

SOC 108: Groups in Organizations  
Tuesday & Thursday, 6:30-7:50 PM

Brown University, Fall 2009

## Groups in Organizations

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Office Hours: Thursday, 2:00-3:00 PM

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### Course Description

In the last decade, teamwork has become increasingly popular in organizations. Whether structured into the organizational makeup, or temporarily established around specific projects, teams are a critical competency of organizations. They are considered an effective performance unit, and expected to efficiently cope with the fast changes and demands of today's corporate environment. However, deriving the full benefits from teamwork requires correct management of team processes and dynamics. This course dwells on selected issues in team development, internal processes, and members' behavior, as well as management skills needed to effectively lead teams in organizations.

### Aims and Objectives

The main objective of this course is to provide you with knowledge and practical tools that will enable you to diagnose work-group situations and dynamics, and to become more productive team members and leaders. This will be achieved through developing teamwork and management skills on three levels: personal, inter-personal, and group-level skills. On the personal-level we will aim at broadening your awareness of your individual patterns of communication, behavior, and managerial style. We will also provide tools for identifying preferred and more effective behaviors, suitable for various managerial situations. On the inter-personal level we will focus on managerial communication skills (e.g. giving feedback), and on the group level we will learn to identify and cope with conflicts between team members, and with frustration of individuals within the group. Management of group discussions will also be studied and practiced.

## **Course Format**

The primary teaching method of this course is experiential, therefore only about half of the course time will be devoted to standard lectures. The rest of the time will include case-study analysis, exercises, self-assessment questioners, and small-groups simulations, with the purpose of demonstrating and practicing the various skills required to effectively manage teams in organizations. Personal and group feedback will also be used as part of the learning.

**Course Requirements and Assessment** (may change depending on the number of students registered to the course)

- 1) Personal progress report - **25%**
- 2) Personal role analysis – **5%**
- 3) Analysis of 2 case studies - 10% each, total of **20%**
- 4) Final examination (**50%**)

## **General Course Outline**

The course is divided to five modules, each focusing on a specific aspect of team function:

**Part A - Team Development and Internal Dynamics:** In this part of the course we will introduce the subject of teams in the workplace, review various types of teams, and elaborate on the characteristics of the different stages of team development. We will talk about justice and trust, discuss in depth the benefits and the disadvantages of teamwork, and practice basic communication skills.

**Part B - Leading Teams:** This part will focus on participative vs. autocratic decision making in teams. We will discuss the importance of the quality of decisions and its acceptance by the team, and identify the criteria that should affect the method of decision making. You will also be leading your teams to develop a team contract and to create and maintain team unity.

**Part C - Team Discussions and Decision Making:** This part will dwell on types of discussions, and the way team leaders can use discussions as means to reinforce quality and acceptance of decisions. We will review the role of the discussion's chairperson, the sequential stages of effective team discussion, various methods for increasing creativity in teams, and various decision making rules.

**Part D – Emotions in Teams:** This section includes two subjects. The first is managing conflicts in teams. We will discuss types of conflicts, the dynamics of conflict development, and individual styles of conflict resolution. The second subject is dealing with Frustration. We will differentiate between motivation and frustration-based behaviors; You will learn to identify behavioral characteristics of frustration, and to cope with frustrated team members.

**Part E -Managerial Communication:** The last part of the course will dwell on giving and receiving feedback, and with defensive vs. supportive communication, and will provide guidelines for a more effective communication in teams.

### **Detailed Course Plan**

#### ***Part A: Team Development and Internal Dynamics***

##### **Class 1 (Sept. 10): Introduction**

In class: Introduction to the course  
Handouts: Course syllabus; Behavioral Profile.

##### **Class 2 (Sept. 15): Communication Traits**

In class: Communication traits: Theory and small group activity  
Handouts: Communication traits self assessments  
Assignment: Personal self assessments  
Readings: Myers & Anderson, Ch. 3

##### **Class 3 (Sept. 17): Teams: What, Why, When, and Which.**

In class: From dependence to interdependence; defining teams; your first teams are formed + team activity.  
Assignment: The role I assume in my family  
Readings: Thompson, pp. 3-7, 13-19; Slocum & Hellriegel, pp. 318-332, Katzenbach & Smith, 43-64.

**Class 4 (Sept. 22): Experiencing Teamwork**

In class: Team activity.  
Assignment: Read and prepare HBS case study for next class.  
Due: The role I assume in my family

**Class 5 (Sept. 24): Case Study Analysis**

In class: HBS case study: Turmoil  
Due: General analysis of the Turmoil case.  
Readings: Thompson, pp. 22-38

**Class 6 (Sept. 29): Justice and Trust in Teams**

In class: Basic team management skills; the issue of trust.  
Readings: Thompson pp. 214-216, Kramer, 1999.

**Class 7 (Oct. 1): Team's Internal Dynamics**

In class: Stages of team development: Team roles (DVD);  
Assessment of your first team.  
Handouts: Role assessment  
Assignment: Fill out worksheets and discuss results in groups  
Readings: Slocum & Hellriegel, pp.332-344

**Class 8 (Oct. 6): Team's Internal Dynamics (cont.)**

In class: Stages of team development: Norms and cohesion;  
Advantages of teamwork; second teams are formed.  
Due: worksheets on team roles.  
Readings: Slocum & Hellriegel, pp.344-346

**Class 9 (Oct. 8): Effective Teamwork: Information Sharing.**

In class: Activity in groups.

**S p r i n g      W e e k e n d      \* \* \*      H a v e      F u n      ! !**

**Class 10 (Oct. 13): Dysfunctional Team Dynamics**

In class: The Abilene Paradox (DVD); Group polarization.

Readings: Thompson, pp. 186-191.

**Class 11 (Oct. 15): Dysfunctional Team Dynamics (cont.)**

In class: Groupthink (DVD); Escalation of commitment; Social loafing; assessment of the second team.

Assignment: Read and prepare HBS case study for next class.

Readings: Slocum & Hellriegel, pp. 347-350; Maier, 1999, Karau & Williams, 1993; Thompson, 172-179. .

**Class 12 (Oct. 20): Case Study Analysis**

In class: Third and final teams are formed; HBS case study: The Army Crew Team.

Due: General analysis of the Army Crew Team case

Assignment: Prepare 3 Hours Tour Case

Readings: Jehn, 1997; Kanter, 2003; Katz, 2001.

***Part B: Leading Teams***

**Class 13 (Oct. 22): How to Approach Team Leadership**

In class: Case analysis (3 Hours Tour); diagnosing team needs; understanding team culture; leader's use of power; introduction to a leader's decision making model.

Due: Case Preparation.

Assignment: Vroom cases for individual analysis

**Class 14 (Oct. 27): Leader's Normative Model of Decision Making**

In class: Quality and the acceptance of decisions; participative vs. autocratic decision making.

Due: Vroom cases - individual analysis

Assignment: Vroom cases for group analysis (with decision tree)

Readings: Thompson pp 310-313; Dunken et al.; Rebber et al.

**Class 15 (Oct. 29): Leader's Normative Model of Decision Making (Cont.)**

In class: Analysis of Vroom cases; leading teams - DVD

Due: Vroom cases – group analysis

Readings: Levi, pp. 153-165.

**Class 16 (Nov. 3): A Unified Team**

In class: How to create a unified team: A group board game.

**Class 17 (Nov. 5): Team Contract**

In class: A competitive game; working on team contract

Due: Assignment from last week

Assignments: Finalize team contract.

***Part C: Team Discussions and Decision Making***

**Class 18 (Nov. 10): Developmental Discussion**

In class: Types of discussion; Stages of developmental discussion; introducing a problem to the team; decision-making rules.

Due: Team contract

Readings: Maier, Ch. 8 pp. 168-171, 177-180

**Class 19 (Nov. 12): Decision Making and Creativity in Teams (cont.)**

In class: Methods for increasing creativity in teams; team leader's role in the developmental discussion.

Assignments: Conflict style self assessment (Slocum & Hellriegel, pp.384-385).

Readings: Paulus & Yang, 2000, Nijstad & Stroebe, 2006.

*Part D: Emotions in Teams*

**Class 20 (Nov. 17): Managing Conflicts**

In class: Types of conflicts; levels of conflict in organizations; conflict resolution styles; the process of mediation.

Due: Conflict Style self assessment.

Readings: Levi, pp. 115-123, 126-128; Slocum & Hellriegel, pp. 356-368, Eisenhardt et al.

**Class 21 (Nov. 19): Coping with Frustration**

In class: Causes of motivation and frustration; expressions of frustration; dealing with frustrated team members; active listening.

Handouts: Self assessments.

Readings: Maier, pp. 68-78, 82-85.

*Part E: Managerial Communication*

**Class 22 (Nov. 24): Managerial communication**

In class: Guidelines for effective feedback; defensive vs. supportive communication.

Readings: Slocum & Hellriegel, pp.236-249, Jackman & Strobe. .

**Thanks giving**

**Class 23 (Dec. 1): TBA**

**Class 24 (Dec. 3): TBA**

**Reading Period Begins**

**Reading Material** (available on MyCourses)

- Duncan, W.J., LaFrance, K.G., & Ginter, P.M. (2003). Leadership and decision making: A retrospective application and assessment. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 9(4), 1-20.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., J. L. Kahwajy and L. J. Bourgeois (1997). How Management Teams Can Have a Good Fight. *Harvard Business Review*, 75(6), 77-85.
- Katz, N (2001): Sports teams as a model for workplace teams: Lessons and liabilities. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 15(3), 56-69.
- Katzenbach, J.R. & Smith, D.K. (1999). *The Wisdom of Teams*, NY: Harper Collins.  
Ch. 3: Team Basics: A working definition and discipline (43-64)
- Jackman, J.M. & Strober, M.H. (2003). Fear of feedback. *Harvard Business Review*, 101-107.
- Jehn, K. A. (1997). A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42(3), 530-557.
- Kanter, R.M. (2003). Leadership and the psychology of turnarounds. *Harvard Business Review*, 58-67.
- Karau, S.J., & Williams, K.D. (1993). Social loafing: A meta analytic review and theoretical integration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(4), 681-706.
- Kramer, R.M. (1999). Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging prospective, enduring questions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 569-598.
- Levi, D. (2001). *Group dynamics for teams*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.  
Ch. 7: Managing conflict (pp. 115-123, 126-128).  
Ch. 9: Decision making (pp. 153-165).
- Maier, N.R.F. (1999). Assets and liabilities in group problem solving: The need for an integrative function. *Group Facilitation*, 1, 45-51
- Maier, N.R.F. & Verser, G. C. (1982) *Psychology in industrial organizations*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.  
Ch: 4: Frustration as a factor in Behavior (pp. 68-78, 82-85).  
Ch. 8: Supervisory leadership (pp. 168-171, 177-180).

- Myers, S.A. & Anderson, C.M. (2008). The fundamentals of Small Group Communication. Los Angeles, Sage Publications.
- Ch. 3: Small Group Member Communication and Personality traits (pp. 45-70).
- Nijstad, B.A. & Stroebe, W. (2006). How the group affects the mind: A cognitive model of idea generation in groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10(3), 186-213.
- Paulus, P.B. & Yang, H.C. (2000). Idea generation in groups: a Basis for creativity in organizations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 82(1), 76-87.
- Reber, G., Auer-Rizzi, W., & Maly, M. (2004). The behavior of managers in Austria and the Czech Republic: An intercultural comparison based on the Vroom/Yetton Model of leadership and decision making. *Journal of East European Management Studies*, 9(4), 411-429.
- Slocum, J. W. Jr, & Hellriegel, D (2007). *Fundamentals of Organizational behavior*. Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western.
- Ch. 8: Fostering Interpersonal Communication in Organizations (pp. 236-249)
- Ch. 11: Developing and Leading Teams (pp. 318-350)
- Ch. 12: Managing Conflict and Negotiating Effectively (pp. 356-368, 384-385).
- Thompson, L.L. (2007). *Making the team: A guide for managers* (3rd edition). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education.
- Ch. 1: Teams in organizations: Facts and myths (pp. 3-7, 13-19).
- Ch. 2: Performance and productivity: Team performance criteria and threats to productivity (pp. 22-38).
- Ch. 7: Team decision making: Pitfalls and solutions (pp. 172-179, 186-191).
- Ch. 8: Conflict in teams: Leveraging differences to create opportunity (pp. 214-216).
- Ch. 11: Leadership: Managing the paradox (pp. 310-313).