

Leadership Development Within Groups

Leadership for Effective Groups

Community organizations, clubs and committees influence decisions that are made in our neighborhoods, schools, churches and government. Groups can make major changes in communities. The influence a group exerts on a community is greater than the influence of individuals working separately.

Each of us has been a member of a group. We are probably a part of many different groups. Groups are such a common part of our lives, we don't stop to think about them often. One definition of a group is:

...two or more persons who are interacting with one another so that each person influences and is influenced by each other person.

Every Group has a Unique Personality

Every group has a personality of its own as a result of the unique individuals who come together to form it. Each member brings different interests, skills and goals to the group. Each group member has different values and attitudes. A group takes a life of its own as individuals gather to talk, learn, work and make decisions together.

Think of your family. There is no other family exactly like yours. Each family member has unique ideas, skills and roles. When 10-year-old Andy spends a week at his cousin's house, Andy will influence the activities at that house, and he will probably act a little differently there than he does at home. With Andy away from home, the rest of your family will function a little differently, too. Someone must do Andy's chores. While Andy is away from home, 12-year-old Diane will act differently, too.

A group influences each member within it, too. We may act one way within group A but interact with the members of group B very differently.

A group is stronger when its members are diverse. Individuals from different backgrounds (spiritual, cultural, political) offer a variety of ideas, values, perspectives and talents to the group. Individuals learn from one another, and the group benefits. A group is strengthened by the diverse individuals within it.

Good leadership consists of motivating people to their highest levels by offering them opportunities, not obligations.
John Heider

Groups Are Unique Because People Are

Every person has something to offer. Each group member is a potential leader in that group. We're all O.K., just different. Some of us see the end result of a project clearly and others know exactly what has to be done to get there.

Following an analysis of 27 working groups across the nation, researcher J. Richard Hackman said, "Each group was, in some ways, like some other groups...and each group was, in still other ways, like no other group, a unique entity unto itself with its own special problems, opportunities, and ways of operating."

A group is successful and functions effectively when all members have equal opportunity to share ideas and responsibilities. The group will benefit and members will develop leadership skills as a result of their involvement.

A group can provide leadership within a community -- but to do so, it needs to develop and function effectively. Effective groups develop when members:

- have a reason for working together
- are dependent on one another to accomplish a goal
- believe in the group goal and want to help accomplish it
- understand how they will benefit from the group activity.

Group Development

Just as family members mature and change due to the influence they have on one another, so do groups have phases of development. Group development phases are fairly consistent.

Phase 1 -- Forming

The first phase of group development, FORMING, is an orientation period for members of a group. Members do not know one another or their roles in the group. They do not know the group goals. Members want to be told what to do and may not share their feelings easily. Members may be more likely to express negative feelings because of their uncertainty.

During this first phase, a leader needs to establish a safe group environment and help members get to know one another. A leader can encourage members to ask questions, help members learn what this group can offer to them, and identify skills and assets each can bring to the group.

Phase 2 -- Storming

STORMING is the second phase of group development, when members have become comfortable expressing their opinions. They will begin questioning and challenging group leaders and one another. The "storming" phase should not be suppressed. If a group is not allowed to work through this stage, members will not learn how to deal with conflict or manage it successfully.

During this phase, the group needs leadership to help them communicate effectively, involve all members and find ways to manage their conflicts.

Phase 3 -- Norming

The NORMING phase builds on phase two. As members learn to trust one another and work cooperatively, they begin drawing upon one another's experiences to work through problems and make decisions.

This is the time for leaders to help members develop common goals. A group must agree on a goal to work toward or the group will have no reason to exist. Leaders must continue to reinforce trusting relationships, open communications and conflict management skills.

Phase 4 -- Performing

The last phase, PERFORMING, is the time when the group has achieved a degree of harmony, defined its purpose, examined relationships and begun to see the results of its work. Members have learned how to work together and contribute their skills to accomplish a group goal. At this time, group leaders help members develop skills that will be rewarding to the individual and ultimately beneficial to the group.

When the membership of the group changes, it is common for the group to move through each of the four stages again. If only a few new members join the existing group, the process may be quicker and smoother than it was when the group was first formed.

Too many people overvalue what they are not and undervalue what they are.
Malcomb Forbes

Leadership is . . .

There are three basic ways to explain how people become leaders. The first two explain the leadership development for a small number of people. These theories are:

1. Some personality traits may lead people naturally into leadership roles. This is the TRAIT THEORY.
2. A crisis or important event may cause an individual to rise to the occasion which brings out extraordinary leadership qualities in an ordinary person. This is the GREAT EVENTS THEORY.

The third explanation is most widely accepted today. It says:

3. People can choose to become leaders. People can learn leadership skills. This is the TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP theory.

Popular definitions of leaders and leadership include:

Leaders help others (individuals and communities) achieve things they want to accomplish.

Leadership [is]...about accomplishing tasks and reaching goals through the efforts of other people.

A leader is an individual in any situation in which his/her ideas and actions influence the thoughts and behavior of others.

If leadership is...the process of influencing people by ideas, then there is no limit to the number of leaders that can function within a group. In fact, the more the better because the very act of leadership... develops initiative, creativity and responsibility.

Leadership Within Groups

There is nothing mysterious about being a leader. Leadership is a learned behavior. Everyone can improve leadership skills through practice.

Every person within a group can provide some type of leadership. Everyone has different personality traits and skills. Some members may use their leadership skills continuously, while others are leaders only during a specific project. Everyone can provide leadership in different ways.

In an ideal group, leadership will shift from person to person depending on the task the group needs to accomplish at that time. Beal, et al

A group needs people to fulfill three basic types of leadership roles. They are:

1. TASK ROLES

These leaders help or coordinate a group to get something accomplished. They help the group identify its goals, outline tasks that need to be accomplished and ensure jobs get done.

"Assisting local families is an important part of our goals. I'll develop the list of things to do before the next meeting and everyone can volunteer for two jobs then."

Facilitator: guides the group through the process of achieving its goals.

Idea Person: is enthusiastic, creative and engaging. All things are possible to this member.

Quality Controller: questions, inspects and challenges ideas and decisions to keep the group focused.

Doer: is task oriented and gets things done. This person may be impatient with slow progress.

2. MAINTENANCE ROLES

Leaders fulfilling these roles are concerned with relationships within the group. They help individuals get along, communicate, deal with conflict and work together successfully.

"There were several suggestions offered at the last meeting that we didn't have time to discuss. I'd like to do that now before we move on...."

Team Builder: is concerned with group morale and working together.

Synthesizer: blends the individual ideas to provide an overall group plan.

Recorder: serves as the "group memory." This may be a formal secretarial role or recorder for one event.

3. INDIVIDUAL ROLES

Individual needs may be different from group needs. Leaders fulfilling these roles promote individual development in and out of the group, observe individual behavior and channel energy in a way that is helpful to individuals and the group.

"Let's sponsor Gerry to the workshop. He enjoys painting, and we could certainly use someone to develop posters for the spring project."

External Contact: provides access to resources outside the group.

Mentor: helps individuals within the group find ways to expand their skills and resources.

Why Groups Need Leadership

The goal of leaders in an organization is to create a situation in which people can work toward a worthwhile purpose.

Leaders help a group:

1. Get Organized

Leaders help members understand the purpose of the group and reasons for their involvement. They help members identify the skills they have to share with the group.

2. Develop Its Program

Leaders help define group goals. Group leaders see how the group relates to the larger community. They invite individuals from outside the group to join forces to accomplish their goals, too. Leaders help members explore options for accomplishing goals.

3. Grow as an Effective Group

Leaders help members understand the phases of group development and assist in working through the phases successfully. Leaders help the group evaluate itself, its members and its program.

4. Enhance Individual Growth

Leaders help individuals get to know one another, communicate openly and effectively, and expand their skills.

The group benefits when its leaders grow as individuals, too. Group leaders need to continually share their skills, take risks, model positive group behavior, learn and evaluate themselves.

THE LEADERSHIP BEAT

*I love a parade with a positive beat.
If you need a leader, I'm on my feet!
If you don't need a leader, that's just fine;
I'll stamp my feet and march in your line.
If you don't need a marcher, it's O.K.;*

I'll stand to one side and shout, "Hooray!"

*If you need a friend, come to me that day;
I'll push all the negatives out of your way.*

Dottie Walters

I can...

Learning is more complete when you experience and apply information. Consider the following questions on your own or with a friend.

- How is a leader like a star?
 - How is a group like a star quilt?
 - How do you define leadership? Draw a picture that represents leadership to you.
 - What role(s) (ex. idea person, team builder, recorder...) do you most often take in a group?
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*Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve.... You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.
Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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*The greatest good we can do for others is not just to share our riches with them -- but to enable them to discover their own.
Sister Carita*

*Nobody's ever the greatest anything.
Maralyn Lois Polak*

*The goal of most leaders is to get people to think highly of the leader. But the goal of the exceptional leader is to get people to think highly of themselves.
Anonymous*

Leaders are ordinary people with extraordinary determination.
Anonymous

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their entrances and exits;
And one man in his time has many parts.*
William Shakespeare

The impersonal hand of government can never replace the helping hand of a neighbor.
Hubert H. Humphrey

Leadership [is]...about accomplishing tasks and reaching goals through the efforts of other people. They know what ought to happen, plan a way to make it happen and take steps to see that it does!
Paul Hersey

I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do.
Helen Keller

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