

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B

Group Discussion Techniques

Student Manual

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for the

CALIFORNIA FIRE SERVICE
TRAINING AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

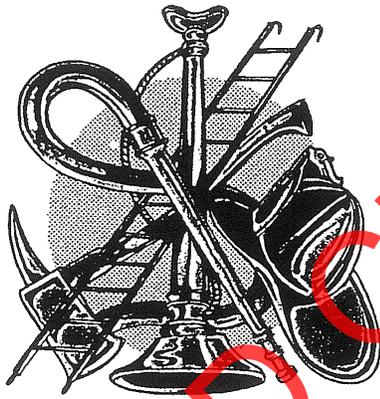
Second Edition

REQUIRED CURRICULUM

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B

Group Discussion Techniques

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published by

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RETIRED CURRICULUM

**FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B
GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<u>Instructor Teaching Schedule</u>	<u>Time</u>
Session 1 (Monday Morning)	
Course Introduction and Overview	1 hour
Personal Biographical Sketch	1 hour
Personal Biographical Sketch Exercise	1 hour
Session 2 (Monday Afternoon)	
Brainstorming Session	1/2 hour
Discussion Groups	2 hours
Group Development	1 1/2 hours
Nonverbal Codes	1 hour
Session 3 (Tuesday Morning)	
Evaluating Interpersonal Relations	1 hour
Rating Errors	1/2 hour
Leaderless Group Exercise	2 1/2 hours
Session 4 (Tuesday Afternoon)	
Nominal Group Technique Exercise	1 hour
"Abilene Paradox" - Video Exercise	1 hour
"Lost on the Moon" - Exercise	1 hour
Quiz and Review	1 hour
Session 5 (Wednesday Morning)	
Staff Meeting	1 1/2 hours
Conference Leading	1 1/2 hours
Conference Leading Demonstration (inst)	1 hour
Session 6 (Wednesday Afternoon)	
Discussion 66 Exercise	1 hour
Discussion Groups Demonstrations	2 1/2 hours
HOMEWORK	
Session 7 (Thursday Morning)	
Conference Leading/Staff Meeting Demos	4 hours
Session 8 (Thursday Afternoon)	
Conference Leading/Staff Meeting Demos	3 hours
Course Review	1 hour
Session 8 (Friday Morning)	
Certification Examination	1 hour

RETIRED CURRICULUM

THE NATURE OF WORK GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

Small groups are the very essence of our daily living. We do not exist as humans alone, but in groups of from as small as two to as large as ten or more members. Most people spend a major portion of each day in small groups. Groups are a fact of organizational life and are actually the building blocks of our organizations. A careful examination of any organization reveals many separate but interdependent work groups, task forces, committees, and councils.

Groups structure themselves in a variety of ways such as group size, norms and member roles. Also, power relationships within and between groups influence who does what for whom. Status within the group determines one's standing in relation to other members. Group cohesiveness also represents an important factor in determining the level of group effort and performance.

Communicating in small groups is so much a part of our lives that most of us take it for granted, failing to perceive and understand what is happening in these groups or how to make them more effective. We need to understand how to communicate more effectively in them, or we are doomed to unsatisfying and ineffectual discussions. A knowledge of organizational behavior would be incomplete without a thorough understanding of basic group processes.

DEFINITION OF A GROUP

Groups have been defined by various writers with reference to members' perceptions, goals, structure, interdependence, and interaction among members. The following definition seems best suited for discussions regarding small group communication:

"A group is defined as two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person"

This definition emphasizes interaction and mutual influence. Interaction implies **communication**, the exchange of signals between or among persons who belong to the group, and that at least some of these signals are perceived and responded to in such a way that each group member makes some difference in how each other member acts in the future.

The small group is one in which members can perceive at least peripherally all the group members at once, with some awareness of who is and is not in the group, and the role each is taking.

The "two person" group (dyad) has been arbitrarily eliminated for discussion in this course because there is a lot of evidence that dyads function considerably differently from groups of three or more members.

TYPES OF GROUPS THAT DISCUSS

Discussion groups refer to a groups of persons talking with each other face to face in order to achieve some interdependent goal. This definition implies several characteristics:

- o A small enough number of members for each to be aware of and have some reaction to each other
 - From three to rarely more than fifteen
- o A mutually interdependent purpose
 - Success of each member is contingent upon the success of the entire group
- o Oral interaction, involving speech communication
 - Verbal and nonverbal
 - Impromptu
 - Continuous interaction
 - Give and take
- o A sense of cooperation exists among the members
 - Certain amount of disagreement and conflict
 - Argument is viewed as positive
 - Coexist rather than defeat or win attitude

Discussion groups may be divided into two general types: private and public. A "Private" discussion group is one that is made up of three to fifteen people who meet together for the purpose of discussing a problem that has been identified, or a series of items listed on an agenda. "Public" discussion groups are more formal, as prepared presentations are made by one or more persons, often followed by questions from the audience.

Private Groups

- o Conference

A method by which people of similar backgrounds of experience or knowledge meet together in a planned informal discussion and supervised by a trained leader for the purpose of reaching a useful conclusion and/or definite plan of action.

- o Committee

A small group assigned the responsibility of performing a task that cannot be done efficiently by a larger or parent organization.

- o Group Discussion

A group of persons (6-20) meeting together with a trained leader for the purpose of discussing and resolving a topic of mutual interest. Group discussions are usually considered as a method of instruction.

- o Staff Meeting

A gathering of three or more persons for the purpose of giving instruction and exchanging information or for the purpose of discussing and solving problems.

Public Groups

- o Panel Discussion

A group of three or more (3-6) persons presenting information in an orderly, informal conversation, guided by a designated moderator, before an audience on an assigned subject. There is no audience participation.

- The moderator directs the panel discussion calling on each panel member in turn.
- Each panel member knows in advance what they are going to say but may not know what the others will say.
- Although panel members use an agreed upon outline of questions to follow, the speaking should be relatively informal, with direct impromptu responses to each others remarks.

- o Panel-Forum

A panel discussion followed by audience participation in the form of oral or written questions.

- o Symposium

A series of speeches by two to five experts giving their viewpoints on a single issue. There is no audience participation.

- Symposium members plan in advance what each will say
- Careful to cover the issue but not overlap each other

- o Symposium-Forum

A symposium which is followed by audience participation in the form of oral or written questions

- o Public Interview (Colloquy)

A presentation that utilizes two groups of people of three or four in each group to discuss a topic or problem before an audience. One group is composed of experts on the topic or problem, while the other group has prepared itself to represent the audience with questions and remarks pertinent to the topic. Audience participation is limited to those questions and remarks presented by its represented group.

Other Types Of Public Groups

- o Seminar

A group of people meeting together for the purpose of studying a subject under the leadership of an expert.

- o Workshop

A group of people with a common interest (professional or vocational) meeting together for an extended period of time to improve their individual proficiency, ability, and understanding through research, discussion, or education.

- o Institute

A series of meetings arranged for a group of people who are to receive instruction and information in a specific field of work.

- o Convention

An assembly of delegates from area units of a parent organization who meet together to discuss problems of concern to the total membership. A convention may make use of several of the of the previous types of oral communication.

THE SMALL GROUP AS A "SYSTEM"

You have probably noticed that when a new person joins a group there is a major change in the group, not just a simple addition of a new member. This illustrates the idea of a "system". The small group can best be understood as a system of interdependent components and forces. With a systems perspective we are more likely to consider all of the characteristics of a group when trying to understand and improve its functioning, rather than look at only one or two of them.

The variable (characteristics) of a small group can be classified into three broad categories: input variables, process variables, and output variables. "Input variables" are the components from which the small group is formed. These include the members of the group, the reason for forming the group, relationships to other groups, resources available to the group, and physical setting in which the group is functioning. "Process variables" refers to how the group functions internally, procedures they follow, how they communicate among themselves, and how they do their work as a group. "Output variables" are results of the group processes, including work accomplished, personal effect on group members, and process changes. Keep in mind that these are not separate, but as previously stated, everything influences and is influenced by everything else in the small group - it is a system. Another way of stating this is that all components and variables interact with each other in a small group.

GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Groups tend to form structures and develop standards that help them to function effectively and maintain themselves as a group. These standards or "usual way of doing things" are most helpful to the group as everyone knows what is going to happen and how it is going

to happen. These "usual way of doing things" are often called the culture of the group. Members are expected to conform to these standards or informal rules and pressure if often exerted by the group on individuals who deviate from them. From this process of social control a group derives its strength to pull together as a group and increase its effectiveness.

Effect Of Time On A Group

Researchers have studied how small human groups develop and change through time. As a general rule there are gradual changes in the way the group systems functions, but some very abrupt changes can also be observed. Any demarcation into distinct phases is somewhat arbitrary: the decision of when a group has moved from one phase to another, and even of how many phases there may be, depends on the person doing the observing and classifying of phases in their life history, the exact sequence depending on the primary purpose of the group's interaction and other variables. Time is certainly an important variable for understanding any group.

Single-meeting groups differ from most committees and other types of groups that meet for several or more discussions. The one-meeting group has no chance to develop a history, regular procedures and rituals, or extensive norms and values. Except for previous contacts with other participants in different groups context, there is little basis on which to predict each other's behavior. There is no future for the group, no need to build cohesiveness. Models of group emergence have little relevance. An assigned leader will usually be accepted willingly unless they are totally incompetent. With little time to spare, members usually accept the designated discussion leader's statements about the purpose and procedures for the meeting. If the leader has an agenda or outline to follow, the group will likely do so with gratitude.

When members know that they will be meeting numerous times, they will take much more time to get organized and will move through a series of phases in the life history of the group. First comes a period of orientation during which the group will not readily follow any outline for problem solving. Even though it may appear that the discussion is about facts of a problem, objectives, and possible alternatives, the real agenda item will be the development of a group structure: roles for members (especially, who will be the primary leader), norms to govern behavior, shared values, general procedures for decision making and problem solving, who will interact with whom and in what ways, shared objectives, and so forth. This period of time may seem like aimless milling around to an untrained observer. But after such relational issues have been resolved to some degree, the group will go into a work phase

characterized by much compiling of information, suggesting of courses of action, and more or less open conflict until decisions emerge.

Depending on the degree to which the group achieved a stable structure of roles, norms, and procedures, there may be continual cycling between serious work and problems of interpersonal relations, with the group seeming to have begin anew at many

meetings. Or it may move forward from problem to problem with great dispatch, spending little time on matters of value, procedure, roles, and interpersonal relations.

Invariably there will be some cycling through time between matters of work to be done and group maintenance (socioemotional relationships). Every problem solving group has both task and social dimensions to be dealt with through discussion. These are not totally separable, but the emphasis will shift from social relations to task as a group becomes more clearly organized through time.

Bruce W. Tuckman reviewed a large number of studies of phases in the development of several types of small groups. From a wide variety of different phases described by observers of therapy, encounter, learning and problem-solving groups he synthesized a four-phase theory of group development applicable to all small groups. He chose rhyming words to stand for these four stages:

Phase 1: Forming

During the initial stage a collection of people attempts to develop into a group with a sense of interdependence of purpose and membership; also called the "orientation" phase by several writers. While "forming" is going on the discussants are sizing each other up, trying to decide how each will act and react, what the attitudes, skills and competencies to other members may be, and whether or not to make a personal commitment to the group. Collectively, there is likely to be much talking about goals, "where we are going". A structure of norms and roles (including leadership) begins to emerge.

Phase 2: Storming

During this phase, the interaction is likely to be marked by a great deal of conflict about information, the nature of the task facing the group, and how to achieve it. At a different level this phase involves a struggle for power, influence, and

leadership roles. There will be considerable open resistance to influence by other members and what appear to be majorities, with few or no members appearing willing to accept and support the suggestions of others. It may seem that nothing is being accomplished with so much open conflict, but the groundwork for later cooperation and coordination is being laid.

Phase 3: Norming

In this phase, the group works out definite ways of proceeding, guidelines or rules for member conduct, and standards, for evaluating their decisions. There is likely to be much open expression of opinions, now marked by considerably more agreeing with each other than in Phase 2. In place of strong positions of individuality common in Phase 2 are efforts to reduce conflict. If the group is going to be productive, a structure of roles and statuses emerges, along with a high degree of cohesiveness.

Phase 4: Performing

Discussion will now be centered on the task of the group. A solution to the problem (if any) may emerge fairly quickly with consensus or majority support. There is likely to be a lot of rephrasing of the solution by various members of the group. If needed, plans for putting the solution into effect are worked out.

Tuckman's interest as a social psychologist and his objective of finding similar phases in the life histories of groups with divergent major purposes may have led him to label three of the four phases with words concerning social relations. Actually, productive task work, producing the groundwork for a final group solution, may be going on in these phases. In that sense "performing" is occurring to some degree in all phases of the groups's life. The important thing here is to be aware that it is typical for groups to move through stages, as it is for all human relationships, from a phase in which identification of common interest and a basis for cooperation and trust is laid down, to an exploration of various alternatives, to a period of time in which there is rapid goal achievement. Long-term groups will tend to spiral somewhat through these phases, going back over the periods of forming, storming, and norming from meeting to meeting, as new problems and members are introduced into the group system, and as other components of the small group system change through time. Such a spiralling through growth and work stages should be no surprise, for it is characteristic of all living systems. There is even a spiral-like progression during the time when many groups

consider and evaluate each possible course of action as a solution to their problem.

Tension

The tension experienced by members also varies through time, dependent upon handling of both social and task issues. When one feels tense, one may be irritable, ill at ease, and generally

uncomfortable. Muscles are tightened in the face, neck, abdomen, hands, and even in the feet and legs. Headaches may develop if tension is not dealt with. The two general types of tension associated with discussion groups have been identified as: primary and secondary.

Primary tension is the name for the social unease and stiffness that accompanies getting acquainted. The earmarks of primary tension are extreme politeness, apparent boredom, or tiredness, and considerable sighing and yawning. When members show primary tension, they speak softly and tentatively. Frequently they can think of nothing to say, and many long pauses result. Members who are extremely affected by primary tension may pull back from the circle of others, look away from the group, or even read.

Members of one-meeting groups cannot afford the time needed to get well acquainted with each other, but groups that will meet often may be wise to do so. Groups failing to do so, talking only about their work and the problems confronting them, often continue to be plagued by shyness, reticence, apparent apathy, absenteeism, and inability to reach decisions based on open and honest confrontation of ideas and beliefs. Very early in the life of a continuing group it pays to deal directly with primary tensions; take time to talk about who each person is, ask each other questions, air differences in feelings and backgrounds, chat about hobbies and interests, maybe even have a social hour or party. Don't expect members of a continuing group to get to work on the agenda at the very start of each new meeting either. Even groups with considerable history experience some amount of primary tension at the start of each meeting.

Members need to confirm where they stand with each other, to reaffirm their relationships, and that each is accepted as a unique individual. Thus a brief period of "ventilation", chitchat, or small talk is needed before getting down to work, often before the meeting is "called to order" by a designated leader.

Secondary tension results from differences among members as they try to accomplish their goals. Persons in a small group differ over their perception of a problem, over procedures for working as

a group, over values of relative importance and goodness, over alternative means for achieving goals, and over who should do what for the group. The signs of tension from such conflicts are quite different from those of primary tension. Voices get loud and strained. There may be long pauses, followed by two or more persons trying to talk at once. Members twist and fidget in their seats, bang on the table, wave their arms, or even get up and pace around the room.

Every group must develop norms and procedures for reducing secondary tension. Once it is under control, a decision will usually emerge quickly, be confirmed by the group, and details of implementation will be worked out rapidly. Throughout its history, a group will cycle from periods of high to low tension among members, and periods of high to low harmony and productivity in accomplishing the work of the group. Some groups try to ignore secondary tensions because dealing with them is often very difficult, uncomfortable, or even painful. A group may dodge the issue of a clash over values or means to a goal.

They leave the touchy area of human relations and return to the safe area of doing the job. The problem, however, never goes away, and if ignored or dodged will continue to impede their progress. Facing up to secondary tensions realistically is the best way to release them.

This may mean discussing how members feel about each other, joking, and openly discussing each other's behavior, roles, and norms. It may take conciliating, compromising, or other techniques for resolving conflicts and disagreements. Some degree of tension is helpful, of course. Just as the individual is not productive when totally relaxed or hypertensive, so with the group. Learning to maintain a productive level of tension, developing tension-reliever roles, and procedures for handling tension are keys to effective group discussion.

Role Structure

In a mature, fully-organized small group each member has a definite position or role. The concept of positions or roles in a small group is most clearly seen in an athletic group such as a basketball or baseball team. Each member has a set of definite responsibilities, plus more general ones to assist other members of the team as needed. All share to some degree in shooting or batting, and in the event one member is not able to perform optimally, members can often substitute for each other. Who plays each position is determined largely by the relative performance skills of all the members of the group. A discussion group with the task of problem solving or learning will in time develop almost

as definite a structure of member roles as does an athletic team. This is accomplished through a sort of trial-and-comparison basis. Although certain socioemotional and procedural roles are needed in every small group, many of these and most of the task roles depend on the purpose and environment of the group. While a new group is forming, much effort will be spent in determining who can best perform the kinds of behaviors needed to unify and coordinate the activities of the members, and to accomplish the group's task. Some of the roles may change considerably in latter phases of the group's life as new demands are made on the members from the

environment, different stages of the problem-solving process, and partial changes in membership.

Some discussion groups have certain appointed or elected posts. For example, most committees have a designated chairperson who is responsible for such duties as calling meetings, planning agendas, coordinating the work of other committee members, and making reports to the parent organization. A committee may also have a designated secretary or recorder.

For a small group to be effective, a stable set of roles (or division of labor) must emerge and be accepted by all members. Then each member can be expected to perform certain types of actions or task for the group. This is not to say that everyone plays a role totally different from everyone else, or that two or more members may not perform the same types of functions. Indeed, some behaviors, such as supplying needed information, may be widely shared among the members. But in the mature small group, each person has a unique set of functions to perform, which combined with those of the other members provide for all the group's needs in discussing and doing its work. Any effective long-term group has specialists who can be counted on to act when their skills are needed for summarizing, testing ideas, managing conflicts, and so on. However, the group must not depend too much on these specialists, or also when they are absent no one else will be able to step in to perform those behaviors vital to the progress of the group.

Ideally, group members have considerable flexibility, and each can provide a wide variety of the behaviors useful to the group. Perhaps the ideal all-around discussants would be those who are so sensitive and versatile that they could diagnose what each group to which they belong needs from them, and perform those things. But no human being can be all things, so we tend to seek role profiles suited both to our skills and limitations and to the needs of each group.

The role a person has varies from group to group. In some groups a person's role will also change as new persons join the group or

as the problems facing the group change. A major principle of small group theory is this: The role of each member of a group is worked out by interaction between the member and the rest of the group. What seems to happen is that a member of a discussion group does something. If others respond favorably, that member is likely to do this sort of thing again, a response to previous positive reinforcement. Soon that type of behavior is a part of their role. If other members reject the behavior or do not respond favorably (negative reinforcement), the person will not be likely to act that way again. Gradually, from this pattern of selective reinforcement, a fairly stable set of roles emerges in the group,

and members come to expect each other to behave in some ways and not in others. Of course, a member who has been reinforced for proposing new ideas may not always be able to do so as the problem changes, and members who have not previously been initiators of ideas may suddenly have experience leading them to try idea initiating. If positively reinforced, a new facet has been added to their roles.

A person's role in a small group is made up of many behaviors of various types. The complete role of an individual is a sort of summary of these types of behavior, reflective of the relative proportions of each. There are several types of behavioral functions that members of a small group perform during discussions. During a single speech, a person may perform more than one of these behaviors, such as both giving information and asking for more information from others. We tend to name a person's role on the basis of the kinds of behaviors they most often performs as a group member, but in reality the role consists of an amalgam of those kinds of behaviors that they provide most often and in relatively high proportions compared to other group members.

Types of Behavioral Functions

Initiating and Orienting - proposing goals, plan of action, or activities; prodding group to greater activity; defining position of group in relation to external structure or goal.

Information Giving - offering facts and information, evidence, personal experience, and knowledge pertinent to the group task.

Information Seeking - asking other members for information; requesting relevant evidence.

Opinion Giving - stating beliefs, values, interpretations, judgements; drawing conclusions from evidence.

Opinion Seeking - asking other members for their opinions.

Evaluating - expressing judgements about the relative worth of information or ideas; proposing or applying criteria.

Clarifying and Elaborating - interpreting issues; clarifying ambiguous statements; developing an idea previously expressed by giving examples, illustrations, and explanations.

Dramatizing - nontask (sometimes even deviant to the group purpose) comments that evoke fantasies about persons and places other than the present group and time, including

joking, storytelling, and fantasizing; often the theme of the drama is a tentative value or norm being tested as a possible group norm or position.

Coordinating - showing relationships between or among ideas; integrating two or more solutions into one; summarizing or reviewing what has previously been said in bits and pieces; suggesting teamwork and cooperation.

Consensus Testing - asking if group has reached a decision acceptable to all; suggesting that agreement may have been reached.

Suggesting Procedure - suggesting an agenda of issues, outline, problem-solving pattern, or special technique; proposing some procedure or sequence to follow.

Recording - keeping group records on write-on board or paper, preparing reports and minutes; serving as group recorder and memory.

Harmonizing - reducing secondary tension by reconciling disagreements; pointing out common ground of values and beliefs; suggesting compromises; conciliating or placating an angry person.

Tension Relieving - introducing strangers, and helping them feel at ease; reducing status differences; encouraging informality.

Norming - suggesting standards of behavior for members; challenging unproductive ways of behaving in a group; giving negative response when another violates a group norm.

These are the major types of behavior that are needed to develop a collection of persons into a group, coordinate their efforts, provide and use resources and thus achieve interdependent goals.

Other types of behaviors that spring from purely personal needs work at odds with the best interest of the group as a whole. Among these self-centered types of acts are the following:

Withdrawing - avoiding important differences; refusing to cope with conflicts; refusing to take a stand; covering up feelings; giving no response to comments of others.

Blocking - preventing progress toward group goals by constantly raising objections, repeatedly bringing up the same topic or issue after the group has considered it and rejected it.

Recognition Seeking - boasting, calling attention to one's own expertise or experience when it is not necessary to establish credibility or relevant to group task; relating irrelevant experiences; game-playing to elicit sympathy or pity.

Horseplaying - making tangential jokes; engaging in horseplay that takes the group away from serious work or maintenance behavior.

Advocating - playing the advocate for the interests of a different group, thus acting as its representative, apologist, or advocate counter to the best interests or consensus of the current group.

Dominating - giving orders; interrupting and cutting off; flattering to get own way; insisting on own way.

Attacking - attacking the competence of another, name-calling, impugning the motive of another instead of describing own feeling; joking at expense of another; attempting to destroy "face" of another.

This list of self-oriented behaviors could be expanded considerably. The import thing is for you to be aware of whether a member is trying to contribute to the interdependent group goal, or manipulating and using other members for selfish goals at odds with the best interests of the group as a whole.

Networks Of Communication

Concomitant with the development of somewhat specialized roles in a group is the development of a communication network. The phrase communication network refers to a pattern of message flow or linkages of who actually speaks to whom in discussions. A members who open a meeting may find the others expecting them to initiate discussion on a new topic or at subsequent meetings. Persons who

speaking frequently will find others looking (literally) to them for comment on each new issue or when there is a lag in conversation. Infrequent verbal participants will themselves be more and more overlooked, and the comments they do make ignored.

Many types of networks have been identified, but the permissible as well as the actually used channels must be looked at in any group to fully understand its structure. Hopefully, the democratic group has an all-channel network in which all participants are free to comment on a one-to-one basis with all others, and to the group as a whole (see illustration).

A wheel network is to be avoided in which all comments are directed toward one central person (leader) who alone may speak to the group as a whole or to any individual in it. A "Y", or hierarchical network, occurs when an autocratic leader has lieutenants with whom they interact directly, and who in turn talk to subordinates. The persons at the ends of the Y rarely if ever interact directly with the leader. In both the Wheel and "Y" networks the central person is usually very satisfied with their participation and status, but the peripheral members tend to find little satisfaction in participation in the group. Sometimes, however, the central person (leader) becomes overloaded with more messages from other group members than they can handle, and then becomes frustrated and dissatisfied. The central person is then said to be suffering information overload. A Wheel or "Y" network forces some members into a position of low sending, and hence low satisfaction. Interaction in such restricted networks sometimes breaks down into two or more private conversations going on at the same time between pairs of individuals during a group meeting.

The All-Channel network permits rapid communication without having to get clearance from a central gatekeeping authority; everyone is free to say what they want while it is pertinent and fresh in mind. Communication flows freely from person to person. At least half of the comments are addressed to the group as a whole, and all group members can hear and attend to all one-to-one or one-to-few comments. Free feedback of questions and responses is thus encouraged. Many studies have shown morale to be highest when all channels are open, and some have indicated superior problem solving on complex tasks by groups with such networks compared to more restricted networks of flow of communication. To have a functional All-Channel network will take some conscious effort on the part of group members, but you are well advised to see that departures from such a completely open net are very brief.

Status

Status refers to the relative importance of each member and their prestige. As group roles emerge, each person is placed on a sort of ladder or pecking order within the group. Thus, status is closely associated with position in a communication network. Researchers have found that high-status members talk more often than do low-status members, that highs communicate more often with each other than with lows, and that lows tend to address their comments to persons higher in status than themselves rather than to members of equal or lower status. Discussants tend to interrupt and ignore the comments of low-status persons far more often than those of highs. However, the status hierarchy of a small group is not inflexible; it may change through time as members make contributions to the group's goals, and roles change. Most persons find satisfaction in the psychological rewards that come from high status: being admired, responded to, supported, and liked. We spend much time and effort acquiring the symbols of high status, such as, fine automobiles, tailored clothing, houses in exclusive neighborhoods, trophies, and titles.

When a small group is first developing, status will often be ascribed on the basis of each member's position in the society external to the small group, guided by such benchmarks as wealth, education, work, personal fame, or position in the parent organization of a committee. However, status is earned or achieved in the small working group based on each member's perceived contributions to the group's goals, so that order would likely change drastically as functional roles emerged.

Sex has an unpredictable impact on status and roles in a group today, depending on the beliefs and values of the members. A decade ago one could predict that in a mixed sex group, a male would almost always emerge as leader, and that the status of females would on the average be lower than the status of males. Today, this situation is not necessarily the case, however, some men tend to resist the leadership of a woman, no matter how capable and some women will refuse, as a matter of principle, to follow any plans suggested by a man. When the discussion group mirrors the struggle between the sexes for position within the group, this hidden agenda item will interfere with productive work.

Most small groups establish two or three levels of status in their hierarchy. This does not mean that lower members are not judged to be of value, or that they are unhappy in the group. Cohesive groups value the contributions of each member, and every member knows it. High is not necessarily better, just more influential. Case studies of student groups often contain such comments as this: "Every member of our group played a vital role. Jim, our leader, was most important in the success of our project, but even quiet

Norman made a vital contribution with his careful research and by arranging a place where we could meet. He could always be counted on to do his part. I would not change a member of this group even if I could".

Norms

Every group develops norms. These are rules of conduct, standard of participation, or expectations of how members would behave. They are not regulations imposed by a head person with power to punish, but guidelines that all or most members accept implicitly. Norms both guide and regulate behavior of group members. They determine how and to whom members speak, how they dress, where and how they sit, what they talk about, what language may be used and so on.

During the developmental stage of a new small group, norms are developed rapidly, often without the members realizing what is occurring. The first meeting is quite important in establishing norms, especially the first few minutes. At that time, behaviors that are typical of primary tension can become norms if the tension is not released early.

Group norms may or may not be stated openly, but they can be detected by a keen observer. The best evidence comes when someone acts contrary to a norm and is then punished in some way by the group. For example, others may frown, fail to respond, comment negatively about the behavior, or even scold the violator: "Let's stick to the issues and not go blaming one another". Every norm has some impact on a group's productivity and member satisfaction. The norms that are counter-productive or reduce satisfaction need to be changed.

Two general types of norms develop as a group culture emerges: (1) those governing the specialized role of each member and (2) those that apply to all members. Members share in the expectation that both types of norms will be complied with.

Some examples of role-specific norms are:

- o "The leader should prepare and distribute an agenda in advance of each meeting."
- o "The leader should summarize from time to time, but other members may do so if the leader does not when a summary is needed."

- o "Mary may play the critical tester of all ideas, asking for evidence pointing out logical fallacies, and otherwise evaluating."
- o "Mike should tell a joke to relive secondary tension when the climate gets stressful from an argument over different points of view".

Some examples of typical norms that would apply to every member of a small group are:

- o "Each speaker should relate their comments to what has been said previously during the discussion". (productive)
- o "Discussants should avoid challenging the leader's opinions". (counter-productive)

Conformity to procedural norms is essential if members are to work together. Discussants are usually inclined to conform to the procedural norms of the group. Any violation of the norms may mean that the norm is not understood by the violator or they disagree with it. If procedural norms are clearly understood, but still violated by one or more members, this should be called to the attention of the group and some action should be taken. Continued violation means the member feels the norm is some how detrimental. Here are two examples of procedural norms typical of effective discussion groups: "Members should stick to the agenda, unless all agree to change it". "While brainstorming, no one should criticize any idea suggested".

In order to clarify, and possibly change norms of a discussion group, first study their effects. Group awareness of harmful effects can lead to change. A participant should try to discover answers to the following questions if they sense that something is wrong that may be due to a counter-productive norm:

- o What regularities of behavior can be seen? For example, who talks to whom? How do the persons talk? Where do they sit? To what degree do they ask for evidence supporting a position? How are ideas evaluated?
- o What seems to be the practical effects of each of these modes of behaving? For example, are ideas going untested? Are some members ideas accepted uncritically while others ideas are ignored? Is there much evidence of frustration?
- o What happens when a member deviates from a norm? Is this deviant behavior punished in some way?

Once you have formulated the norms you believe to be detrimental to the group, state it to the members, describe the evidence of its existence, and suggest that it be replaced by a different norm or pattern of behavior. The group will likely discuss this problem for a few minutes, and decide to make the change. Even if this is done by consensus, members may still need reminders of the new norm for some time to come until it has become largely habituated.

Norms are based on the shared values-beliefs of what is relatively good or bad, productive or unproductive. Values are often explored and developed in what appear to be tangents to a group's discussion topic, in sequence of comments that are called fantasy chains. The process of group dramatizing or fantasy chaining relates to unconscious meanings or needs of one or more participants. Hence such fantasies have great power to motivate discussants. Usually several persons participate in a group fantasy chain, but not necessarily all members. Consider how this process occurs. Quite often the group seems at a loss for what to say or do. Talking peters out, or perhaps there is an awkward tenseness due to conflict among members. Suddenly someone says something that appears to be off the subject, a tangent about persons in some other time and place.

Interaction speeds up, a pitch of excitement is heard in the voices; often there is some conflict or an edge of hostility. The volume of sound often goes up as the group begins the chain association. Many signs of interest are seen among those who do not participate verbally. Restless movements increase as people try to find a way to get into the conversation.

The fantasy is manifestly about persons and events outside the group, that could have occurred in another time (past or future) and another place. At the same time, on a different level, the talk mirrors indirectly the problems of the group at the moment, such as fears, dislikes, loves, jealousies, tense relations between members, relations with other groups, un verbalized hidden agendas, and so forth.

Fantasy chains can easily be detected by an observer watching for them by noting sudden changes of pace, levels of excitement, and a sort of electric tension in the air. To interpret the fantasy, look for sudden insight into what is going on in the group that has not been openly discussed. Systematic analysis will not work. Through fantasy chains a group establishes a new realm of social reality for its members, a dramatic conflict, with shared values and interest.

Cohesiveness

The term cohesiveness is used by social psychologists to refer to the common bonds and sentiments that hold a group together. To say that a group is high in cohesiveness is to say that a relationship among members, on the average, are highly attractive to them, they have a high degree of "stick togetherness" and unity. Defining cohesiveness operationally has not been easy, for we cannot measure the concept directly. How would you observe and measure "the resultant of all the forces acting on the members to remain in the group", a widely accepted definition? Obviously you cannot, but must observe selected behaviors that can be considered an index of how cohesive a small group may be; members individual assessments of how closely knit they are as a group; how strongly members feel a sense of belonging or affiliation to the group as expressed on a scale, attendance at meetings; favorable remarks about the group to outsiders; degree of conformity to the group norms that call for behaviors different from those the members manifest in other social situations; achievement of consensus or lack thereof, especially in expressions of value.

Researchers have shown that groups high in cohesiveness have greater rates of interaction than less cohesive groups, express more positive feelings for each other, and have more satisfaction with the group and its products. The higher the cohesiveness of the group, the greater control over member behaviors the group as a whole will be able to exert.

A high degree of cohesiveness is associated with a high degree of ability to cope effectively with unusual problems, and to work as a team in meeting emergencies. Production groups, if highly cohesive, can produce more than low cohesive groups, but may not do so if the members are influenced by intragroup norms for less production. High cohesiveness is associated with the group's ability to get members to conform to the majority or high-status members' desires. Conformity in many problem-solving groups contributes to very low quality decisions which is may be the result of "group think", which does not allow for disagreement with the beliefs of high-status members. Deviance from the beliefs of high-status members or the majority may be put down so powerfully that persons holding valid information that negates those beliefs even begins to doubt their own information. As such groups continue through time they become very predictable, less creative, less able to use novel ideas, and the challengers to this process are silenced or even put out of the group. The very persons who could contribute most to the quality of solutions by pointing out fallacious thinking find the group less and less attractive while the cohesiveness among the majority is growing. Thus we have a dilemma of how to maintain a productive degree of creativity and critical thinking while at the same time maintaining a high degree

of cohesiveness essential to high potential, personal satisfaction, and loyalty.

However, we do know that a group that accomplished its objectives, provides members with satisfaction in their participation, officers prestige in belonging, and is successful in competing with other groups, has high attractiveness to its members. We also know that cohesiveness is fostered by the degree to which members know and like each other as persons, their frequency of interaction, and the amount of influence exerted by each on the group. Interestingly, open disagreeing has been shown to be more frequent in high-cohesive groups than in low-cohesive groups. A climate of trust in which each member feels secure permits expressions of disagreement on issues, facts, and ideas, provided the disagreement is aimed at arriving at high-quality solutions. But if high-status members resist disagreement as a personal affront, then whatever cohesiveness is achieved by other means will be at the expense of low-quality decision making (groupthink). Highly successful and cohesive groups tend to first get well acquainted and interested in each other as persons. They accept the need for secondary tensions generated by disagreements, and find ways to reduce these tensions by giving priority to evidence, rational thinking, and compromise. After decisions have been reached, such groups restate the value of the group and of each of its members. Members can be heard saying such things as: "I'm proud of our group, we really thresh out ideas until we arrive at the best, and then we team up." Even if I disagreed with you, Joe, I'm glad you spoke up. "We disagreed openly and honestly, and I learned a lot from you. I like that."

In order to enhance cohesiveness a group should consciously do the following:

- o Develop a strong identity as a group and a group tradition or history. This can be done by developing nicknames for the group, insignia of membership, referring to past events with pride and pleasure, ceremonies and rituals, and emphasizing the high quality of accomplishments.
- o Stress teamwork, and give credit to the group. Avoid talking about what you did personally for the group, especially if you are the designated leader. Volunteering to do things for the group, and emphasizing how important the group is to you will help get members feeling closer to each other.
- o Recognize contributions to the group goal by members, thus rewarding individual members from within the group. Low-status members especially need reward and praise from other group members, and not criticism, if they are to develop

the loyalty that will make them more productive and dependable.

- o Show human concern for the persons who make up the group, providing warmth, affection, and direct attention to personal tensions and problems that members indicate. As soon as personal needs are dealt with, however, the group should get back to the group task.
- o Support both disagreement and agreement, which basically means working for a norm of open expression of disagreement or support for ideas. Highly cohesive groups show more disagreement; open conflict needs to be encouraged, not repressed. When the conflicts are settled, persons who supported rejected ideas that helped build a better group solution, and comments such as "Let's get behind this", are needed.
- o Help the group set clear and attainable goals, which also provide enough of a challenge to yield a sense of pride in group achievement. Continuing groups that fail to reach their objectives tend to display lowered cohesiveness and may even break up.

RETIREED CURRICULUM

NON VERBAL CODES

Nonverbal components of messages are equally as important as the verbal in determining listeners interpretations and responses. Furthermore, a large proportion of the interaction among discussants is done with signals that are entirely nonverbal. It is estimated that sixty-five percent of meaning when persons communicate is the result of nonverbal signals. Sometimes the meaning derived from nonverbal cues during face-to-face interaction is as high as ninety-three percent. Four implications of communicating via nonverbal signals are especially important to keep in mind when considering what happens during the process of discussion:

- o You cannot not communicate in a face-to-face small group. Nonverbal cues go out from you constantly; you cannot stop them. Even if you sit relatively immobile and impassive, that behavior will be seen and responded to by others, possibly with distrust, dislike, worry about what you are up to or what is wrong with you. Another way to put it is that in a group "nothing never happens" with anyone.
- o Many nonverbal cues are highly ambiguous when not clarified verbally. For instance, a smile can mean friendship, agreement, disdain, gloating, private reverie, or just about anything.
- o In any case, where the words signal one attitude or idea to a perceiver and the nonverbal cues signal another, the receiver is more likely to believe the nonverbal signals. Thus if you say "I'm really interested in that idea" in a flat tone while looking at notes in front of you, the previous speaker to whom you are responding is almost certain to believe that you do not care what he or she suggested.
- o Our feelings are communicated primarily by our nonverbal signals. These signals can rarely be concealed from sensitive persons in the close proximity of a small group. Integrity or sincerity is the only means to prevent tension from the mixed messages that result when a discussant attempts to deceive, bluff, or play manipulative games with other members of a small group.

Within a few seconds after you enter a group, you are ready to pass judgements on the other members. You are ready to predict which members will be friends, which will be hard workers, and which

trouble-makers. But if someone dared to ask how you make these judgements, you would probably be hard-put to provide an articulate answer. Is it the clothes they wore? The shape and smell of their bodies? How they combed their hair? Maybe it's the way they sat, or where they sat, or how they moved their bodies when they turned to look at you?

Functions Of Nonverbal Signals In Small Group Communication

Nonverbal signals serve six major functions during group interaction: supplementing the verbal code, substituting for words, contradicting verbal statements, expressing emotions, regulating the interaction, and indicating status relationships. Being aware of these functions can help you act in ways that will be appropriate when responding to others and make your own signals more clear and unambiguous to them.

Supplementing The Verbal

A movement or gesture may effectively repeat what is being said, as when a person points to item three on a chart at the same time says, "now look at the third item on our list of ideas". Such repeating makes the verbal message doubly clear. Other nonverbal messages serve to complement or elaborate what is said. For instance, a discussant might shake his head from side to side while saying, "I cannot accept that suggestion. I consider it immoral", in a voice louder and more strained than usual, or hold up three fingers while saying "There are three things in support of your suggestion".

Some nonverbal signals give emphasis or accent the verbal message. A nod of the head, increased force on a particular word or phrase, and a shake of the finger can indicate, "This is an especially important thought or word I am now uttering". Thus by repeating, complementing, and emphasizing, nonverbal signals can supplement the verbal.

Substituting For Words

Many gestures are substitutes for words. A back-and-forth nod of the head is often used to indicate agreement or to bid at an auction without saying anything. If the chairperson of a small group asks, "Do you want to vote on this?" and then sees one person shaking their head from side to side, no vote will be taken at that time. A finger movement can indicate to another discussant that you want them to lean closer to you, or a circle made with the thumb and forefinger can say in effect "I approve", "I'm okay".

Because only one person can be speaking at a time in an orderly discussion, a great deal of the communication among members is done with nonverbal substitutes for words. Not to be aware of these, or not to consciously look for them, will mean that you are missing many important potential messages among the group members.

Contradicting Verbal Messages

When something that a person says in a discussion doesn't seem to "ring true", often that is because the nonverbal cues contradict the words uttered. For instance, someone might say, "Yes, I go along with that", but in such a way that you expect them to give no real support to the idea. When you observe nonverbal messages that seem to contradict what someone is saying, it will usually pay to point out and ask what the person means.

Expressing Emotions

As the previous example indicated, our feelings are communicated more often by nonverbal cues than by what we say. Try saying, "I like you" in a variety of ways, and notice how each seems to indicate a very different feeling. Sitting close to another person can indicate more positive feelings for them than any words can convey.

Regulating Interaction

Certain nonverbal messages control or direct the flow of interaction among group members. A designated discussion leader may use nods of the head, eye contact, and hand movements to indicate who should speak next when two or more persons have indicated a desire to do so. Favorable nods encourage a speaker to continue, whereas a lack of overt response or looking away often signals "shut up". Persons will show they want to speak by leaning forward, raising a hand or finger, opening the mouth, and possibly by uttering a nonverbal sound such as "uh". Hand signals may be used to speed up a dawdling speaker, or slow someone who is rushing. So it is that nonverbal cues are the primary means of regulating the flow of verbal interaction in a discussion group.

Indicating Relationships

It has previously been pointed out that sitting at the end of a table may indicate leader status or desire for a high degree of influence in a small group. A feeling of relative superiority is often indicated by staking out a larger than average amount of

territory at a table (with books, etc.), suddenly getting very close to another, a penetrating stare, a loud voice, and a patronizing pat or other touch. Relatively high status persons tend to have more relaxed posture than lower status group members. On the other hand, uncrossing arms and legs, unbuttoning a coat, and general relaxation of the body often signal openness and a feeling of equality. Body orientation, the angle at which a participant's shoulders and legs are turned in

relation to the group as a whole or another person, indicate how much one feels a part of the group, and often that one is more committed to a subgroup than to the group as a whole.

Types Of Nonverbal Signals

Although we usually respond to a pattern of simultaneous nonverbal signals, rather than to a single cue, nonetheless it is important to be aware of the variety of types of such cues to help you avoid overlooking some of them. There are many ways of classifying nonverbal signals. Those which are listed below seem to play an especially important role in communication among members of small groups.

Paraverbal Cues

These are the characteristics of voice and utterances other than words from which listeners interpret meanings of speakers. Included are such variables as pitch, rate and fluency of utterance, dialectical variations, force, tone quality, and silences (pauses). Listeners tend to agree on the characteristics they ascribe to speakers based on vocal cues. Included are such characteristics as aptitudes and interests, personality traits, adjustment, ethnic group, education, anxiety, and other emotional states. The tone of a voice has been recognized as an excellent indicator of a person's self-concept and mood. How we react to statements such as "I agree" or "Okay" depends much more on the pitch patterns and tone of voice than on the words themselves. Anxiety about communicating has been related to nonfluencies such as interjections ("uh"), repetitions, hesitations, sentence corrections, and even stuttering. To discover how you infer from vocal cues, tape record a discussion. Everyone in the group should listen just to the voices, trying to ignore the words, and then write a description of the mood, feelings, or attitudes of each other person in the group. A comparison of the results often show strikingly high agreement.

Facial Expression

Facial expression is highly indicative of feelings and moods. Without a word being spoken, you can often perceive anger, support, agreement, disagreement, and other sentiments from facial expressions. With the close physical proximity typical of a small group meeting one can easily detect changing moods of fellow discussants if one is simply aware of facial expressions.

Eye Contact

Americans in small groups often use eye contact to seek feedback, when they want to be spoken to, and when they want to participate more actively. In a competitive relationship between two persons, direct eye contact (or staring) may indicate something like "lets fight" whereas in a cooperative group it signifies friendship and cohesiveness. As previously mentioned, eye contact is used to regulate the flow of conversation among discussants. Averting the look from another is usually taken as a sign that one wishes not to speak. Persons who seek and provide eye contact are often regarded as more believable than those who offer limited eye contact.

Eye movements can also signal disgust, dislike, superiority, or inferiority. In short, the eyes provide many important clues in human interchange.

Movement

Body movements and gestures signify much to the sensitive observer. A gatekeeper's nod may indicate who should speak next. Leaning toward another person in the group usually indicates interest, whereas leaning away indicates the opposite. However, leaning away during a discussion held out-of-doors might simply indicate being relaxed. A lot of twisting and shuffling of feet may indicate frustration or impatience with the pace of group progress. Members movements often signal that it is time for the meeting to end.

Dress And Accessories

These are often cues to status as members get acquainted in a small group. Crosses, social organization pins, jewelry, hair styles, and type of clothing often say much about how a person sees self, reference group memberships from which one derives norms, and personal values.

Any single nonverbal cue may be meaningless or highly ambiguous. But if you are careful to observe all the types of nonverbal cues a person is sending, you will gain a great deal of information helpful in relating effectively and in interpreting his or her verbal messages.

RETIRED CURRICULUM

EVALUATING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

In all human interactions there are two major ingredients - content and process. The first deals with the subject matter or the task upon which the group is working. In most interactions, the focus of attention of all persons is on the content. The second ingredient process, is concerned with what is happening between and to group members while the group is working. Group process, or dynamics, deals with such items as morale, feeling tone, atmosphere, influence, participation, styles of influence, leadership struggles, conflict, competition, cooperation, etc. In most interactions, very little attention is paid to process, even when it is the major cause of ineffective group action. Sensitivity to group process will better enable one to diagnose group problems early and deal with them more effectively. Since these processes are present in all groups, awareness of them will enhance a person's worth to a group and enable him to be a more effective group participant.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUP BEHAVIOR

Below are some observation guidelines to help one process analyze group behavior.

Participation

One indication of involvement is verbal participation. Look for differences in the amount of participation among members.

- o Who are the high participators?
- o Who are the low participators?
- o Do you see any shift in participation, e.g., highs become quiet, lows suddenly become talkative. Do you see any possible reason for this in the group's interaction?
- o How are the silent people treated? How is their silence interpreted? Consent? Disagreement? Disinterest? Fear? etc.
- o Who talks to whom? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?
- o Who keeps the ball rolling? Why? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?

Influence

Influence and participation are not the same. Some people may speak very little, yet they capture the attention of the whole group. Others may talk a lot but are generally not listened to by other members.

- o Which members are high in influence? That is, when they talk others seem to listen.
- o Which members are low in influence? Others do not listen to or follow them. Is there any shifting in influence? Who shifts?
- o Do you see any rivalry in the group? Is there a struggle for leadership? What effect does it have on other group members?

Styles Of Influence

Influence can take many forms. It can be positive or negative; it can enlist the support or cooperation of others or alienate them. How a person attempts to influence another may be the crucial factor in determining how open or closed the other will be toward being influenced. The following items are suggestive of four styles that frequently emerge in groups.

- o Autocratic: Does anyone attempt to impose his will or values on other group members or try to push them to support his decisions? Who evaluates or passes judgment on other group members? Do any members block action when it is not moving the direction they desire? Who pushes to "get the group organized"?
- o Peacemaker: Who eagerly supports other group members' decisions? Does anyone consistently try to avoid conflict or unpleasant feelings from being expressed by pouring oil on the troubled waters? Is any member typically deferential toward other group members - give them power? Do any members appear to avoid giving negative feedback, i.e., who will level only when they have positive feedback to give?
- o Laissez faire: Are any group members getting attention by their apparent lack of involvement in the group? Does any group member go along with group decisions without seeming to commit himself one way or the other? Who seems to be withdrawn and uninvolved; who does not initiate activity, participates mechanically and only in response to another member's question?
- o Democratic: Does anyone try to include everyone in a

group decision or discussion? Who expresses his feelings and opinions openly and directly without evaluating or judging others? Who appears to be open to feedback and criticisms from others? When feelings run high and tension mounts, which members attempt to deal with the conflict in a problem-solving way?

Decision-Making Procedures

Many kinds of decisions are made in groups without considering the effects of these decisions on other members. Some people try to impose their own decisions on the group, while others want all members to participate or share in the decisions that are made.

- o Does anyone make a decision and carry it out without checking with other group members? (Self-authorized) For example, he decides on the topic to be discussed and immediately begins to talk about it. What effect does this have on other group members?
- o Does the group drift from topic to topic? Who topic jumps? Do you see any reason for this in the groups interactions?
- o Who supports other members' suggestions or decisions? Does this support result in the two members deciding the topic or activity for the group (handclasp)? How does this effect other group members?
- o Is there any evidence of a majority pushing a decision through over other members objections? Do they call for a vote (majority support)?
- o Is there any attempt to get all members participating in a decision (consensus)? What effect does this seem to have on the group?
- o Does anyone make any contributions which do not receive any kind of response or recognition (plop)? What effect does this have on the member?

Task Functions

These functions illustrate behaviors that are concerned with getting the job done, or accomplishing the task that the group has before them.

- o Does anyone ask for or take suggestions as to the best

way to proceed or to tackle a problem?

- o Does anyone attempt to summarize what has been covered or what has been going on in the group?
- o Is there any giving or asking for facts, ideas, opinions, feelings, feedback, or searching for alternatives?
- o Who keeps the group on target? Who prevents topic-jumping or going off on tangents?

Maintenance Functions

These functions are important to the morale of the group. They maintain good and harmonious working relationships among the members and create a group atmosphere which enables each member to contribute maximally. They insure smooth and effective teamwork within the group.

- o Who helps others get into the discussion (gate openers)?
- o Who cuts off others or interrupts them (gateclosers)?
- o How well are members getting their ideas across? Are some members preoccupied and not listening? Are there any attempts by group members to help others clarify their ideas?
- o How are ideas rejected? How do members react when their ideas are not accepted? Do members attempt to support others when they reject their ideas?

Group Atmosphere

Something about the way a group works creates an atmosphere which in turn is revealed in a general impression. In addition, people may differ in the kind of atmosphere they like in a group. Insight can be gained into the atmosphere characteristic of a group by finding words which describe the general impressions held by group members.

- o Who seems to prefer a friendly congenial atmosphere? Is there any attempt to suppress conflict or unpleasant feelings?
- o Who seems to prefer an atmosphere of conflict and disagreement? Do any members provoke or annoy others?
- o Do people seem involved and interested? Is the

atmosphere one of work, play, satisfaction, taking fights, sluggishness, etc.?

Membership

A major concern for group members is the degree of acceptance or inclusion in the group. Different patterns of interaction may develop in the group which give clues to the degree and kind of membership.

- o Is there any sub-grouping? Some times two or three members may consistently agree and support each other or consistently disagree and oppose one another.
- o Do some people seem to be "outside" the group? Do some members seem to be "in"? How are those "outside" treated?
- o Do some members move in and out of the group, e.g., lean forward or backward in their chairs or move their chairs in and out? Under what conditions do they come in or move out?

Feelings

During any group discussion, feelings are frequently generated by the interactions between members. These feelings, however, are seldom talked about. Observers may have to make guesses based on tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and many other forms of nonverbal cues.

- o What signs of feelings do you observe in group members: anger, irritation, frustration, warmth, affection,, excitement, boredom, defensiveness, competitiveness, etc.?
- o Do you see any attempts by group members to block the expression of feelings, particularly negative feelings? How is this done? Does anyone do this consistently?

Norms

Standards or ground rules may develop in a group that control the behavior of its members. Norms usually express the beliefs or desires of the majority of the group members to what behaviors should or should not take place in the group. These norms may be

clear to all members (explicit), known or sensed by only a few

(implicit), or operating completely below the level of awareness of any group members. Some norms facilitate group progress and may hinder it.

- o Are certain areas avoided in the group (e.g., sex, religion, talk about present feelings in group, discussing the leader's behavior, etc.)? Who seems to reinforce this avoidance? How do they do it?
- o Are group members overly nice or polite to each other? Are only positive feelings expressed? Do members agree with each other too readily? What happens when members disagree?
- o Do you see norms operating about participation or the kinds of questions that are allowed (e.g., "If I talk, you must talk"; "If I tell my problems you have to tell your problems") Do members feel free to probe each other about their feelings? Do questions tend to be restricted to intellectual topics or events outside of the group.

EVALUATING DIMENSIONS

Behavioral definitions and ideal characteristics of individuals working within groups include the following:

- o Decisiveness: The extent to which an individual is able and willing to make a decision when required.

Ideal Characteristics

- Makes up mind on all alternatives, especially under pressure, without vacillating or procrastinating
- Displays a constant willingness to decide rather than asking for more information or procrastinating in bringing issues to closure

- o Decision Quality: The extent to which an individual makes sound decisions based on the exercise of judgment and consideration of all available information

Ideal Characteristics

- Decisions exhibit qualitative depth of action rather than quantitative, shallow, or impulsive decisions

- Generally makes firm decisions but allows for

alternative approaches if things go wrong or if significant new information is presented

- Looks at long-range consequences and implications rather than handling only the short-term immediacy of problems
 - Makes decisions logically and consistent with organizational goals and policies
- o Planning: The extent to which an individual can anticipate future possibilities or consequences of present situations and alternatives

Ideal Characteristics

- Is able to provide future implications for various alternative actions
 - Anticipates situations or problems and prepares in advance to cope with them
 - Is aware of both the important priorities at present and also is aware of possible future priorities
 - Develops realistic goals and objectives
 - Projects and interprets trends
- o Organizing: The extent to which an individual can assemble information, materials, thoughts or actions into coherent, orderly, logical unity

Ideal Characteristics

- Approaches problems in a logical manner
 - Develops ideas in a orderly fashion, without unnecessary digression or irrelevant information
 - Coordinates group efforts effectively
- o Problem Analysis: The extent to which an individual identifies and analyzes all relevant variables and their interrelationships

Ideal Characteristics

- Quickly perceives and defines problems and central issues
- Objectively seeks and sorts out pertinent information,

considers organizational goals and weighs consequences of alternatives

- Sees relationships among the people involved within the problem and within the organization
- Perceives differences in priorities
- o Productivity: The extent to which an individual actively and constructively participates in group or individual problem solving

Ideal Characteristics

- Consistently strives towards meeting an individual or organizational goal
- Frequently offers pertinent information or ideas to others
- Energetic and efficient, attempts to complete all work assigned
- o Initiative/Self Direction: The extent to which an individual demonstrates self-starting behavior, is willing to originate action without instruction, and is willing to produce new ideas, methods, and interpretations of policy

Ideal Characteristics

- Determines outcomes; does not merely let things happen (proactive, not reactive)
- Actively influences events rather than passively accepting them
- Frequently develops new approaches, ideas, methods, and interpretations of policy
- Assumes responsibility and control in situations requiring prompt action
- Accepts additional assignments or devotes extra time to assignments
- o Leadership/Personal Direction: The extent to which an individual effectively directs the behavior of others to accomplish a task or goal without arousing hostility.

Ideal Characteristics

- Commands positive attention and respect and generates impression of self-confidence
 - Influences others to accept ideas and support positions
 - Motivates others, without alienating them, to perform at full potential and accomplish objectives
 - Directs group discussions without dominating others
 - Accepts and appropriately responds to counsel and disagreement
 - Encourages free flow of ideas and cooperative resolution of problems
- o Interpersonal Sensitivity: The extent to which an individual is able to perceive and respond to the needs, interests, and capabilities of others

Ideal Characteristics

- Perceives the perspectives and needs of others and considers them in selecting and advocating a course of action
 - Modifies behavior when perceiving adverse impact on others
 - Attempts to include and encourage others
 - Establishes and maintains positive working relationships with others, providing support and collaboration
- o Composure And Self-Control: The extent to which an individual functions in a controlled, effective manner under stress and pursues tasks to completion despite opposition or difficulties

Ideal Characteristics

- Keeps composure under pressure
- Overall performance does not deteriorate even under stressful conditions
- Accepts time delays, constraints and disappointments without being irate or discouraged
- Performance remains stable when progress is slow and

pressure from opposition is strong

- Continues working, does not give up
- o Flexibility: The extent to which an individual perceives accepts the need for change; modified behavior style or position in response to changes in situations or priorities; modifies approach to obtain goals

Ideal Characteristics

- Readily shifts behavior to accommodate changes in situations
- Demonstrates resourcefulness in implementing alternatives in working to obtain goals
- Uses a variety of approaches until finds one that works to attain objectives
- Backs off position if perceives situation has changed or group support is absent
- o Oral Communication: The extent to which an individual expresses ideas clearly, concisely, and persuasively, including gestures and other nonverbal communication; the extent to which an individual listens to others attentively and with comprehension

Ideal Characteristics

- Speaks clearly and concisely
- Listens attentively to what others say and extracts relevant information
- Speaks directly to a question or issue without confusion, disorganization, or rambling
- As appropriate, translates technical language to level of audience
- Gestures and other nonverbal communication indicate control of self and situation and serve to facilitate communication
- Technical qualities of oral expression (volume, rate, vocabulary) do not distract from basic clarity of communication
- o Written Communication: The extent to which an individual

expresses ideas in writing clearly and in good grammatical form

Ideal Characteristics

- Document is complete, all significant aspects included
- Detail elaborates upon overall description rather than confusing or competing with it
- Careful and appropriate choice of words
- Clarity not impaired due to problems of spelling, grammar, and punctuation

RATING ERRORS

When people are called upon to evaluate the performance of others, errors may be unknowingly brought into the process. The following descriptions cover the six most common types of rating errors:

- o First Impression Effect

This error evidences itself when the person being rated does well at the beginning of a testing process, but then "poops out". The rater observing this person may become so impressed with that early behavior that a high rating is given, even though the total behavior warranted a lower rating.

Related to this rating error is the last impression or recency effect where behavior occurring at the end of the process, good or bad, is given undue weight by not taking into consideration the total behavior.

- o Halo Effect

This error evidences itself in the tendency to allow a candidate's performance on one dimension to influence the rating on all the other dimensions, even when there is little evidence for such ratings on those other dimensions.

It is important that raters try to keep the dimensions as distant as possible. Some of the dimensions are closely related, and skill in one area often goes along with skill in another. Nevertheless, careful attention to the amount of actual behavior justifying a rating will help to avoid this type of rating.

- o Leniency Effect

This error evidences itself in the tendency to be an "easy" rater. It is often less offensive to be generous than it is to make objective, but lower, ratings.

Conversely, there is also a tendency, among a fewer number of raters, to be excessively and unjustifiably harsh. The key is to focus attention on the behavior observed in the process.

- o Central Tendency Effect

This error evidences itself in the predisposition to "play it safe" by avoiding the use of extreme ratings, even when they are called for and justified.

Sometimes raters fail to assign the minimum or maximum on the assumption that no candidate could be that bad or good. It is very important to make fair distinctions among candidates, and the full range of scores should therefore be used.

- o Contrast Effect

This error evidences itself when a particular candidate's evaluation is influenced by the evaluation of the preceding candidate.

Keep in mind that you are evaluating against specific criteria and not against another candidate. The key is to focus on the actual amount and nature of the behavior observed.

- o Similar To Me Effect

This error evidences itself when candidates remind you of your own approach to situations thereby resulting in higher ratings than are justified. The reverse situation can also occur, resulting in lower ratings than the actual behavior would dictate.

It is important to remember that the rater is not the one being evaluated.

It should be realized that the rating errors described may influence rater evaluations. This does not mean that they automatically will have some impact. Awareness of the types of rating errors which may occur is an important step in reducing their potential effects.

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

WHAT GROUPS DO BEST

The most common use of meetings is to bring people together to disseminate information. Information is useless unless it compels people to solve a problem, make a decision, or devise a plan. Useless information bores people. The pure information dissemination meeting, held at regular periods during the work life of an organization, has one guaranteed result: boredom!

It is this experience of the regular use of bringing people together that has made most managers skeptical about the potential of groups. Typically these types of meetings usually allow very little participation for most of the members of the group. Many group leaders lack communication skills, leadership ability, and an understanding of the responsibilities of group leading. So, in a short period of time, the minds in the group wander. By the end of the meeting, the subjects that have been talked about have been diminished in importance because they have been ignored.

Consider the following recommendations regarding meetings and groups: (1) Do everything possible to diminish the time spent in pure information dissemination. Getting people together solely for this purpose is asking for failure. When possible, convert information sharing to problem solving, decision making, or planning. For instance, the announcement of a new policy can be a problem-solving agenda by presenting two or three cases to which the policy must be applied. (2) Give the group some work to do. The underlying assumption in calling any good meeting is that people are being brought together to do what groups do best: employ their members' minds in processing information for the purpose of problem solving, decision making, or planning. Information processed for these purposes is useful - never boring - and the process of using it is one of discovery and exhilaration.

Finally, if your problems, decisions, and plans are simple ones, do not waste other people's time by calling a meeting. Treat a group as a kind of superior intelligence, and engage the group in tasks worthy of it.

Meet some typical meeting goers:

"There's the group leader who gets a power fix from calling all subordinates into one room and playing meeting master. He's similar to the project manager who relishes the temporary chance to chair meetings of her peers and calls unnecessary project meetings"

"There's the boss who detests department meetings; they're a waste of time, she'd rather write her workers a memo, she doesn't need their input on decisions."

"And there's the worker who agrees with this boss. He's got more important things to do than sit through a meeting where his opinions and ideas do not count."

"There's also the eager meeting attendee. To her, a meeting is a paid break in the day, a chance to catch up on daydreaming or doodling."

"Then there are these meeting goers: group leaders and project managers with valid reasons for every meeting they call and expertise in conducting the meetings. They recognize the benefits of orally communicating information and soliciting spontaneous feedback from the group. The importance of this oral exchange is felt by all meeting attendees. They not only actively participate in the meeting, but leave satisfied that their time was well spent. These ideal meeting leaders and participants form the base for productive meetings, a goal of countless business professionals who recognize the benefits. Well-executed meetings produce ideas and problem solutions that might not occur to a lone worker at a desk. They also boost morale, and productivity in the process, by creating a feeling of involvement among employees. All this is accomplished during a time-efficient session, not necessarily short but always as short as possible."

Purposes Of Meetings

A productive meeting begins with a purpose. You have a good reason for calling the meeting, and you plan the meeting keeping the reason constantly in mind. Every decision you make from who to invite to the meeting, to how to run it, revolves around the meeting's purpose. Following are several common meeting purposes:

- o To share information or plan a project. You have news, plans, or other information to share with a group, information best communicated orally or with an audiovisual presentation. Or, various people need to relay information and hear news from others.
- o To receive information. You need information from others, information best received through oral rather than written reports.

- o To analyze and solve a problem. The problem is one that affects the entire group and can be solved best through discussion and debate of different viewpoints.
- o To reach a group decision. The opinion of everyone in the group counts and the decision is best made after open discussion.
- o To explain and gain support for a decision. You had authority for making a decision and reason for doing so alone; now you need to tell affected parties about it and to solicit their support.
- o To make a recommendation and solicit feedback. You have an idea or you have made a tentative decision and you want spontaneous reactions from people who will be affected or from others whose opinions you respect.
- o To generate ideas for a new program or plan. A brainstorming session is in order for figuring out ways of working or for thinking up possible new programs.

Be careful not to provide too much information into any single meeting. Giving people too much news at one time or asking them to solve too many problems at once destroys meeting effectiveness.

Whatever the purpose of your meeting is, make sure you explain it in advance to the attendees. They should know ahead of time, for instance, whether they're attending to listen to a report or help solve a problem. Attendees need this information not just to satisfy their curiosity but to adequately prepare for the meeting.

Meeting Fundamentals

No matter what the purpose, all productive meetings have several similarities. Certain elements characterize an effective meeting and certain conditions are necessary for a successful meeting to occur. Responsibility for these characteristics and conditions is shared by the meeting leader and the participants. Therefore, all participants should be made aware of these fundamentals.

Characteristics Of An Effective Meeting

Characteristics of an effective meeting include the following:

- o All participants have a valid reason for being included in the meeting

- o All participants know the purpose of the meeting and arrive prepared to fulfill that purpose
- o There is a meeting agenda
- o The meeting is run time efficiently and sticks to the agenda
- o Objectives determined in advance are achieved by the end of the meeting
- o All parties leave the meeting knowing what was accomplished and what is expected of them for the future

Conditions Necessary For A Successful Meeting

To be successful, all meetings must have a specified leader and all participants should understand and respect the leader's role. However, leadership is essentially shared by all participants, as well as, a feeling of responsibility for the meeting content and outcomes. The meeting atmosphere should be safe and supportive. All participants should feel free to express their views frankly without fear of repercussions. Also, participants should display interest in and respect for each other's views.

Planning The Meeting

Once a purpose for calling a meeting has been identified, and the time and circumstances seem right, you want to make sure that the time will be well spent. Know what you want to result from the meeting and that the results will merit the meeting time and effort required. To accomplish this a certain amount of time is required to plan for a productive meeting.

Objectives

Determine exactly what you want to accomplish through the meeting and write down specific objectives. Base the objectives on your overall meeting purpose and, when possible, write the objectives from the participants' point of view. Here are some examples:

- o Meeting purpose: To share information about a plan to develop a training program

Objectives:

- To understand the reasons for the training program

- To become familiar with all the parts of the program and understand their individual roles in executing the program
- To know the deadlines for their program tasks
- o Meeting purpose: To analyze and solve two problems that have arisen with the training program

Objectives:

- To discuss the general lack of interest trainees have in the program and to make recommendations for increasing interest
- to discuss the inadequacies of the training facility and to make recommendations for improvements
- o Meeting purpose: To reach a group decision about budgeting funds for an acting officer training program

Objectives:

- To discuss the expected organizational results from implementing an acting officer training program
- To weigh the expected results of the program against the costs
- To decide whether or not to budget funds for the program

Participants

After meeting objectives have been established you must concentrate on who will be attending the meeting. Based on the objectives for the meeting, decide who to ask to the meeting by asking questions such as:

- o Who needs the information you intend to share?
- o From whom do you need information from?
- o Who is affected by the problem to be discussed in the meeting?
- o Who has the authority to make a decision or approve an action?

If the meeting purpose is to discuss a controversial issue, make sure you invite an equal number of representatives from both sides of the issue. And make sure both sides of the issue are represented by people of equal status.

Review the number of participants on your list. Is it a manageable group considering the objectives you want to accomplish? Consider any additional people to invite purely for political reasons.

Agenda

Prior to the meeting an agenda should always be prepared and it should be based on the objectives established for the meeting. List the topics to be discussed in the meeting in the order in which they will be covered. Sequence topics based on the purpose of the meeting.

Some experts say covering topics in the order of importance, with the most important topic first, is best. Doing so takes advantage of early meeting energy and guarantees full coverage of the most important topics. Considerations should be given to sequencing the topics in a simple logical order. Determine how one topic naturally leads to another.

Fill in activities planned for coverage of each topic. For example, the activities for one topic may be "group discussion and debate", while the activities for another may be "introduction and slide show".

Write the name of the person in responsibility for each particular agenda item and allot a time frame you expect each item to take. Allow enough time for full participation by meeting attendees.

Try to end the agenda with a positive topic, something you expect to gain general approval from the participants, so the meeting can end on an upbeat note.

The agenda will help you keep the meeting on track and will be useful when you evaluate the meeting and plan follow-up sessions. Participants will also find the agenda useful. Send them the agenda with your announcement of the meeting. This way, participants can prepare fully for the meeting. If the agenda is for a regular staff meeting, invite participants to suggest agenda topics, and incorporate these into the meeting if appropriate.

Date And Time

At this point you will need to choose a date and time for your meeting. Choose a day and time when participants are apt to be most energetic. Not Monday morning or Friday afternoon and not right after lunch or right before the end of the working day.

Avoid surprise meetings. They disrupt schedules and so not give participants adequate time to prepare. Consider these following guidelines when setting up your next meeting:

- o Plan a meeting date that allows you enough time to properly prepare for the meeting (gather information, produce handouts, etc.)
- o Consider current organizational priorities and upcoming events
- o Identify who you absolutely must have at your meeting and plan around their schedules
- o If you are deciding a day and time for a regular staff meeting, ask participants about the meeting time preferences.

Place

When considering a location for the meeting give some thought to the locations of people you will ask to attend. You must match the facility accommodations to the number of persons invited and to the activities you have planned for the meeting. It may be to your advantage to hold the meeting away from your normal workplace in order to avoid everyday distractions.

Announcement

The final planning step for meetings is to write and distribute a meeting announcement. Include the following information in the announcement:

- o Names of all meeting participants
- o Meeting date
- o Start and end times (estimate end time based on your agenda)
- o Meeting location

- o Meeting purpose and objectives
- o What materials, if any, participants must bring

Attach a copy of the meeting agenda and distribute the announcement far enough in advance to allow participants to reserve time for and prepare for the meeting.

A/V Equipment And Materials

During your final preparations you should consider what types of audiovisual equipment, visual aids and materials you will need to conduct the meeting activities you have planned. Plan to display the meeting objectives and agenda at the meeting.

How To Conduct The Meeting

Productive meetings are extensions of excellent plans. Once you know what you want to accomplish, with whom, how, when, and where, it is time for execution. Following are guidelines for successfully executing each phase of a meeting. These guidelines assume that the person who called the meeting is responsible for both the meeting content and process.

Preparing The Room

Start your meeting off right by having the room ready for business by the time the first participant arrives. Get to the room early enough to take the following preparation steps. Allow enough time to call for assistance if you have any preparation problems.

- o Check the arrangement of tables and chairs. Are they set up the way you want them?
- o Adjust the lighting to your needs. Check from different seats for glare.
- o Check any audiovisual equipment you are planning to use. Make sure you know how to operate the equipment and whether it is working properly.
- o Arrange visual aids, such as the flip chart for documenting meeting data, so they can be seen from all seats.

- o Check to make sure that you have all the meeting materials you need are on hand, and that there is enough for everyone.

Opening The Meeting

A productive meeting does not necessarily begin once everyone invited arrives: it begins at the time planned. Start the meeting on time. If you have latecomers, keep going. Do not stop and restart the meeting. Your on-time participants will recognize that you were ready for them and that you do not intend to waste their time. This recognition helps set the climate for a productive meeting.

Display enthusiasm. Be energetic and upbeat from the start, and maintain your enthusiasm throughout the meeting. Make sure everyone knows each other. Introduce any participants who are new to the group.

Go over the meeting objectives and agenda. Make any appropriate changes suggested for the agenda. As necessary, review ground rules for any activities planned. Consider the professional level of the participants and then determine whether it is necessary to review such rules as:

- o Allowing everyone a chance to speak
- o Showing respect for each other's opinions
- o Giving constructive, not destructive feedback
- o Accepting feedback professionally

During The Meeting

Meeting effectiveness relies heavily on excellent leadership techniques with the meeting in general and with individual activities. Following are overall guidelines for the meeting leader and for participant activities:

- o Stick to the agenda
- o Maintain a productive climate
- o Encourage and structure participation
- o Ask good questions
- o Provide constructive feedback
- o Give or get clarification of vague statements
- o Discourage generalizations
- o Protect minority opinions

- o Keep participants on the subject
- o Reduce tensions
- o Observe participants
- o Provide necessary breaks
- o Maintain professionalism and enthusiasm
- o Maintain control of the meetings

Closing The Meeting

It is the leader's responsibility to recognize the time to close the meeting and to do so formally. Otherwise, participants may begin drifting onto topics unrelated to the meeting, diminishing its effectiveness. Or they may drift out of the meeting room with an unsettling feeling that business was left unfinished. To avoid both of these situations, follow these closing steps:

- o Begin wrapping up the meeting when you planned to do so, unless participants are involved in a discussion that all agree should continue
- o Summarize the major points of the meeting
 - State what was accomplished
 - State action items agreed upon, persons responsible for actions, and deadlines
- o Decide when and where the group will meet next. Decide on a preliminary agenda for that meeting
- o Conclude the meeting crisply, positively, and on time

Following Up

Can you call a meeting productive once you leave the room? Not always. If action items were decided in the meeting, the proof of productivity is in participant follow through. Always check with participants to make sure they are carrying out the actions they agreed to in the meeting. Be sure to help them with any problems they have encountered. To be productive, meetings must meet the following criteria:

- o The meeting objectives were accomplished
- o Time was used efficiently
- o The participants were satisfied with the results

CONFERENCE LEADING

The planned conference is a departure from the formal business meeting, in which someone either addresses the group or conducts the meeting under the rules of "parliamentary procedure". The planned conference involves no lost motion. It quickly brings important problems before the group, the solution of which stimulates the best thinking of everyone present. It is a thinking process guided and directed by a competent leader.

DEFINITION

A conference is a method by which people of similar backgrounds of experience or knowledge meet together in a planned informal discussion and supervised by a trained leader for the purpose of reaching a useful conclusion and/or definite plan of action.

CONFERENCE BENEFITS

Conferences has been found to be effective in bringing about changes in thinking and attitudes among conferees. Conference members have an opportunity to compare their experiences, techniques, practices, and philosophies with those of the group. When they hear the interpretation others have put on a situation similar to one they have experienced they are often willing to adopt the attitude taken by the majority of the group. Other outcomes can be a change in one method of operation to that suggested by one or more individuals in the conference, or corroboration of one's methods, ideals, and interpretations.

As an educational procedure a conference is successful to the degree to which all contribute from their own experiences and comment upon the experiences and opinions of others. The value of a conference is entirely dependent upon reaching an agreement. There are a number of elements that are extremely important to the success of a conference:

- o Members have common interests or similar backgrounds
- o The leader has planned for the meeting and acts in a group facilitating capacity rather than dominating one during the conference
- o Members try to solve their mutual problems by exchanging ideas and experiences

- o Facts when available are carefully gathered and are used as the basis for all deliberations
- o Discussion is carried on in a planned and systematic way
- o The discussion leads to a conclusion or plan of action, even though it may be concluded that without further facts a plan of action at the time is not possible

Dozens of different kinds of meetings can meet the above criteria and be classed as conferences. Following is a sample list:

- o Advisory committee meetings
- o Faculty/staff meetings
- o Club meetings
- o A superior and a subordinate discussing mutual problems
- o A gathering of a professional organization
- o Peers discussing problems of group behaviors

Any of the previously mentioned groups of people can meet and yet not have a conference if:

- o They are not trying to solve problems
- o The leader or one or two members dominate the meeting
- o Members are only trying to give their own ideas and experiences but are unwilling to accept available facts or new ideas
- o The meeting does not fit the criteria in other ways

LIMITATIONS OF CONFERENCES

Conferences deal primarily with available facts and with the ideas and attitudes of conference members, but are inappropriate for passing along new information or skills. Spur-of-the-moment conferences are seldom a success. Planning of the conference by the leader and preparation for the conference by the members is important.

All members of a conference group should be willing to share their ideas and believe that conference results will be better than the ideas of any one member. If one or more of the members, or the leader, is determined to indoctrinate the group with their own ideas and succeeds in doing so, the result will not be a conference.

Sufficient time must be available to permit systematic discussion of all facets of the problem. Solving a problem by the conference method takes more time than dealing with it in other ways. If a group is to be together for only one short meeting, and the members

are not familiar with conference techniques, it may not be practical to attempt the use of conference methods.

If a group wishes to discuss a problem casually and then leave conclusions to each individual rather than having the group concur on conclusions, then the conference method is inappropriate.

CONFERENCE LEADING PROCEDURE

Conferences are typically used for solving problems through democratic group discussion. They may be used to identify what the group perceives as a concern, question, or situation that they want to raise for discussion, exploration, or solution. Sometimes they are used simply to gather facts, information, suggestions, and attitudes on which decisions can be based.

Group membership is composed of a small group of people with similar backgrounds to permit exchange of ideas concerning the problem. There is an acknowledged leader who prepares for the conference in advance and who also prepares the conference members for work on the problem.

Members of the group contribute to the discussion by presenting facts, relating personal experiences, or giving opinions bearing on the problem. Facts and ideas submitted are evaluated by the group as to their significance in helping solve the problem.

The leader records on flip chart paper the original problem and group selected contributions for solution. While the leader is responsible for guiding the progress of the meeting but without being a dominate figure. The discussion ends with conclusions or a plan of action.

Identify The Conference Topic

The first step in preparing for a conference is to choose a conference topic. Sources where potential conference topics may be found include: internal directive from administration, requests from an outside source, or from group instigated activities. To be considered as a conference topic, the following conditions should apply:

- o Of interest to each member of the group
- o Within the experience of the group
- o Can be solved by the conference method

- o Has only one clearly specified objective

Difficulty in wording the problem-solving topic is often experienced after a problem suitable for group discussion has been identified. An effort must be made to word the conference topic in such a way that it will pin-point a single issue, and will give the conference members a clear idea of the problem they are expected to solve. The topic selected for a problem-solving conference must meet the following criteria:

- o Must pinpoint a single issue
- o Cannot be answered by a simple "yes" or "no"
- o Specific and limited so that it can be covered in one session
- o Will usually start with the word "what" or "how"
- o Examples of conference topics :
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of _____?
 - How can the conditions created by _____ be corrected?
 - How can the time allotted for training be best utilized?

Prepare A Conference Announcement

If a conference is to be a meeting where the members are to solve their mutual problems by exchanging ideas and experiences, then it seems logical to have them give thought to and prepare for the conference in advance of the meeting. This can be done by sending to the members an announcement suggesting the type of preparation they should make in advance of the conference.

The conference announcement should contain the following:

- o Date of the announcement
- o The heading "Conference Announcement"
- o The word "TO:"
 - List the persons invited to the conference
 - Individually or by group, such as rank or title
- o The word "FROM":
 - Name of conference leader (or if someone else, who the announcement came from)

- o Body of the announcement
 - Date, time, and location of the conference
 - A statement of why the conference is being called
 - An explanation of the problem and give the title of the conference
 - Ask members to come prepared to discuss the problem
 - Convey a feeling of importance to the participants

RETIREED CURRICULUM

SAMPLE CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

October 29, 1990

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

TO: All members of the Department Training and Education Committee

FROM: William J. Vandevort, Training Officer

Your attendance is requested at the California Fire Academy at Asilomar at 1600 hours on October 31, 1990.

The Training Division has been approached by several of the departments' company officers in regard to a problem they are experiencing with the delivery of certain types of fire department training.

The officers have stated the problem to be "an obvious lack of interest by several of the fire fighters while performing routine drills during training sessions". Furthermore, they are concerned that the correction of this problem is essential in order to maintain operating efficiency and the safety of all personnel.

The conference topic will be: "How To Increase Interest In Repetitive Drills".

I have invited you to this conference to solicit your input and assistance to help solve this dilemma in our training program. Please spend time formulating ideas for the solution to this problem, and come prepared to contribute to the success of this conference.

At the conclusion of the conference you will receive a copy of the report for your own information and use.

Sincerely,

William J. Vandevort, Training Officer
Conference Leader

Prepare The Conference Plan

A conference plan is a self-prepared working guide to keep the leader on top of their subject throughout the conference. It is a reference, to be consulted as often as necessary, and is the result of considerable pre-planning for the conference.

The conference plan should contain the following:

- o The heading "Conference Plan"
- o The words "Conference Topic:" (include the title of the conference here)
- o The word "Introduction"
 - Provide an explanation of the topic, making necessary information available to the conference members so that they get a clear picture of the problem
 - The objectives of the conference should also be stated here
- o The word "Definitions"
 - Provide definitions for any words that could have more than one meaning or that may be unfamiliar to the conference members
- o The words "Suggested Chart Headings"
 - Provide some chart headings that will be suitable for use in the conference
 - In most cases these headings will be acceptable to the conferees, thereby avoiding the unnecessary wasting of time while chart headings are discussed and selected
- o The words "Leading Questions"
 - Prepared questions are listed here for the purpose of stimulating discussion during the conference
 - They may be used anytime during the conference as the need arises

- o The words "Cases And Illustrations"
 - Provide some "examples" or "illustrations" to assist in introducing and explaining the problem or to use if the conference discussion begins to lag
- o The word "Summarize"
 - Summarize the conference and review the recommendations made by the group that will be entered on the conference report

RETIRED CURRICULUM

SAMPLE CONFERENCE PLAN

CONFERENCE PLAN

CONFERENCE TOPIC: How To Increase Attendance of the Area Training Officers

INTRODUCTION:

A. Introduce Problem

1. As a Training Officer you have the responsibility to organize, manage, and administer training to the fire service personnel at your department and the county level.
2. To direct this training on the county level we must meet in order to plan and complete the various training programs.
3. Attendance at the meetings in the last six (6) months has averaged two-three (2-3) training officers per month. There are nine (9) training officers in the area.
4. All of the responsibilities cannot be carried by these same two-three (2-3) training officers who come to the meeting regularly.

B. Current meeting procedures

1. Meetings are held the third Thursday of each month at 1000 hours.
2. Location - Local OES Office

C. Results of Low Attendance

1. No training programs developed.
2. Apathy fosters on county and department levels
3. County Fire Chief's Assoc. questions T.O.'s credibility and county function

SUGGESTED CHART HEADINGS:

Reasons for low attendance
Methods to improve attendance

LEADING QUESTIONS:

Why do you think there is low attendance?

Do you think this organization is functional?

What are some methods to improve attendance?

What can be done to overcome this problem?

CASES AND ILLUSTRATIONS:

Due to low attendance and lack of participation our annual Multi-agency control burn workshop did not occur. It takes full participation for successful programs.

SUMMARIZE:

Summarize the conference and review the recommendations made by the group that will be entered on the conference report

Conducting A Conference

The success of a conference depends a great deal on how well the leader comes across to the group members. The leader should feel out the group carefully, analyzing their attitudes and personalities. Since no two groups of people are the same, it follows logically that the same methods that have been successful with one group might fail with another. It is important for the leader determine the appropriate approach and put the group at ease in order to get the best results from the conference.

Suggestions For Conducting A Conference

- o Introduce yourself to the group.
 - Indicate your name and position on the top of the chart paper.
- o Place the topic or problem on the top of the chart paper.
- o Define any word in the topic that may confuse or leave doubt in the conference member's mind.
- o The introduction to the problem may take 30 seconds or five minutes, depending upon the problem. At this time you are preparing the mind of the conference members so they will be better prepared to contribute in the discussion.
- o Explain the rules under which you will run the conference
 - You may want to tell them that you are not an authority on the subject, only the leader of the conference.
 - Encourage members to speak up when a thought or idea comes to mind. However, as them not to interrupt if another member is speaking.
 - Remind the members to listen to ideas presented by other members (evaluate the idea before condemning it).
- o Mark your suggested headings on the chart
 - The chart headings will usually be accepted by the conference members, but if they want them changed, go ahead and replace yours with the new suggested heading.
 - You may also find that the chart headings will have to be changed once the conference has begun. The decision to change the chart headings should come from the group members.

- o Begin the discussion with the use of illustrations or questions.
 - If the members feel any of the suggestions placed on the chart should be removed, draw a line through the ones they do not want listed
 - Keep the discussion on the topic
 - If the discussion slows down, use illustrations and questions to stimulate thinking.
 - Do not list your ideas on the chart, but if you feel your information needs to be placed on the chart, try to get one of the members to bring it out. You can do this through the use of direct questions.
 - As a conference leader you should not become part of the discussions.
 - It is up to the leader to end the conference when the desired information has been obtained.
- o A summary of the discussion should be made by the leader and placed on a chart
 - Conference members may want to make recommendations and if they do, list these on the chart also
 - Inform the members that a report on the conference will be sent to them

Write A Conference Report

The conference report serves to record, summarize, and review the proceedings of the conference. It is a reminder of the meeting and the plan of action decided upon. The report gives each member a permanent record which can be used for reference purposes.

In preparing the report the leader has an opportunity to review and analyze the problems discussed, and to spot weak, incomplete, and uncertain points and conclusions. Many times these matters can be reconsidered to advantage at later conferences.

The report should follow closely the exact language used or the exact phrasing written during the conference. Minor changes to clarify points are allowable.

Short sentences and short paragraphs sections should be used in writing the report. Conciseness in expression is very desirable. Avoid involved or wordy reporting.

The conference report should contain the following:

- o Date of Report
- o The heading: "Conference Report"
- o The heading: "Conference Members"
 - List the persons who participated in the conference
- o The heading: "Conference Leader"
 - List the name of the conference leader
- o The heading: "Conference Topic" (include the title of the conference here)
- o Body of the report
 - Date, time, and location of the conference
 - Purpose of the conference
 - Definitions
 - Facts accumulated (based on chart work)
 - Conclusions and recommendations

(Provide conclusions reached as the result of the conference, which may include recommendations to be made and a plan of action to be followed)

SAMPLE CONFERENCE REPORT

October 29, 1990

CONFERENCE REPORT

CONFERENCE MEMBERS: LaFever, MacDonald, Maffie, McGready and Myer

CONFERENCE LEADER: Ronald L. Martin

CONFERENCE TOPIC: How to Increase Attendance Of The Area Training Officers

The conference was held on October 12, 1989 at 0900 hours on Thursday, October 12, 1989. The purpose of the conference was to determine methods by which attendance could be increased at the area Training officers' meeting.

The area of concern in this case was decreasing attendance of local department Training Officers at the monthly meeting. The participation of all the Training Officers is needed in order to organize, manage, and administer local and regional delivery to training to the fire personnel.

The problem discussions centered on two main points: "reasons for low attendance", and "methods to improve attendance". The results of the discussion yielded the following suggestions:

Reasons for Low Attendance

1. Agenda
2. Commitment
 - personal
 - department
3. Location
4. Training Officer "burn-out"
5. Incentive
6. Too frequent
7. Impersonal
8. Conflicting schedules

Methods to Improve Attendance

1. Bi-monthly meetings
2. Rotating meetings
3. Rotating responsibility
4. Formal agenda with reminders
5. Personal report to the Fire Chiefs
6. Request an appointment of a liaison to our committee
7. Professional/Guest Speaker(s)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

At the conclusion of the discussion, a brief summary was conducted and it was acknowledged that the suggestions provided by the conference members would be compiled and forwarded to the Fire Chiefs, area Training Officers and conference members.

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Martin, President
Solano County Training Officers' Association
Conference Leader

Conference Leading Techniques

Conference Chart Work

Charting refers to the technique of recording significant points in a conference in such a way that they are visible to all group members. It includes charts which are built up in the course of a discussion, as well as, those which are prepared in advance by the leader. The utilization of charts allows the conference leader to arrange ideas that are presented by the group in such a manner that the conference is stimulated by greater thinking. Reasons for using conference charts include:

- o Chart headings serve to direct thinking
- o Helps to keep the discussion on the subject by focusing attention of the group on the problem
- o Provides a systematic means of attacking the problem
- o Enables the group to maintain an up-to-date record of their progress
- o Since only group-accepted ideas are recorded on the charts, the group is continuously aware of what it recorded, there can be no accusation of the record being in variance with the agreed upon ideas.

The use of paper charts is preferred because they can be tacked or taped to walls of the conference room and thereby serve as a visual record. They can be referred to as the conference progresses for review and to point out the continuity of the conference. From the standpoint of the group members it gives them a feeling of importance to see their contributions appear before the group and serves as an incentive for more active participation.

Chartwork is the most flexible instrument a conference has for surveying ideas. As a discussion aid it is practically indispensable. But a certain degree of skill must be developed or the results are likely to be disappointing. Consider these specific points when making conference charts:

- o Select chart headings which will help the group solve the problem most effectively
- o Arrange the group so that no one has difficulty in seeing the charts

- o Allow the group to review the chart headings briefly to see if any improvement can be made
- o Charts should be prepared in advance of the meeting
- o Chart should be neatly and legibly lettered
- o Avoid using unnecessary or words unfamiliar to the group
- o Abbreviations can be used if they are explained to the group
- o Record responses promptly - it encourages participation
- o Avoid talking to the chart to such an extent that group contact is lost

The leader should summarize and confirm the ideas on the chart that have been presented by the group. This does not mean that each idea must be voted on by the members, but it does mean that each idea should be discussed sufficiently so the leader is reasonably sure that group consensus has been reached.

Also, the leader must remember that the chart is a means toward the end and that writing on the charts is a secondary responsibility, while the primary job is to assist the group to think the problem through.

Suggestions For Discussion Leaders

The purpose of the discussion leader is to assist the group to do its job. The leader helps set the stage, keeps the discussion moving along, develops wide participation, and assists the group in establishing a systematic approach to its task.

Some of the functions of the group leader are:

- o Setting The Group Climate - The leader has an important part in developing the climate of the group. They should make sure the group members become acquainted with one another. Informality on the part of the group leader along with a warm and friendly attitude toward all group members encourage participation.
- o Stating The Question - Clear phrasing of the question which the group is being asked to discuss is important in focusing the groups attention on its basic task and purpose. A well stated question stimulates constructive and creative group participation.

- o Encouraging Group Participation - The group leader can encourage group participation by:
- Keeping aware of individual's efforts to be heard and by providing them an adequate opportunity to contribute
 - Helping the group understand the meaning and intent of individual contributions
 - Maintaining continuity of group discussion by pointing out the relationship of similar ideas offered by different group members
 - Encouraging inter-member discussion rather than member-leader discussion
 - Conveying acceptance by exhibiting a non-critical attitude and by refraining from evaluating member contributions
 - Not letting anyone take over and monopolize the meeting, and not rely on those who are always articulate and eager to talk
 - Keeping the discussion on the subject. Some diversions may be fruitful, but only insofar as they can be related to the main topic
- o Utilizing Group Resources - In most groups, participants have special knowledge and skills which are useful to the group. The leader should become aware of these resources and use them appropriately
- o Keeping The Discussion Moving Along - A good brisk pace is desirable, but do not move it faster than the group wants to go; patience is an important attribute of a good leader
- o Testing For Group Consensus - The leader can assist the group in developing consensus by occasionally reviewing points developed during the discussion and by summarizing what appears to be the group conclusions
- o Do Not Give The Answers - Do not get involved in the discussion. It is very difficult to be impartial, especially when you have strong opinions on the subject being discussed. Other reasons for not getting involved are:

- The prestige of leadership may give your view a little more weight than anyone else's and you will be using your position unfairly if you express your ideas
- Once you become involved as a participant, expressing and defending your own views, you will not have time to perform the real functions of discussion leadership

Tips For Discussion Leaders

- o To call attention to a point that has not been considered: "Has anyone thought about this phase of the problem?"
- o To question the strength of an argument: "What reasons do we have for accepting this argument?"
- o To suggest that the discussion is wandering from the point: "Can someone tell me what bearing this has on our problem?"
- o To suggest that no new information is being added: "Can anyone add anything to the information already given on this point?"
- o To register steps of agreement (or disagreement): "Am I correct in assuming that we all agree (or disagree) on this point?"
- o To bring the generalizing speaker down to earth: "Can you give us a specific example on that point?"
- o To suggest that personalities be avoided: "I wonder what bearing this has on the question before us?"
- o To suggest that some are talking too much: "Are there those who haven't spoken who have ideas they would like to present?"
- o To suggest the value of compromise: "Do you suppose the best course of action lies somewhere between these two points of view?"
- o To help a member having difficulty expressing themselves: "I wonder if what your saying isn't this . . .?"

Generating And Choosing Alternative Solutions

This is the "thinking up" phase. It is the bridge between perceiving, defining, and analyzing a problem, and evaluating and deciding on a final solution. It is a time for creativity and originality.

Thinking up alternatives can be lots of fun, particularly in group situations. There is less chance of getting fixated and bogged down. Another person's idea will trigger a new thought and your mind will take off again. This connective creativity was first described and popularized by the advertising profession, where new ideas are always in demand. The ad people found that under the right conditions groups can achieve "synergy" and produce more creative ideas than group members could generate individually.

A practical technique that can be used to generate ideas is called "brainstorming". It is a technique that is useful to discussion leaders because it is simple and effective and has so many uses. Its power stems from a combination of the strategy of deferred judgement and the natural connective creativity of groups. The rules are simple: Everyone tosses out as many ideas as possible. The ideas are written down by the recorder. Nobody is allowed to criticize or evaluate any ideas until after the brainstorming session is over.

Listed below are the essential elements of a brainstorming session:

- o The group leader writes down the problem for which solutions are sought on the conference pad. The question should be brief, specific, and stimulating.
- o The reason for the question should be made clear to the group. The group leader should provide all pertinent background information as well as information regarding how the ideas will be used.
- o The "ground rules" for brainstorming should be clearly explained. These are:
 - Every idea is acceptable (even if it sounds silly)
 - No evaluation of ideas is permitted by the group during the brainstorming. This includes both verbal and nonverbal expression of approval or disapproval
 - The quantity of ideas is the main goal. This is called freewheeling.

- Building on the contributions of others, referred to as "hitch-hiking", is encouraged. Some of the best suggestions result from the stimulation provided by the ideas of others.
- A time limit for the brainstorming stage should be set
- o The group leader lists each idea on the conference pad as quickly as possible. It is written exactly as given. Hesitation in recording the idea sometimes gives the impression of disapproval.

(Usually the session begins with an initial spurt of ideas and then slows down. At this point, a new flow of ideas may be stimulated if the group remains silent for several minutes and thinks about the problem and the ideas previously suggested)

- o The follow-through. Once ideas are expressed, something must be done with them. The method of evaluating and utilizing the ideas resulting from brainstorming depends upon the area of freedom of the group, the nature of the problem, and the time available

Another method used to solicit feedback and ideas is called the Discussion 66 Method. Discussion 66 is based on the assumption that group leaders wish to use a discussion technique in which all of the group's ideas may be brought out. This procedure is used to organize a large group meeting into many small groups that work concurrently on the same question. The purpose may be to get questions for a speaker or panel, to identify problems or issues, to compile a list of ideas or possible solutions, or to get personal involvement and thinking by members of a large group.

The procedure for employing the Discussion 66 Method is as follows:

- o The group leader presents a question to the entire assembly, which may be seated in rows in an auditorium or at small tables. This question should be very concise, limited, and specific.
- o The audience is divided into groups of six.
- o Each group appoints a recorder-spokesperson.
- o Each group is to record as many responses to the question as they can think of in three (3) minutes.
- o Recorder-spokesperson records all of the responses suggested.

- o Each group has three (3) minutes to decide which one of the responses suggested is most important and is to be presented to the speaker. Thus, a discussion occurs in groups of six members for six minutes - Discussion 66!

There are several uses for the Discussion 66 Technique which include:

- o Providing time so all members may participate
- o Making public many facts known only to a few members of a small group
- o Provoking audience questions
- o Evaluating an experience shared by the entire group
- o Making nominations
- o Achieving other purposes dependent upon a quick canvas of the thinking of a large group

Nominal Group Technique

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a method of structuring small group meetings. It allows individual judgements to be effectively pooled in situations where uncertainty or disagreement exists about the nature of a problem and its possible solutions. The process has been extensively used in business and government and has proven especially beneficial in fostering citizen participation in program planning.

The technique is helpful in identifying problems, exploring solutions, and establishing priorities. It works particularly well in "stranger" groups where it is important to neutralize differences in status and verbal dominance among group members. However, NGT is not useful for simple information exchange, negotiation, or policy setting in representative bodies.

The ideal size of an NGT group is five to nine members. With an average-size group, the entire process can be comfortably completed in 90 minutes. In no case should the session be permitted to last over three hours.

Pre-Meeting Preparations

1. Formulate and test the NGT question.

2. Assemble supplies (easel, flipchart, felt-tip pen, masking tape, and deck or 3 x 5 cards for each group). If possible, type the NGT question at the top of a sheet of paper and duplicate a copy for each member.
3. Prepare the meeting room. Wall surfaces should be suitable for taping up sheets from the flipchart. The best table arrangement is a U, with the easel located at the open end.
4. Train inexperienced group leaders. If the group leaders have never conducted an NGT session, you should arrange a training session that simulates the process. Good NGT questions for training purposes are either the actual question the group is planning to use or the general question, "What barriers do you anticipate in using NGT in your own organization?" If the actual question is used, the training session is an occasion to pilot test the phrasing of the NGT question.

The NGT Question

You should pay careful attention to the phrasing of the question. It should be as simple as possible, but it should elicit items at the desired level of specificity and abstraction.

Several people should be involved in preparing the question. They should begin by clarifying the objectives of the meeting. They should then illustrate the types of items they want to get from the group. With objectives and examples in mind, they can proceed to the composition of the question.

The Opening Statement

The opening statement is important because it can set the tone for the whole meeting. It should include at least three elements:

- o First, the importance of the task and the unique contributions of each group member should be noted.
- o Second, the group should be informed of the session's overall goal and how NGT results will be used.
- o Third, the four basic steps of NGT should be briefly summarized for people who are unfamiliar with the process.

Conducting The NGT Process

Step One: Silent Generation of Ideas in Writing

1. Distribute the question on individual sheets of paper or display it before the group. Read the question aloud to the group and ask members to respond to it by writing their ideas in phrases or brief sentences. Remind them that since you will not be collecting their lists, good penmanship is unimportant.
2. Ask members to work silently and independently. Demonstrated good behavior by doing your own silent writing. Immediately stop disruptive behavior, such as talking.
3. Some members may ask about the meaning of the NGT question. You may illustrate the degree of abstraction desired, but do not lead the group in any direction. Tell persistent questioners to respond to the NGT question in whatever way is most meaningful to them.
4. Allow four to eight minutes for this step. In a large group, a short period of silent writing will limit the number of items the members produce.

Step 2: Round-Robin Recording of Ideas

1. Explain that the objective of this step is to map the group's thinking. As you go around the table, each member is to present orally one idea from his own list in a phrase or brief sentence without discussion, elaboration, or justification. You will continue to go around the table until all ideas have been presented.
2. Explain that each member is to decide whether their item duplicates one already presented. A member may pass at any time but may re-enter the process later in their turn. (Continue to call on members who have passed). Encourage members to "hitchhike" on others' ideas and to add new items, even though these items may not have been written down during Step One.
3. The leader should record items on flipchart sheets as rapidly as possible, numbering items in sequence and recording them in the member's own words. If possible, avoid condensing and abbreviating. Ask long-winded participants to come up with simpler wording. If this causes delay, tell the person you will return for a shorter phrase and move on to the next item.

4. After you fill a sheet with numbered items, tape it to the wall where it will be visible to everyone.
5. With a large group, the length of the list can be controlled in several ways. For example, you can announce in advance that you will solicit items around the table only two or three times. Or, when a sufficient number of items have been generated, say that you will go around the table only once more.

Step Three: Serial Discussion of the Listed Ideas

1. Explain that the purpose of this step is to clarify the ideas presented. Read each item aloud in sequence and invite comments. Members may note their agreement or disagreement, but arguments are unnecessary since each person will vote independently in Step Four. Do not waste time on conflict. As soon as the logic of a position is clear, end discussion.
2. Announce in advance the number of minutes to be devoted to this step. (The usual rule of thumb is to allow two minutes times the number of items. If time is short, allow only the number of minutes until adjournment, minus 15 minutes for the voting in Step Four).
3. Encourage viewing the list as group property. Anyone can clarify or comment on any item. Above all, do not ask a member to clarify the item they have contributed. It is particularly useful to encourage someone other than the contributor to clarify items. The group leader can model good behavior at an appropriate point with a comment such as, "Well, to me this item means. . ."
4. Within reason, new items can be added and small editorial changes made. Duplicate items may also be combined. However, the leader should resist attempts to combine many items into broader categories. Some members may seek to achieve consensus by this means, and the precision of the original items may be lost.

Step Four: Voting

1. Ranking is the simplest and usually most effective voting technique. Sometimes ratings are used, with each of the five most important items on a list rated on a one to five scale. Ranking is usually preferable, however, since it can be quickly tallied and the results are easily interpreted.

2. Each person should receive five 3 x 5 cards (seven cards if the list is long). Ask members to select the five (or seven) most important items and write one in the center of each card. They should write the item's sequence number in the upper left corner. Tell them not to be concerned with penmanship: the only purpose of writing the item on the card is so that they will not have to refer back to the sheets on the wall when they rank-order their five cards.

For example:

6

Parking spaces
reserved for
handicapped.

3. Give the group a time limit (four or five minutes) for selecting its priority items and do a countdown ("You have two minutes left"). Request that the group members work silently, and that they wait to rank-order the cards until everyone is finished and the ordering can be done together.
4. When everyone has completed the set of five (or seven) cards, announce that the rank-ordering will begin. Go through the following instructions without delay, using this general wording:
 - o Spread the cards out in front of you so that you can see all five cards at once. Decide which card is more important than all the others. Write 5 in the lower right-hand corner and underline it three times. Turn the card over.
 - o Which is the least important of the four remaining cards? Write 1 in the lower right-hand corner and underline it three times. Turn the card over.
 - o Select the most important of the three remaining cards. Write 4 in the lower right-hand corner and underline it three times. Turn the card over.
 - o Select the least important of the two cards that are left. Write 2 in the lower right-hand corner and underline it three times.

- o Write 3 in the lower right corner of the last card and underline it three times.

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Parking spaces reserved for handicapped.

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5. Collect the cards, shuffle them, and record the vote on the flipchart in front of the group. Tally rankings alongside a column of item numbers. The hypothetical example below shows how a group of six members voted on a list of 27 items

VOTE

1.	2, 1, 1, 1	15.	3, 3
2.		16.	4
3.	5, 4, 5, 5, 3, 4	17.	
4.	3, 2	18.	
5.	5	19.	4, 3, 3, 1
6.		20.	2
7.	5	21.	1
8.		22.	
9.	2	23.	4
10.	1	24.	
11.		25.	
12.		26.	
13.	2	27.	
14.	5, 4, 2		

6. Lead a discussion of the voting pattern. Resist the temptation to play numerical games, such as adding the rankings together to arrive at a consolidated score. In the above example, adding the scores would obscure the different patterns of support for items 1 and 5.
7. If time permits, the group can further clarify the items and vote again. Keep the discussion brief, and caution people not to change their minds frivolously. Research shows an average change of only 10 to 12 percent from the results of the initial vote.

Summary Of NGT Procedures

Pre-Meeting Preparation

- o Formulate and test the NGT question
- o Assemble supplies
- o Prepare the meeting room
- o Train inexperienced group leaders

Opening Statement

Inform the participants of the context of the session, indicating how NGT results will be used in subsequent steps. Summarize the four basic NGT steps for groups who are not familiar with the process.

Conducting the NGT Process

1. Silent generation of ideas in writing

Read the question aloud and ask members to list their responses phrases or brief sentences. Request that they work silently and independently. Allow 4-8 minutes.

2. Round-robin recording of ideas

Go around the table and get one idea from each member. Write the ideas on a flipchart. As you finish each sheet, tape it to the wall so that the entire list is visible. Encourage hitchhiking on other ideas. Do not allow discussion, elaboration, or justification.

3. Serial discussion of the list of ideas

Explain that the purpose of this step is clarification. Read Item 1 aloud and invite comments. Then read Item 2 and continue discussing each item in turn until the list is covered. Arguments are unnecessary because each member will have a chance to vote independently in Step 4. As soon as the logic of a position is clear, cut off discussion.

4. Voting

Each person selects the five (or seven) items that are most important to them and writes each on a 3 x 5 card. These are

then rank-ordered. The votes are recorded on the flipchart in front of the group. The group then discusses the voting patterns. If desired, the items can be further clarified and a second vote taken.

Decision Making

The decision making process takes place within a space of time during which the problem solver or decision maker(s) progress toward a projected goal. If any of the elements of the decision making process are overlooked or misused, we can think of this as exceeding the "operating tolerance".

For example, if too much time is taken on setting the "climate", or if too little attention is paid to stating the question, or if too rapid progress is made toward reaching the goal, then the decision making process breaks down.

Elements of decision making can be given too much or too little emphasis but as long as deviations do not exceed the operating tolerance, effective decisions can be reached. The discussion leader needs to be aware of the hypothetical operating tolerance and be capable of taking corrective action when it becomes apparent that the group norms for decision making are being violated.

The elements of decision making include the following:

- o Climate. A climate usually conducive to problem solving and decision making is one that is free from threat and one in which the physical and psychological surroundings are conducive to free expression of opinion and consideration of the problem.
- o Ground Rules. Ground rules involve determining the procedures to be used, the type of participation, and the amount of time available to reach a decision.
- o Limits. What is being expected of the group, what policies, rules, traditions, and directives serve as guidelines within which decisions are to be made.
- o Stating The Question. A question asked of a group should be short, understandable, specific, and meaningful. The group should have the question in their view at all times.
- o Collecting Data. All facts, opinions, and circumstances having a bearing on the question should be brought forward. At this point in the problem-solving conference, group members should state opinions and differences, but should

not try to make their point of view prevail. This is the time for collecting evidence, not the time for deciding whether or not the evidence is conclusive.

- o Weighing The Data. Pros and cons can be examined to determine the validity of the data which have been collected. This should be done with the viewpoint of determining "what really is the problem".
- o Determining Problems. Group members must now indicate what they believe to be the problems, and chances are the real problem or problems will be somewhat different than originally anticipated.
- o Determining Alternate Solutions. In the process of weighing data and determining problems, the group evaluates data, members try to understand others' viewpoints, hidden agendas are explored, and members are encouraged to state their opinions. The result is that all possible solutions are brought forward.
- o Choose Solution. Select the solution that appears to be most appropriate. Almost always, there will be more than one acceptable solution to the problem..
- o Taking Action. Decisions, once made, require action. It must be determined: What is to be done? How is it to be done? Who will do it? When will it be done? What type of accountability controls will be employed? What kind of feedback will be used to report results of the decision.

Functions Of The Group Observer

Group observation is the process of watching how a group functions; in other words, the ways or processes it used in trying to achieve its objectives. The use of observers is based on the assumption that a group is a unit which has a process of operation, and that the ability of functioning effectively is controlled by the group. In order to improve its own processes, the group must have data about how it is operating.

In most groups the on-going process continues at a low level of productivity because there is not a device or mechanism for helping the group diagnose its difficulties and change its processes. The observer role has been developed in an effort to change the level of productivity.

The group observer serves as a group conscience and seeks to observe, record, and report back to the group data about the

group's behavior. In order to evaluate its processes, the group needs several different kinds of information about itself before changes in its behavior are possible, such as:

- o Does the group have a direction toward a goal?
- o Where is the group located with reference to its problem solving?
- o What is the rate of progress toward the goal?
- o Is the group using the creative abilities of all its members?

A group observer may record data on a wide range of group phenomena, such as, leadership roles, problems of communication, motivation, participation patterns, interpersonal relations and other factors which effect the group process and productivity.

Without such information the group has no basis on which to evaluate the effectiveness of its processes. Therefore, the major purpose of the group observer to provide feedback to the group in regard to the discussion process so it may overcome any difficulties it may be experiencing. In order to give complete attention to group process, the observer does not participate in the general discussion.

In some groups a pattern has been established whereby the last ten or fifteen minutes of a meeting are set aside for discussion of their progress with the observer. A most effective use of observers is to permit them to break into the discussion at any time they feel that is crucial to do so. In this way a group often has a chance to briefly take stock of its process and take immediate steps to alter its behavior. To always wait until the end of the meeting to make a report may mean that a group flounders entirely too long.

In providing feedback to a group the observer must use tact in presenting an analysis of group behavior. Very often the observer role fails because the observer makes a report which is highly critical and judgmental. Group members may resent such a report and resist the "feedback" it is getting until it discovers that the observer's comments are directed at persons, but at process. When making a report to the group consider these suggestions:

- o Skip and personality clashes
- o Report favorable observations, and "accentuate the positive". Call attention sparingly to weak points at first; as the group matures comments about difficulties

may be increased.

- o Phrase comments about data in the form of tentative hypotheses or expressions of feelings, such as, "how did you feel about our progress?" or "I was wondering what would have happened if we had made a decision earlier?" The observer may want to ask the group if they agree with these observations. This manner of reporting permits the group to reject any of the observer's comments if all of the members are not ready to accept them.
- o Do not make judgmental analysis
- o Try starting comments on the participation patterns, communication problems, or problems or orientation and goal setting.

An observer may enter the discussion with such comments as:

"We seem to be bogging down at this point. I wonder why? Several people are getting restless. During the past ten minutes only two people have been speaking. Do we need a summary so we can go on to the next point? Most of us seem lost. We have tried to define "learning" for an hour. Is there a communication block we need to look at?"

Or an observer may confine the remarks to a brief statement at the close of the meeting, such as:

"For the first 20 minutes our leader did most of the talking, then more and more of the group became involved in the discussion. Only one member did not participate during the whole session."

"No one spoke for more than five times and everyone participated at least once"

"Postures and facial expressions indicated great interest throughout the session. Only once did we have a near crisis. That was when one member said "but how can anyone think like that? I don't agree with you at all!" The leader saved us by asking whether we could see how some people really do think that and several members gave illustrations which helped all of us understand that point of view".

"This is a good session. We have begun to think together as a group. Was one reason for this the fact that no one challenged another's judgment although several of us found inadequacies in the solution the group had worked out? Everyone seemed to be trying to advance the group's thinking

rather than to sell his own idea".

"We were working at cross purposes during much of this session. Two definite fractions emerged early in the discussion, one 'pro' and one 'con'. Instead of helping each to see the other's point of view, most of us were busy thinking up arguments on one side or the other. One member suggested a restatement of the problem to take into account the evidence on both sides, but no one else picked this up. We might have used the blackboard to list the evidence on both sides with which we all agree, the alternatives on which we do not agree, and what evidence is further needed. Perhaps we could spend part of next session studying why we got into this jam and where we go from here?"

The observer's role is like a mirror. Through their observer, the group sees itself in action. However, the image reflected may be less beautiful than expected. Unless the group and each of its members can accept the observers's report as an effort at objective appraisal, it may do more harm than good. Much depends upon how the report is presented.

RETIRED CURRICULUM

STUDENT INFO

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH EXERCISE
RATING FORM

PARTICIPANT: _____

EVALUATOR: _____

Record written observations of the presentation in the appropriate spaces.

Voice:

Body Language:

Eye Contact:

Grammar/Vocabulary:

Command Presence:

Audience Attention:

Audience Response:

Use of Humor:

Use of Visual Aids:

Logic of Presentation:

Digression/Irrelevant Information:

Timing:

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS:

RATING SCALE:

Observation/Judgment

Grade

Job Dimensions

Grade

Excellent

10

Oral Communication Skills

Good

7

Composure & Self Control

Fair

5

Organization of Material

Poor/Improvement Needed

3

Unsatisfactory

0

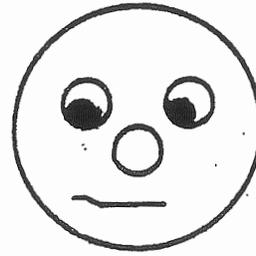
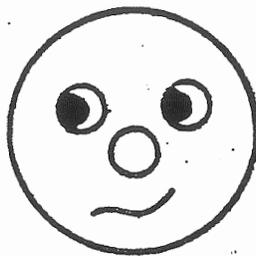
Total

As people represent information internally, they move their eyes, even though that movement may be slight. With a normally organized right-handed person the following holds true, and the resultant sequences are systematic. (NOTE: There are some people who are organized in a right-to-left reverse manner.)

VISUAL (V)

AUDITORY (A)

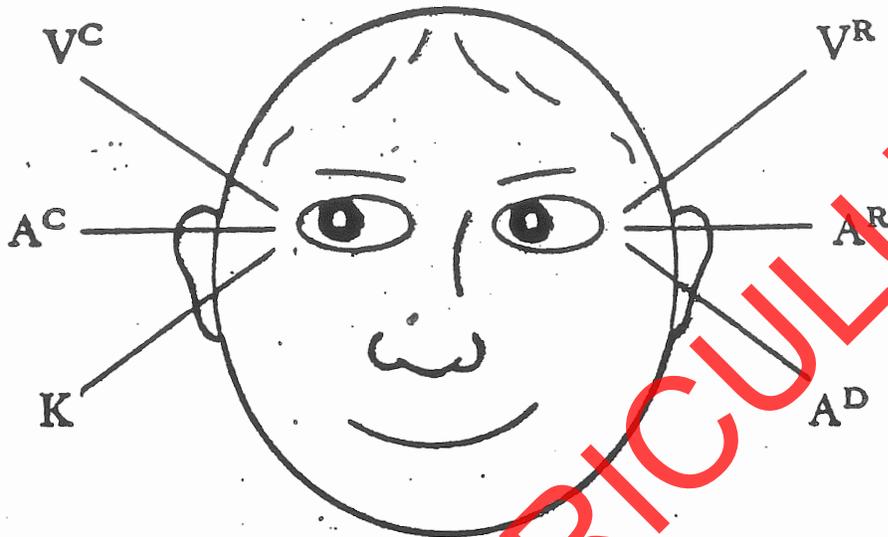
KINESTHETIC (K)



RETIRED CURRICULUM

Eye movements can allow you to know how a person is internally representing his external world. The person's internal representation of the external world is his "map" of reality and each person's map is unique.

EYE-ACCESSING CUES

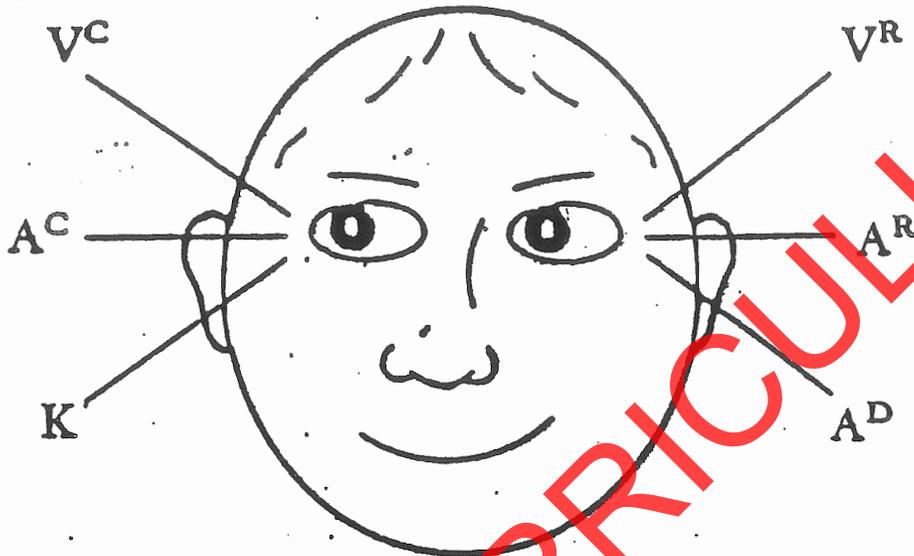


V^R Visual remembered: Seeing images of things seen before, in the way they were seen before. Sample questions that usually elicit this kind of processing include "What color are your mother's eyes?" and "What does your coat look like?"

V^C Visual constructed: Seeing images of things never seen before, or seeing things differently than they were seen before. Questions that usually elicit this kind of processing include "What would an orange hippopotamus with purple spots look like?" and "What would you look like from the other side of the room?"

A^R Auditory remembered: Remembering sounds heard before. Questions that usually elicit this kind of processing include "What's the last thing I said?" and "What does your alarm clock sound like?"

EYE-ACCESSING CUES



A^C Auditory constructed: Hearing words never heard in quite that way before. Putting sounds or phrases together in a new way. Questions that tend to elicit this kind of processing include "If you were to create a new song right now, what would it sound like?" and "Imagine a siren sound made by an electric guitar."

A^D Auditory digital: Talking to oneself. Statements that tend to elicit this kind of processing include "Say something to yourself that you often say to yourself" and "Recite the Pledge of Allegiance."

K Kinesthetic: Feeling emotions, tactile sensations (sense of touch), or proprioceptive feelings (feelings of muscle movement). Questions that elicit this kind of processing include "What does it feel like to be happy?" "What is the feeling of touching a pine cone?" and "What does it feel like to

INSTRUCTOR INFO

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B GROUP DYNAMICS AND CONFERENCE LEADING

LEADERLESS GROUP EXERCISE

INSTRUCTIONS:

The Fire Chief has been delayed in getting to today's staff meeting. He has called and requested that the group begin the meeting without him.

Please discuss all of the items listed on the agenda and have a consensus agreement among all participants prior to his arrival in approximately 30 minutes.

STAFF MEETING AGENDA #1

1. Fire Officer I certification is being considered as a prerequisite for testing for Fire Captain in the department. Chief Officer certification is also being considered as a prerequisite for testing to Chief Officer. The Chief has stated that if he uses these as prerequisites, that he would waive the written examination. What are the pros and cons of the issue?
2. The paramedics have raised the question of "paramedic burnout". They would like to know what plans the department has for eliminating this problem in the future. What steps can we take to eliminate the potential problem?
3. One of this year's goals is to increase the department's public education program. Please discuss ways of providing a higher level of fire education for the public. Please provide at least three ideas with an estimated cost of each.
4. Books have been missing from the station libraries. What steps can we take for controlling this that will still allow the books to be used by department personnel?
5. Consider the issue of having a routine station, apparatus, and personnel inspection program. Develop recommendations for an inspection policy that will include: who will do the inspections, when the inspections should be accomplished, and how the results will be documented.
6. The Training Officer has been experiencing difficulty in getting the training manual sections completed by those companies assigned to do the work. He would like some recommendations on what could be done to get the training manual completed.

INSTRUCTOR INFO

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

LEADERLESS GROUP EXERCISE

INSTRUCTIONS:

The Fire Chief has been delayed in getting to today's staff meeting. He has called and requested that the group begin the meeting without him.

Please discuss all of the items listed on the agenda and have a consensus agreement among all participants prior to his arrival in approximately 30 minutes.

STAFF MEETING AGENDA #2

1. The present EMT-1 training program must be revised. (The EMT instructor is on shift, he trains the captains once each month and then the captains train their respective crews). Our only instructor will not be able to teach after the first of the year due to a change in instructor qualifications. We need to maintain our EMT-1 FS certification and we need at least two alternatives to the present system.
2. The department is going to buy a new piece of aerial apparatus equipment. We need a consensus decision on which type of aerial apparatus to buy: an articulating boom, a ladder platform, or an aerial ladder. Please provide a recommendation and the rationale for your decision.
3. The department is considering using non safety employees to do fire prevention inspections. The city manager has determined that the reduced workload on the fire fighters would allow him to move from 5 to 10 fire fighters off the line and into these new positions at a reduced wage. We need to develop a list of pros and cons on this issue along with a recommendation.
4. The department is going to purchase new fire helmets for all personnel. Which type should it purchase, the polycarbonate plastic type or the traditional leather helmet? Please support your recommendation.
5. Staff has been discussing the possibility of developing an extra duty (overtime) call back system. Develop a fair method for calling back personnel for extra duty (overtime) which will be acceptable to the majority of the employees.

It appears that the captains at each station are not communicating. There is very little consistency in getting things done between shifts at the same station. Make a recommendation to correct this problem.

INSTRUCTOR INFO

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

Leaderless Group Exercise Rater Instructions

While evaluating the participation and contribution of your candidate, consider the following behaviors.

- Was your candidate selected as the discussion leader? Why?
- Was your candidate selected as the recorder? Why?
- Was your candidate selected to present the group's recommendations? Why?
- Did your candidate outline "behaviors" to facilitate discussion (look for positives in each other's ideas, take turns, brainstorming ideas initially, practice active listening, etc.)?
- Did your candidate offer ideas that seem to have value to the group? Could they justify their opinion?
- Was your candidate involved in the discussion versus just "play acting"?
- Did your candidate encourage other participants and/or recognize their contributions?
- Did your candidate utilize "active listening techniques"?
- Did your candidate serve as a "gatekeeper" to keep the discussion moving along?
- Did your candidate monopolize the discussion, become overly verbose, and find fault with others?
- Was your candidate able to verbalize persuasively, concisely, and logically?

In evaluating your candidate, please use the dimensions shown below:

- Problem Analysis
- Oral Communications
- Interpersonal Sensitivity
- Composure and Control
- Decisiveness

INSTRUCTOR INFO

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B
GROUP DYNAMICS AND CONFERENCE LEADING

Leaderless Group Exercise Rating Sheet

Candidates Name: _____

Raters Name: _____

Instructions:

Rate each dimension with a score between 1 and 9. The number 1 being the lowest score and the number 9 being the highest score. The scores are ranked in this manner:

Below average: 1-2-3 Average: 4-5-6 Above Average: 7-8-9

Dimension:

Score:

Problem Analysis

Oral Communication

Interpersonal Sensitivity

Composure and Control

Decisiveness

Total Score:

General Comments:

"LOST ON THE MOON" TEST

Your spaceship has just crash-landed on the moon. You were scheduled to rendezvous with a mother ship 200 miles away on the lighted surface of the moon, but the rough landing has ruined your ship and destroyed all the equipment on board, except for the 15 items listed below.

Your crew's survival depends on reaching the mother ship, so you must choose the most critical items available for the 200-mile trip. Your task is to rank the 15 items in terms of their importance for survival. Place number one by the most important item, number two by the second most important, and so on through number 15, the least important.

- ___ Box of matches
- ___ Food concentrate
- ___ Fifty feet of nylon rope
- ___ Parachute silk
- ___ Solar-powered portable heating unit
- ___ Two .45-caliber pistols
- ___ One case of dehydrated milk
- ___ Two 100-pound tanks of oxygen
- ___ Stellar map (of the moon's constellation)
- ___ Self-inflating life raft
- ___ Magnetic compass
- ___ Five gallons of water
- ___ Signal flares
- ___ First-aid kit containing injection needles
- ___ Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter

LOST ON THE MOON TEST: THE ANSWERS

Following are the answers to the group problem-solving test, "Lost on the Moon."

Items	NASA's Reasoning	NASA's Ranks	Your Ranks	Error Points	Group Ranks	Error Points
Box of matches						
Food concentrate						
Fifty feet of nylon rope						
Parachute silk						
Solar-powered portable heating unit						
Two .45 caliber pistols						
One case of Pet milk						
Two 100-pound tanks of oxygen						
Stellar map (of the moon's constellation)						

Self-inflating life raft

Magnetic compass

Five gallons of water

Signal flares

First-aid kit
Injection needles

Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter

Total

Error points are the absolute difference between your ranks and NASA's (disregard plus or minus signs):

0-25—excellent	26-32—good	33-45—average	46-55—fair	56-70—poor	71-112—very poor, suggests possible faking or use of earth-bound logic.
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STUDENT INFO

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

Discussion Technique: Symposium-Forum

Discussion Topic: Work week/staffing change proposal

Scenario:

The city of Asilomar has proposed to change the fire department work schedule from a 3-platoon 56 hour work week to a 3-platoon 40 hour work week, each platoon working a 8 hour shift per day. In addition the City wants to replace regular fire fighters that are on scheduled leave with part-time fire fighters. Neither proposal has been done in the City in the past, thus a completely new program of part-time fire fighters would have to be developed and implemented. The City claims that as much as 1.3 million dollars could be saved in overtime costs by reducing scheduled overtime due to Fair Labor Standard Act, requiring overtime payment for all hours worked over 52 in a work week, and overtime for call back of regular employees to fill in for vacation leave.

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B
GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

Discussion Technique: Symposium-Forum

Introduction:

The symposium-forum discussion is a series of brief speeches on a single major problem or topic, with each speaker selected because of their position or expertise. Although the speakers determine what each will say ahead of time (in order to cover the subject without overlap), there is no direct interaction among the speakers during the presentations. Upon completion of the presentations, the audience is invited to participate by expressing opinions or directing questions to the various speakers.

Discussion Topic: Work week/staffing change proposal

Assignment:

As a 22nd person group project, be prepared to present your topic before a public group followed by audience participation in the form of questions to specific speakers or by the expression of opinions relative to the discussion. You will need to select a chairperson, assign speaker roles, and audience participants. Individual roles will include:

- o Chairperson - Professor, Communication Studies, ASU
- o Speakers
 - City Manager - Pro
 - City Council Member - Pro
 - Fire Chief - Pro
 - Union President - Con
 - City Council Member - Con
 - Line Battalion Chief - On-the-fence
- o Audience
 - 15 members representing the community and the fire department

Discussion time is limited to 30 minutes. Each speaker has 4 minutes to make their presentation. The audience will be allowed to ask questions for the remainder of the allotted time.

Each speaker and the chairperson must prepare an outline of their presentation which must represent their assigned role during the discussion, as well as, questions developed by those members serving as the audience, and hand it in to the instructor at the conclusion of the exercise.

STUDENT INFO

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

Discussion Technique: Panel-Forum

Discussion Topic: Private contract fire protection proposal

Scenario:

The city of Asilomar is primarily a bedroom community with some commercial and light industry, with a population of approximately 50,000. The fire department has three stations (3 engines and 1 truck) with 45 paid employees and 25 volunteers. The department budget is 2.3 million dollars.

The city is experiencing some financial difficulty and is looking for ways to reduce spending. A private company has made a proposal to provide fire protection on a contract basis. They have offered to give all existing fire fighters the opportunity to continue employment, but at a reduced pay. Six of the current full time employees would not be needed. The company claims it can save the city at least \$300,000 per year.

STUDENT INFO

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

Discussion Technique: Panel-Forum

Introduction:

The panel-forum discussion is a method of publicly addressing a topic of general interest in front of a group or audience. At the conclusion of the discussion by the panelists, the audience is invited to participate by expressing opinions or directing questions to the various panel members.

Discussion topic: Private contract fire protection proposal

Assignment:

As a ten person group project, be prepared to present your topic before a public group followed by audience participation in the form of questions to specific panel members or by the expression of opinions relative to the discussion. You will need to select a chairperson, assign panel roles, and audience participants. Individual roles will include:

- o Chairperson - City Council member
- o Panel members - President, Taxpayers Association
 - Presedent, Local Fire Fighters Union
 - Presedent, Private Fire Protection Company
 - Asilomar Fire Chief
- o Audience - Five members representing the community

Discussion time is limited to 30 minutes. Each panel member has 3 minutes to make their presentation, 1 minute to make a rebuttle, and 1 minute to summarize. The audience will be allowed to ask questions for the remainder of the allotted time.

Each member of the panel and the chairperson must prepare an outline of their presentation which represent their assigned role during the discussion, as well as, questions developed by those members serving as the audience, and hand it in to the instructor at the conclusion of the exercise.

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B
GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

Discussion Technique: Public Interview (Colloquy)

Introduction:

A public interview (colloquy) utilizes two groups of people of three or four in each group to discuss a topic or problem before an audience. One group is composed of experts on the topic while the other group represents the audience with prepared questions and remarks pertinent to the topic. The presenters and the questioning group may agree in advance on a list of major questions or topics to be discussed, or the discussion may be entirely spontaneous.

Discussion Topic: Should fire fighters have the right to strike?

Assignment:

As an eight person group project, be prepared to present your topic before a public audience followed by questions asked by the group of questioners (serving as representatives of the audience). You will need to select a chairperson, assign roles for speakers and questioners. Individual roles will include:

- o Chairperson - Mayor, City of Asilomar
- o Speakers
 - Asilomar Fire Chief - Con
 - President, Local Fire Fighters Union - Pro
 - City Council Member - Con
 - City Council Member - Pro
- o Questioners
 - City Editor, Asilomar Daily News
 - News Anchor, ASTV Channel 11
 - President, Asilomar Chamber of Commerce

Discussion time is limited to 30 minutes. Each speaker has 4 minutes to make their presentation. The question panel will be allowed the remainder of the time to ask questions of the speakers.

Each speaker and the chairperson must prepare an outline of their presentation which must represent their assigned role during the discussion, as well as, questions developed by the question panel, and hand it in to the instructor at the conclusion of the exercise.

AGENDA

1. Final results of management wage survey

Comparison City's / Accountant John Smith / 15 min.

Final proposal / Chief Thomas / 10 min.

Questions / Group / 10 min.

2. Master plan proposal

Overview of process / Chief Kilroy / 30 min.

Questions / Group / 10 min.

3. Mutual aid

Impact of current program / Captain Brown / 15 min.

Questions / Group / 5 min.

4. Summary

Chief Taylor / 10 min.

AGENDA

LIST TOPICS TO BE COVERED

**FILL IN ACTIVITIES FOR
COVERAGE OF EACH TOPIC**

**NAME OF PERSON CONDUCTING
THE ACTIVITY**

REVIEW AGENDA

FINALIZE AGENDA

Minutes

Staff Meeting October 30, 1990

Personnel Attending: Chief Thomas, Kilroy, Taylor, Schmidt, Elliott. Captain Brown, Accountant Smith

1. Final results of management wage survey, action: - approved by group
2. Master plan proposal, action: - group needed more details will be added to agenda for January meeting. Chief Kilroy to conduct further research.
3. Mutual aid, action: proposal denied by group.
4. Summary, action: group develop agenda for November meeting, Chief Kilroy to chair, Chief Thomas to take minutes.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE AS A PARTICIPANT

Most people who conduct meetings also attend meetings. The more skillful they become in conducting productive meetings, the more critical they become of the meetings they attend. So what should they do when they are asked to attend a meeting they feel will be “nonproductive?” Several alternatives are available:

1. Don't go. Make up a good excuse.
2. Go, but demonstrate your dissatisfaction by refusing to participate, criticizing the leader, arguing or exhibiting other nonproductive behavior.
3. Go and help the meeting be productive.

Obviously, alternative number three is usually the best. The problem is, how can a participant be helpful without causing resentment on the part of the leader? If the leader happens to be your boss, tact may be essential.

Here are some ways in which a participant can help a meeting become productive:

Know Why You Are There

If you don't get adequate notice, ask for it. Try to get details on time, place and objectives so you can plan and prepare to be there. Suggest that other participants get the same information.

Be There On Time

Get to the meeting before it is scheduled to begin. Be in your seat ready to go. Encourage the leader to begin the meeting on time. You might tactfully say,

“Well it’s 9:00, let’s go.” or “If you aren’t going to start the meeting on time, I guess I’ll go back to my office to make a quick phone call.” Hints like this will usually stimulate the leader to start on time.

Stay On the Subject

Be sure you know the subject being discussed and the objectives of the meeting. If you participate, stay on the subject. If you aren’t sure what the subject is, ask for clarification, not only for your own benefit but for the benefit of the group. You could say, “Will you put the objective (or question) on the board (flip chart) so it’s clear to all of us?”

Don’t Cause Problems For the Leader

Go to the meeting with a positive attitude and an objective to help make the meeting as productive as possible. Here are a few “don’ts” to remember:

1. Don’t start side conversations. And ignore anyone who tries to start a side conversation with you.
2. Don’t be interrupted by a telephone message unless it’s an emergency.
3. Don’t argue with the leader or with another member of the group. Challenge, yes, but avoid arguments.
4. Don’t lose control of your emotions.
5. Don’t hesitate to ask questions if you aren’t sure about something.
6. Don’t try to do other work during the meeting.

Be Open To the Ideas Of Others

It’s amazing how openmindedness begets openmindedness. When you are willing to listen and are openminded to the ideas of others, they are more apt to be openminded toward the ideas you present. Use such comments as:

-
- “I see what you mean.”
- “I understand how you feel.”
- “You have a good point there.”
- “I hadn’t thought of it that way.”

Try To Help the Leader Control the Meeting

Be on the alert for the meeting getting out of control. When it does, act as follows:

1. If heated arguments occur between participants, put yourself in between. See if you can help each one see the other person’s side.
2. If one participant dominates, insert your own ideas or ask for a contribution from another person by saying, “I’d like to hear Bill’s ideas on the subject.”
3. If interruptions or distractions occur, say “I wonder if we can get back to our objective.”
4. If you feel that a participant is off the subject, gently bring it back on track with a comment like, “I’m not sure how this ties in with the objective.” This might stimulate the leader to restate the objective or the question being discussed.
5. If the meeting gets out of control, try to bring it back by restating the objective and summarizing what has been accomplished and what needs to be done.

A Problem-Solving Meeting

Here is a summary of the opportunities and duties of a participant in a problem-solving conference:

1. Contribute ideas to the discussion
 - a. Understand why you are attending the meeting.
 - b. Make sure you understand the problem.

-
- c. Offer facts and opinions where appropriate.
 - d. Maintain dissenting views in face of opposition but not to the point of having a closed mind or being obnoxious.
2. Listen to the ideas of others
 - a. Listen carefully.
 - b. Understand the viewpoints of others.
 - c. Help others to develop their views and ideas.
 - d. Be courteous by respecting their opinions even if different from your own.
 3. Consider the problem objectively
 - a. Maintain an objective attitude.
 - b. Avoid giving or accepting opinions as facts.
 - c. Avoid becoming emotional.
 4. Contribute to the orderly conduct of the meeting
 - a. Arrange matters so that personal interruptions are unnecessary.
 - b. Be prompt.
 - c. Avoid side conversations with neighbors.
 - d. Stay on the subject.
 - e. Refrain from dominating the meeting.
 - f. Help the leader maintain order.

A Necessary Requirement: Pay Attention!

You won't be able to contribute at all unless you are attentive. Perhaps the first words of advice are: Pay attention! Sometimes this is very difficult to do because the subject is dry, the leader is a poor communicator, the physical facilities are poor or you have something on your mind that bothers you. You therefore are tempted to become a poor listener.

According to Ralph Nichols, author of *Are You Listening?*, there are many things that you can do to stay attentive and listen. Here are some that apply specifically to meetings:

1. *Find areas of interest.* Look for ideas and topics that can be useful to you. These ideas can come from the leader or other participants.
2. *Judge content, not delivery.* Don't be upset and distracted by a monotone voice or the fact that the speaker is reading the material.
3. *Hold your fire.* Don't get overstimulated and sent off on an emotional tangent because of a word or phrase that the speaker used. According to Nichols, "The aroused person usually becomes preoccupied by trying to do three things simultaneously: he calculates what hurt is being done to his own pet ideas; he plots an embarrassing question to ask the speaker; he enjoys mentally all the discomfiture visualized for the speaker once the devastating reply to him is launched. With these things going on, subsequent passages go unheard. We must learn not to get too excited about a speaker's point until we are certain we thoroughly understand it. The secret is contained in the principle that we must always withhold evaluation until our comprehension is complete."
4. *Resist Distractions.* Sometimes it means removing distractions by closing a door, turning off a fan or pulling a window shade. Sometimes it requires a different approach, concentration to overcome the distraction.
5. *Take Notes.* In addition to these mental processes to improve attentiveness and listening, the physical process of taking notes

can be helpful. A person who takes notes during a meeting is more able to resist boredom and disinterest than one who doesn't. Obviously, note taking requires listening and a person who vows to come out of a meeting with notes is committed to listening.

A word of caution is necessary for note takers. Note taking can be a very frustrating experience. For example, some persons are trained to make a formal outline as follows:

I. First Main Subject

A. First subpoint under I

- 1.)
- 2.) } subpoints under subpoint A.
- 3.)

B. Second subpoint under I ("If there is an "A", there must be a "B" !)

II. Second Main Subject ("If there is a "I", there must be a "II"!)

If the person plans and proceeds to take notes in this outline form, great frustration can result unless the speaker uses the same outline format to present the material. And many presenters don't have their material organized this way. So, the note taker becomes frustrated and probably decides that the speaker is not well organized and therefore not worth listening to.

Nichols offers two approaches for taking notes. Both of these require listening on the part of the note taker. And both include flexibility to adjust to whatever organization of material that the presenter uses. Nichols calls the systems "précis writing" and "fact versus principle."

Précis writing requires the listener to write notes only at widely-spaced intervals of time. When the talker begins speaking, the note taker listens for two or three minutes and then writes a short paragraph or a one-sentence abstract of what was said. This spaced listening followed by writing continues for the entire presentation. As precis writing is practiced, the note taker will discover that there is usually a clear-cut breaking point between ideas being presented. The following transitional words provide the clues: "My next point is . . .," "Another matter for consideration is . . .," or "Now let us look at . . ."

The fact-versus-principle system requires an entirely different approach. This system presupposes that the note taker should collect the pieces so that they can be put together at a later time with some semblance of order. The pieces that are most worthwhile to collect are facts and principles. The note taker divides the paper into two columns:

<u>FACTS</u>	<u>PRINCIPLES</u>
--------------	-------------------

The listening efforts are partly directed toward trying to determine what is a fact and what is a principle in the spoken words. This may be a difficult task, but the effort is worthwhile and any facts and principles can become the basis for usable notes.

In addition to the traditional outline approach and the two systems suggested by Nichols, there is one which is both simple and effective. All it requires is the listener's attention and a pencil and paper. The note taker simply records the main words or ideas in the same order that the speaker presents them. If the speaker says my first point is, the note taker labels it "1". The note taker tries to put these points down in the same order and with the same emphasis as the speaker. If the speaker says, I want to emphasize the next point, the note taker puts down an asterisk (*), or underlines the idea, or labels it "significant". Without worrying

about a formal outline, or facts versus principles, the note taker exerts self-discipline to listen and take notes. Perhaps the notes will be referred to again and perhaps not. But the note taking process has served one important purpose - to "force" the listener to listen. Also, the very process of writing it down will probably improve the rate of retention of the listener, whether or not the notes are reviewed at a later date.

Summary

The participant is an important ingredient of a productive meeting. The first requirement is to pay attention to what is being said. In addition, there are many things a participant can do to help make the meeting productive. The specifics have been described under the following opportunities and duties that each participant has:

1. Know why you are there.
2. Be at the meeting on time.
3. Don't cause problems for the leader.
4. Help the leader control the meeting.

Selected Reference:

Nichols, Ralph and Stevens Leonard, *Are You Listening?*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, NY, 1957

2-8
8

Controlling a Meeting

WORKING WITH MEN AND WOMEN IN MEETINGS

WHEN HE/SHE ACTS	WHY	WHAT TO DO
 Overly Talkative	He/she may be an "eager beaver" or a show-off. He/she may also be exceptionally well informed and anxious to show it, or just naturally wordy.	Don't be embarrassing or sarcastic . . . you may need their traits later on. Slow them down with some difficult questions. Interrupt with: "That's an interesting point . . . now let's see what the group thinks of it." In general, let the group take care of them as much as possible.
 Side Conversation	May be related to the subject. May be personal. Distracts members and you.	Don't embarrass them. Call one by name, ask an easy question or Call one by name, then restate last opinion expressed or last remark made by group, and ask his/her opinion of it. If, during conference, you are in habit of moving around the room, saunter over and stand casually behind members who are talking. This should not be made obvious to group.
 Inarticulate	Lacks ability to put thoughts in proper words. He/she is getting idea but can't convey it. He/she needs help.	Don't say, "What you mean is this." Say, "Let me repeat that" (then put it in better language). Twist their ideas as little as possible, but have them make sense.
 Definitely Wrong	Member comes up with comment that is obviously incorrect.	Say, "I can see how you feel" or "That's one way of looking at it." Say, "I see your point, but can we reconcile that with the (true situation)?" Must be handled delicately.

WORKING WITH MEN AND WOMEN IN MEETINGS

HOW HE/SHE ACTS	WHY	WHAT TO DO
 Rambler	<p>Talks about everything except subject.</p> <p>Uses farfetched analogies, gets lost.</p>	<p>When member stops for breath, thank him/her, refocus attention by restating the relevant points, and move on.</p> <p>Grin, tell him his/her point is interesting, point to blackboard and in friendly manner indicate we are a bit off subject.</p> <p>Last resort: glance at watch.</p>
 Personality Clash	<p>Two or more members clash.</p> <p>Can divide your group into factions.</p>	<p>Emphasize points of agreement, minimize points of disagreement, (if possible).</p> <p>Draw attention to objectives. Cut across with direct question on topic.</p> <p>Bring a sound member into the discussion.</p> <p>Frankly ask that personalities be omitted.</p>
 Obstinate	<p>Won't budge!</p> <p>Prejudiced.</p> <p>Hasn't seen your points.</p>	<p>Throw the member's view to group, have group members straighten him/her out.</p> <p>Say that time is short, you'll be glad to discuss it later; ask member to accept the group viewpoint for the moment.</p>
 Won't Talk	<p>Bored.</p> <p>Indifferent.</p> <p>Feels superior.</p> <p>Timid.</p> <p>Insecure.</p>	<p>Your action will depend upon what is motivating the member.</p> <p>Arouse interest by asking for his/her opinion.</p> <p>Draw out the person next to him/her, then ask the quiet lad to tell the fellow next to him what he thinks of the view expressed. If he is seated near you, ask his opinion so that he'll feel he is talking to you, not the group.</p> <p>If member is the "superior" type, ask for view after indicating the respect held for experience. (Don't overdo this. Group will resent it.)</p>

CONFERENCE/STAFF MEETING MATRIX

8 Member Group

Participant	Conference				Staff Meeting			
	A	C	E	EG	B	D	F	EH
1	Cl	Cp	Cp	Cp	Sr	Se	Sp	Sp
2	Ce	Cp	Cp	Cp	Sl	Sp	Sp	Sp
3	Cp	Cp	Cl	Cp	Se	Sp	Sr	Sp
4	Cp	Cp	Ce	Cp	Sp	Sl	Sp	Sp
5	Cp	Cp	Cp	Cl	Sp	Sp	Se	Sr
6	Cp	Cp	Cp	Ce	Sp	Sp	Sl	Sp
7	Cp	Cl	Cp	Cp	Sp	Sr	Sp	Se
8	Cp	Ce	Cp	Cp	Sp	Sp	Sp	Sl

7 Member Group

Participant	Conference			Staff Meeting			
	B	D	F	A	C	E	G
1	Cl	Cp	Cp	Sr	Se	Sp	Sp
2	Ce	Cp	Cp	Sl	Sp	Sp	Sr
3	Cp	Cp	Cl	Se	Sp	Sr	Sp
4	Cp	Ce	Cp	Sp	Sl	Sp	Sp
5	Cp	Cp	Ce	Sp	Sp	Sl	Sp
6	Cp	Cp	Cp	Sp	Sp	Se	Sl
7	Cp	Cl	Cp	Sp	Sr	Sp	Se

Conference

- o Leader = Cl
- o Participant = Cp
- o Evaluator = Ce

Staff Meeting

- o Leader = Sl
- o Participant = Sp
- o Evaluator = Se
- o Recorder = Sr

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B
STAFF MEETING

STAFF MEETING EXERCISE RATER INSTRUCTIONS

While evaluating the participation and contribution of the leader consider the following behaviors.

* Was the leader conducting and maintaining control through out the meeting ?

* Did the staff meeting evaluate the organizations operations ?

* Did the leader control the agenda ?

* Did the leader structure the permanent membership ?

* Did the leader maintain appropriate dynamics ?

* Did the leader guide the process ?

* Did the leader provide for a memory system ?

* Did the leader use "pass downs" ?

* Did the leader use "operational status reports" ?

* Did the leader use "recommendations" ?

* Did the leader use "news items" ?

* Did the leader set the rules ?

* Were decisions made ?

* Did all attendees participate ?

* Were time lines established ?

In evaluating the leader, please use the dimensions shown below.

Setting agenda

Assigning agenda roles

Managing time

Bringing closure with consensus

Providing a summary

Meeting minutes

FIRE INSTRUCTOR 2B
STAFF MEETING

STAFF MEETING GROUP EXERCISE RATING SHEET

LEADERS NAME: _____

RATERS NAME: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

Rate each dimension with a score between 1 and 9. The number 1 being the lowest score and the number 9 being the highest score. The scores are ranked in this manner.

Below average: 1-2-3 Average 4-5-6 Above average 7-8-9

Dimension:	Score:
Logistics	_____
Setting the Agenda	_____
Assigning agenda roles	_____
Managing time	_____
Bringing closure with consensus	_____
Providing a summary	_____
Meeting minutes	_____
Total score:	_____

GENERAL COMMENTS:

STUDENT INFO

CONFERENCE LEADING DEMONSTRATION EVALUATION FORM

Conference Leader _____ Total Score _____
 Conference Topic _____ Time _____
 Evaluator _____ Date _____

1=Poor, 2=Marginal, 3=Acceptable, 4=Above Average, 5=Superior

THE LEADER:

	1	2	3	4	5
Opening remarks					
Statement of the topic or problem					
Stimulated discussion					
Controlled discussion					
Use of questions					
Use of cases or illustrations					
Chart work					
Tactful					
Impartial					
Conslusions					
Summary					
Closing Statements					
Evidence of Good Conference Planning					

THE GROUP (as a whole)

Problem thoroughly discussed					
Facts and information supplied					
Solutions advanced					
Solutions discussed and evaluated					
Decision-making and consensus					
Cooperative attitude					
Total participation					

REMARKS:

Instructor 2B- Quiz 1
GROUP DYNAMICS AND CONFERENCE LEADING

Instructions: The following is a True/False quiz. If you believe a statement to be more true than false, circle the T on your answer sheet. If you believe a statement to be more false than true, circle the F on your answer sheet.

Example: The Capital of California is Sacramento. (T) F

- T F 1. The primary use of flip charts in a biographical sketch is to demonstrate creativity.
- T F 2. You should try to be someone else in the delivery of your biographical sketch.
- T F 3. Content and process are two major components of human interaction.
- T F 4. Tuckman's theory contained five major phases.
- T F 5. A "Y" communication model is a hierarchical communications network when the boss interacts directly with supervisors who in turn pass information to subordinates.
- T F 6. Nonverbal communications is seldom reliable.
- T F 7. Nonverbal signals are a primary means of regulating the flow of verbal interaction in a discussion group.
- T F 8. In neuro-linguistics a visual indicator is an "earful".
- T F 9. Neuro-linguistics is psychomotor skills.
- T F 10. When the interest level of a group is fading, you should continue on with your lecture or meeting.
- T F 11. Successful brainstorming includes non evaluation of ideas.
- T F 12. Authoritative effect is a common rating error.
- T F 13. Tenacity should not be evaluated as a rating error.

Instructor 2B- Quiz 2
GROUP DYNAMICS AND CONFERENCE LEADING

Instructions: The following is a True/False quiz. If you believe a statement to be more true than false, circle the T on your answer sheet. If you believe a statement to be more false than true, circle the F on your answer sheet.

Example: The Capital of California is Sacramento. (T) F

- T F 1. A persons role in a group will be determined by feedback.
- T F 2. "Self centered" behavioral function would be coordinating.
- T F 3. Group norms are standards of participation.
- T F 4. Primary tension is a result of boredom.
- T F 5. Status within a group refers to relative importance of each member.
- T F 6. Developing a strong group identity such as nicknames is described as status.
- T F 7. NGT should not be used for policy setting.
- T F 8. Voting is the first step in the NGT process.
- T F 9. To gain participation from a non participating group member, ask them their opinion.
- T F 10. Process in human interactions is what is happening between and to the group while the group is working.

Instructor 2B- Quiz 3
GROUP DYNAMICS AND CONFERENCE LEADING

Instructions: The following is a True/False quiz. If you believe a statement to be more true than false, circle the T on your answer sheet. If you believe a statement to be more false than true, circle the F on your answer sheet.

Example: The Capital of California is Sacramento. (T) F

- T F 1. A conference can be used to reach a conclusion or plan of action.
- T F 2. Conferences are more successful when participants have dissimilar backgrounds.
- T F 3. When a conference leader wishes to list a personal idea on the chart he/she should.
- T F 4. A group observer should analyze how the discussion is progressing and report to the group.
- T F 5. A discussion group that emphasizes both problems and an exchange of ideas is a workshop.
- T F 6. A "forum" means questions are asked by the audience of the speaker(s).
- T F 7. A public interview utilizes representatives to ask questions for the audience.
- T F 8. The most important factor in conducting effective staff meetings is total agreement.
- T F 9. A conference discussion group ends with group consensus.
- T F 10. A group observer participates in the general discussion of a conference.
- T F 11. A speech-forum allows for all members of the audience to become involved.
- T F 12. Discussion 99 is used to elicit questions from the entire audience.

- T F 13. The leader of the staff meeting makes the final conclusions and decisions.
- T F 14. Conference and buzz sessions are two general types of discussion groups.
- T F 15. The leader of a staff meeting must avoid dominating the group.
- T F 16. A staff meeting is the most misused and criticized small group discussion method.
- T F 17. The main purpose of meeting minutes is to serve as a legal document.
- T F 18. A group conference leader sets the priorities for the group.
- T F 19. A conference plan helps the leader throughout the conference.
- T F 20. A conference announcement gives conclusions and recommendations.
- T F 21. Breaks should not be planned into a meeting.
- T F 22. A conference topic should be broad based and vague.
- T F 23. NGT is an agenda item for staff meetings.
- T F 24. A group leader sets the group climate in a conference.
- T F 25. The first step in a conference is location.
- T F 26. When writing a conference report you should summarize the intent of the participants.
- T F 27. A properly prepared conference plan includes a roster of participants.