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?
MI COMPETENCIES: WORKPLACE SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES

• **Collaborate & Communicate**
  • Developing effective verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills
  • Building and developing effective internal team relationships and external partnerships and alliances
  • Working effectively with diverse personalities, work styles, and cross-cultural perspectives

• **Organize, Plan & Manage:**
  • Recognizing and using appropriate information and communication technologies
WHY GROUPS?:
THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

- **Group work is grounded in social constructivism**
  - Social constructivism: theory that learning is socially situated and occurs through interactions with others
  - 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.
Read the case study
With a partner, discuss
  - What went wrong?
  - What went right?
  - What is missing?
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
- Precise
- Prudent
- Serious

**Driver**
- Efficient
- Decisive
- Pragmatic
- Independent
- Candid

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

**Expressive**
- Persuasive
- Enthusiastic
- Outgoing
- Imaginative
- Fun-loving

Less assertive

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.
Analyticals like to be right and do not like to be embarrassed, and will not discuss their ideas until they feel confident about them. They may be perfectionists who fear critique.

- Be systematic, thorough, deliberate, and task-focused
- Provide analysis and facts; answer “how” questions
- Don’t get too personal
- Don’t rush unnecessarily. Allow time for evaluation.
- Expect to repeat yourself and provide evidence
- Compliment the precision and accuracy of the completed work
Amiables are hard workers and dislike confrontation. They may be indecisive and too focused on pleasing others. They may fear change and chaos.

- Be relaxed and agreeable
- Maintain the status quo
- Create a plan with written guidelines
- Agree clearly and often
- Don’t push or rush
- Recognize them as a team player
Drivers are high achievers and not risk averse. They are extroverted, forceful, and decisive. In groups they can be overbearing and demanding. They may fear being disrespected.

• Focus on the task and results
• Provide concise, precise, and organized information
• Argue facts, not feeling
• Don’t waste time
Expressives are engaging, accommodating, and supportive, but can also be reactive, undisciplined, and unorganized. They may fear rejection.

- Focus on relationships
- Be enthusiastic and open
- Make time to share stories and experiences
- Be warm and approachable
- Do not assign them detail work
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GROUP CHARTER

- Read the assignment instructions
- Create a list of responsibilities
- Discuss norms and expectations
GROUP CHARTER

• “Structural, rather than Individual levers”

• Group Work = Collaborative Learning

• “Building teams that learn”

• Not a guarantee, but generally higher functioning

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
• Slack
• Trello
• Zotero or Mendeley
• Track Changes (Microsoft Word)
• Google Docs
• Outlook calendar
• Zoom
THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS?

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