)
“Styles” of any kind are not absolute, but knowledge of them may help you understand yourself, others, or situations.

Each of the described styles has strengths and weaknesses; none are preferable or “better” than any other.

Tendencies of one style may trigger negative responses in those who more closely resemble another style.
Analytical
- Logical
- Systematic
- Thorough
- Prudent
- Serious

Driver
- Efficient
- Decisive
- Pragmatic
- Independent
- Candid

Amiable
- Co-operative
- Supportive
- Diplomatic
- Patient
- Loyal

Expressive
- Persuasive
- Enthusiastic
- Outgoing
- Spontaneous
- Fun-loving

Less assertive
- More responsive
- Less responsive

More assertive
- Less responsive
- More responsive
PEOPLE DO NOT FIT NEATLY INTO “STYLE” CATEGORIES.

However, knowledge of these behaviours and how they affect one another may help you better interpret and understand group conflict before it gets out of hand.
HOW TO WORK BEST WITH THE MORE RESPONSIVE

(MORE ASSERTIVE)
EXPRESSIVES

• Pick up the energy
• Recognize their contribution
• Be tolerant of the fun-loving or jokes

(LESS ASSERTIVE)
AMIABLES

• Make personal contact
• Focus on feelings

• Slow your pace
• Invite Amiables to speak, don’t interrupt
• Listen more, talk less
• Provide structure
HOW TO WORK BEST WITH THE LESS RESPONSIVE

(MORE ASSERTIVE) DRIVERS
- Pick up the pace
- Be task-oriented
- Don’t get bogged down in the details
- Get the job done

(LESS ASSERTIVE) ANALYTICALS
- Be organized and clear
- De-emphasize the emotional/feelings
- Slow your pace
- Invite Analyticals to speak; don’t interrupt
- Don’t come on too strong
- Provide evidence for your position
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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Do not ignore initial signs of conflict – address them immediately
- Present the conflict as evidence of commitment to the project
- Confront the issue as a problem to be solved
- Do not engage in blaming or character assassination
- Be open-minded and fair, allow all sides to explain their position
- Insist on criticism being given appropriately and constructively
- Brainstorm to find solutions or compromises

STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDING CONFLICT AND WORKING WELL IN A GROUP

• Set roles and goals early, including internal deadlines
• Allow a time buffer at the end of your schedule
• Have periodic check-ins and updates
• Allow time for an outside person to check over the project
• Talk to your professor (not at the last minute) if someone is not contributing
• Consider developing a group charter
Based on the activity we did earlier with the group work cases, what strategies might have been helpful?
• Slack
• Trello
• RefWorks
• Track Changes (Microsoft Word)
• Google Docs
• Outlook calendar

Skype for Business (Outlook)
THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

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