Understanding Work Groups

Section #1: How Groups Behave?
1. I can explain the differences between formal & informal work groups.

2. I can explain why workers join informal work groups.

3. I can describe the factors that influence how groups behave.
Groups Within Organizations

- Formal work groups
  - Established by management to carry out specific tasks.
  - May exist for a short or long period of time.
  - Single goal is to resolve a problem or design a new product.

Different type of formal work group (Command or Functional Group): consists of a manager and all the employees he or she supervises. This group’s work is ongoing and not confined to one issue or product.
Informal work groups

- Formed voluntarily by members of an organization.
- They develop from personal contacts & interactions among people.
- Affect productivity, morale of other employees, and the success of managers

A special type of informal group is the interest group. Its members share a purpose or concern.
Group Norms

- Informal rules a group adopts to regulate the behavior of group members.
- Norms don’t govern every action in a group, only those important for group survival.

1. They may be extremely simple - a group that lunches together may maintain a rigid seating order. Whatever the norma, group members are expected to hold them. Members who break the rules are often shut out.
Group Behavior

- Group Cohesiveness
  - Degree of attraction among group members, or how tightly knit a group is
  - The more cohesive a group is, the more likely members are to follow group norms.
  - A # of factors affect the cohesiveness of informal work groups
    - size, success, status, outside pressures, stability of membership, communication, & physical isolation

3a: The smaller the group, the more cohesive it is likely to be. Members of large groups have fewer chances to interact

3b. The more success a group experiences, the more cohesive it becomes.
3c. Outside pressures, such as conflicts with management, can increase group cohesiveness. If a group sees management’s requests as a demand or threat, it becomes more cohesive.
3d. A stable membership and easy lines of communication improve group cohesiveness. Long-standing members who know each other well.
3e. Physical isolation from other employees may increase group cohesiveness. The isolation forces workers into close contact with each other & strengthen bonds.
Group Conformity

● Degree to which group members accept and follow group norms.

● A group generally seeks to control members’ behavior for two reasons:

  a. Independent behavior can cause disagreements that threaten a group’s survival.

  b. Consistent behavior creates an atmosphere of trust that allows members to work together & socialize comfortably. Members are able to predict how others in the group will behave.
Conformity (cont.)

- Individual members tend to conform to group norms under certain conditions:

  a. When group norms are similar to personal attitudes, beliefs, and behavior

  b. When they do not agree with the group’s norms but feel pressure to accept them.
Groupthink

- When group members lose their ability to think as individuals & conform at the expense of their good judgment

- Members become unwilling to say anything against the group or any member, even if an action is wrong
S2 Learning Targets

1. I can explain the importance of formal work groups.

2. I can describe how managers can influence group cohesiveness & conformity.

3. I can identify different methods of encouraging teamwork in formal groups.

4. I can identify characteristics of successful group leaders.
Importance of Formal Work Groups

- Play an important part in helping an organization meet its goals.
- Groups have more formal knowledge & information than individuals
- Creates a more efficient & effective company.
Influencing Work Groups

- Hawthrone Effect

  - Giving special attention to a group of employees changes the employees’ behavior.

  - When groups of employees are singled out for attention, they tend to work more efficiently.
Building Effective Work Groups

● Linking-Pin Concept
  ○ Because managers are members of overlapping groups, they link formal work groups to the total organization.

● Managers improve communication and ensure that organization & groups goals are met.
Team Building

- Process of establishing a cohesive group that works together to achieve its goals.

- A team will be successful only if its members feel that working conditions are fair to all.

- A team can fail, even in a supportive organization, if a manager does not encourage fair play.
Creating Groups

- Selecting the right individuals is key to the success of a group.

- For most employees, a formal work group is attractive because it increases pay and offers some satisfaction.

- Environment also can be important to the success of a group. An important requirement for meeting group goals is a suitable place to work.

First...For a group to succeed, members must be able to perform the tasks assigned by management.

1. Step #1 is to identify qualified people. They management must make the group attractive to these individuals.

3. How the office is laid out and other physical factors will affect the group’s ability to work together successfully.
Building Trust

- A successful group effort means sharing responsibilities & making decisions together.

- Group members must feel that the entire group is willing & able to work together successfully to achieve goals.

- Effective managers should become personally involved, take a real interest in group members, share information, and exhibit honesty.
Influencing Group Cohesiveness and Conformity

● Formal groups must be cohesive & dedicated to high performance norms in order to succeed.

● How managers can influence group cohesiveness:
  ○ keeping groups small
  ○ selecting group members carefully
  ○ finding a good personality fit between new & old employees
  ○ developing an office layout that improves communication
  ○ creating clear goals
  ○ inspiring group competition
  ○ rewarding groups rather than individuals
  ○ isolating groups from each other
Idiosyncrasy Credit

- Occurs when individuals who have played a significant role in a group are allowed some freedom within the group.

- People in this position have often helped develop a group’s norms.
Quality Circles

- Group of employees from a single work unit (such as a dept.) who share ideas on how to improve quality.

- Goal = to involve employees in decision making.

- Encourage communication & trust among members & managers.

- Inexpensive way to provide employees with training while giving them a sense of control over their work lives.

- Most importantly - they may solve problems that have been around for years.
Groups & Leaders

● Gaining acceptance
  ○ Managers assigned to formal work groups must work to gain acceptance as leaders.

● Encouraging Participation
  ○ As part of a team, managers encourage participation and shared responsibility, acting more like a coach than a manager.

1. Managers assigned to formal work groups must work to gain acceptance as leaders. They generally do not have the same authority as leaders of informal groups. The formal authority granted by top management is no guarantee that a manager will effectively guide a group.