Chapter Eight

Group Dynamics
Chapter Objectives

- Define a group.
- Discuss the types of groups commonly found in organizations.
- Describe the general stages of group development.
- Discuss the major group performance factors.
Chapter Objectives (continued)

• Describe intergroup dynamics.
• Explain conflict in organizations.
• Discuss methods for managing group and intergroup dynamics.
The Nature of Groups

• **Group**
  - Two or more people who interact with one another such that each person influences and is influenced by each other person.
    - Two people who are physically near each other are not a group unless they interact and have some influence on each other.
    - Coworkers may work side by side on related tasks, but if they do not interact, they are not a group.

• **Managerial Perspective**
  - From a managerial perspective, the work group is the primary means by which managers coordinate individuals’ behavior to achieve organizational goals.
Figure 8.1: A General Model of Group Dynamics
Types of Groups

- **Formal Groups**
  - Established by the organization to do its work
  - Include command (or functional) groups, task groups, and affinity groups.
    - command group – a relatively permanent, formal group with functional reporting relationships and is usually included in the organization chart
    - task or special-project group -- a relatively temporary, formal group established to do a specific task
    - affinity group – a collection of employees from the same level in the organization who meet on a regular basis to share information, capture emerging opportunities, and solve problem
Types of Groups (continued)

• Informal Groups
  – Established by its members.
  – Consist of friendship groups, which are relatively permanent, and interest groups, which may be shorter lives.
    • friendship group – relatively permanent and informal, and draws its benefits from the social relationships among its members.
    • interest group – relatively temporary and informal, and is organized around an activity or interest shared by its members.
Table 8.1: Classification Schemes for Types of Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relatively Permanent</th>
<th>Relatively Temporary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command Groups</td>
<td>Quality-assurance</td>
<td>Search committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>department</td>
<td>for a new school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost-accounting</td>
<td>superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>group</td>
<td>Task force on new-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>product quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinity Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>New product</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>development group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship Groups</td>
<td>Friends who do</td>
<td>Bowling group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>many activities</td>
<td>Women’s network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>together (attend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the theater, play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>games, travel</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Stages of Group Development

• Groups are not static; they typically develop through a four-stage process:
  1. Mutual acceptance
  2. Communication and decision making
  3. Motivation and productivity
  4. Control and organization
Mutual Acceptance

- Mutual Acceptance
  - A stage of group development, in which the group forms and members get to know one another by sharing information about themselves
  - They often test one another’s opinions by discussing subjects that have little to do with the group, such as the weather, sports, or recent events within the organization.
  - As the members get to know one another, discussion may turn to more sensitive issues, such as the organization’s politics or recent controversial decisions.
Other Stages of Group Development

- **Communication and Decision Making**
  - Members discuss their feelings more openly and agree on group goals and individual roles in the group.

- **Motivation and Productivity**
  - The emphasis shifts away from personal concerns and viewpoints to activities that will benefit the group.

- **Control and Organization**
  - The group works towards accomplishing its goals.
Figure 8.2: Stages of Group Development
Group Performance Factors

The performance of any group is affected by four factors other than the group’s reasons for forming and the stages of its development:

- Composition
- Size
- Norms
- Cohesiveness
Group Composition

- The degree of similarity or difference among group members on factors important to the group’s work.
  - Most often described in terms of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the members.
    - homogeneous if members are similar in one or several ways that are critical to the work of the group
    - heterogeneous if members differ in one or more ways critical to the group’s work
### Table 8.2: Task Variable and Group Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A homogeneous group is more useful for:</th>
<th>A heterogeneous group is more useful for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple tasks</td>
<td>Complex tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential tasks</td>
<td>Collective tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks that require cooperation</td>
<td>Tasks that require creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks that must be done quickly</td>
<td>Tasks that need not be done quickly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Size

• **Group Size**
  – The number of members of the group; affects the number of resources available to perform the task.
    • In groups established to generate ideas, those with more members tend to produce more ideas, although the rate of increase in the number of ideas diminishes rapidly as the group grows.

• **Social Loafing**
  – The tendency of some members of groups to put forth less effort in a group than they would when working alone.
Group Norms

• Usually established during the second stage of group development (communication and decision making) and carried forward into the maturity stage.
  • By providing a basis for predicting others’ behaviors, norms enable people to behave in a manner consistent with and acceptable to the group.
  • Without norms, the activities in a group would be chaotic.
Group Cohesiveness

- The extent to which a group is committed to staying together.
  - The forces that create cohesiveness:
    - attraction to the group
    - resistance to leaving the group
    - motivation to remain a member.
Figure 8.4: Group Cohesiveness, Goals, and Productivity
Intergroup Dynamics

• A group’s contribution to an organization depends on its interactions with other groups as well as on its own productivity.

• Intergroup Dynamics
  – Interactions are the key to understanding intergroup dynamics.
Figure 8.5: Factors That Influence Intergroup Interactions
Conflict in Groups and Organizations

• Conflict often occurs when groups interact in organizations.
  • In its simplest form, conflict is disagreement among parties.
  • When people, groups, or organizations disagree over significant issues, conflict often results.

• Benefits of Conflict
  – Although conflict is often considered harmful and thus something to avoid, it can also have some benefits.
  – A total absence of conflict can lead to apathy and lethargy.
Reactions to Conflict

- **Avoidance**
  - Occurs when the interacting parties’ goals are incompatible and the interaction among groups is relatively unimportant to the attainment of the goals

- **Accommodation**
  - Occurs when the parties’ goals are compatible and the interaction among groups is relatively unimportant to the goals’ attainment
Reactions to Conflict (continued)

- **Competition**
  - Occurs when the parties’ goals are incompatible and the interactions among group are important to meeting goals

- **Collaboration**
  - Occurs when the interaction among groups is very important to goal attainment and the goals are compatible

- **Compromise**
  - Occurs when the interaction is moderately important to meeting goals, and the goals are neither completely compatible nor completely incompatible
Managing Conflict

- **Conflict Resolution**
  - Occurs when a manager resolves a conflict that has become harmful or serious.

- **Conflict Stimulation**
  - The creation and constructive use of conflict by a manager.
Managing Group and Intergroup Dynamics in Organizations

- Managing groups effectively requires:
  - Knowing what types of groups exist in the organization
  - Possibly “formalizing” some informal groups
  - Breaking up groups to realign the organization and goals
  - Nurturing groups through the development stage
  - Encouraging the development of group norms and roles
  - Developing a reward structure that fosters individual efforts to achieve group goals