CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Guiding and Participating in Team Think-Work Processes

INTRODUCTION

What This Chapter Is About

There is strength in numbers, and two heads are better than one. However, when more than one person is involved in a planning, problem-solving, or decision-making process, divergent views (and conflicting feelings) often hinder the process and undermine results (Moon, and others, 2003). Thus, it is particularly important that individuals at all organizational levels be capable of effectively leading or participating in team or group think-work processes, especially when participative practices are used throughout an organization.

Here again, technology and innovative tools can improve organizational think-work. Leidner and Elam (1993) point out that more advanced executive information systems can speed the identification of problems, increase the depth of analyses, and quicken decision making. But according to Tasa and Whyte (2005), the extent of these improvements is largely a function of an organization's efficacy. And that efficacy depends not only on systems but also on the people involved.

Chapters Two through Five and Chapter Thirteen discussed major principles and practices for better structuring think-work processes, dealing with human mental constraints, dealing with organizational and outside impediments, and enhancing the results of each phase of an analytic approach. This chapter continues and builds on that discussion but concentrates on exploring the advantages of group involvement and prescribing ways to deal with the possible disadvantages and problems.

The basics section provides preliminary definitions for terms such as *groupthink, group processing,* and *group process.* It then outlines the advantages and disadvantages of individual think-work versus group processes. It discusses the issue of quality needs versus acceptance needs. The section also describes symptoms of faulty team-think processes and outlines both leader and participant responsibilities for conducting effective group processes.

Going beyond the basics, the chapter discusses managers' team-think styles as well as advance preparation and ongoing activities for continually improving the effectiveness of team think-work.

What Consultants, Trainers, and Facilitators Can Get Out of This Chapter

After studying this chapter on improving the effectiveness of team think-work processes, consultants, trainers, and facilitators should be able to help participants

- Analyze modes of group or team interaction
- Identify, plan, and implement ways that group or team interaction might be improved within the context of a unique organizational culture
- Identify and establish policies and practices for effectively reinforcing a management or leadership team's use of problem-solving and decision-making methods and tools
- Establish plans, policies, and procedures for further developing the effectiveness of organizational groups or teams on a continuing basis

What Practicing Managers, Participants, or Students Can Get Out of This Chapter

After studying and discussing this chapter, the student or seminar participant should be able to

- Better identify situations in which group (rather than individual) think-work processes would be most appropriate
- Better understand, identify, and deal with methodological and emotion-related problems (and underlying causal or influential variables) that tend to limit group think-work effectiveness
- Apply a method for more effectively structuring team think-work situations to compensate for mental, organizational, and environmental limitations or impediments
- More effectively guide or facilitate team-think sessions with subordinates, colleagues, or superiors
- More effectively participate in team-think sessions with subordinates, colleagues, or superiors
- Better develop his or her own group planning, problem-solving, and decision-making practices and skills, so that their use becomes second nature
- Better improve or further develop subordinates' group planning, problem-solving, and decision-making practices and skills
- More effectively contribute to organization-wide development and reinforcement of team planning, problem-solving and decision-making policies, practices, and procedures

How Instructors and Participants Can Use the CD-ROM's Supplementary Materials

The accompanying CD-ROM contains these materials for Chapter Sixteen:

- *Chapter Sixteen Study Guide.* Participants can use this study guide to prepare for class or seminar sessions and end-of-module superior-subordinates sessions.

• *Table 16.1: Conducting Effective Team-Think Processes.* Placed on the CD-ROM for use as a reference by facilitators and participants, this table outlines the steps of a think-work process and indicates the responsibilities of leaders and participants at each stage in the process. It can be used during class or seminar small-group sessions and should be used during the end-of-module superior-subordinates discussion, OD, and team-building sessions.

• *List of Group Process Interaction Categories.* This document describes types of interactions that tend to occur between individuals during group think-work sessions. These are often discussed or even role-played during class or seminar sessions. One part of the document can be used to keep track of the types of interactions occurring between members of a work group.

• *Group Process Evaluation Form.* This form can be used to identify the dynamics of a group's interactions and to evaluate the effectiveness of its activities during a team think-work session. The insights gained can be used to improve and further develop attitudes and capabilities affecting group performance in planning, problem-solving, and decision-making situations.

THE BASICS

Definitions

Group or team processes are basically group discussions. They even include "committee meetings," an unpopular term that will not be mentioned again. Group processes in organizations involve the following *thought-oriented integrative functions:* (a) analyzing situations; (b) goal setting; (c) planning or programming; (d) budgeting; (e) formulating policies and procedures; (f) formulating solutions, improvements, or innovations; (g) decision making; (h) evaluating results or performance; and (i) performing interim or ad hoc problem-solving and decision-making processes.

Participants in group processes may be (a) a manager and his or her immediate subordinates; (b) colleagues or coworkers; (c) line and staff personnel; (d) management and union representatives; or (e) any other combination of individuals in different roles, levels, functions, or units of an organization. Participants may also be persons outside an organization—for example, suppliers, distributors, customers, inspectors, and consultants.

For years the term *groupthink* has referred to group processes aimed at creatively brainstorming a problem, a potential innovation, or a possible change. Although groupthink is often used synonymously with *group process,* it puts more emphasis on free-wheeling, exploratory, creative thought. Over time, however, *groupthink* has taken on a negative connotation, referring to a situation in which group participants do not raise issues, objections, or new ideas and instead just go along with everyone else. Largely for this reason, we prefer to use the term *teamthink* to refer to both structured in-depth think-work sessions and creative brainstorming sessions. We often use *teamthink* interchangeably with *group* or *team think-work.*

Group processing (note the "ing") generally refers to behavior aimed at improving the conduct or dynamics of a group process. Participants are processing when, for example, they (a) attempt to get another group member to stick to the point; (b) attempt to deal among themselves with interpersonal conflicts that are interfering with effective discussion; (c) apply sanctions to a member who is not conforming to norms of proper conduct of a group process; and (d) apply sanctions to a member who will not agree or compromise with the rest of the group.

Chapter Thirteen (pp. 281–308) defined the following *types of problem-solving situations:* (a) corrective-preventive; (b) preventive; (c) creative or innovative; and (d) improvement-oriented. As mentioned then, these four types of problem situations are related to each other in

various ways. Prevention often involves creativity, innovation, or improvement. Innovation usually stems from a need to improve or correct something. Correction often requires innovation and improvement as well as prevention. Thus, the type of problem-solving approach used in a particular situation largely depends on the context and objectives.

Advantages of Individual Think-Work Processes (Disadvantages of Group Processes)

An individual manager or leader can choose to analyze, set goals, plan, make decisions, and initiate action independently or unilaterally. He or she can also choose to involve others (subordinates, superiors, colleagues) in think-work functions. Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages, especially under certain conditions. The following are the main advantages of individual think-work (and the disadvantages of group or team think-work):

Less time needed. An individual process requires less time than a group process because (a) organizing and holding group meetings takes time and (b) an individual need not deal with the methodological and interpersonal problems or the differences of opinion that generally occur in group meetings. This becomes particularly important in emergency or high-stress situations (such as those involving firefighters and soldiers), when time cannot be wasted because lives or something else very important may be at stake.

Fewer interpersonal conflicts. Conflicts occurring in groups are not a problem for an individual who is thinking on his or her own. Even if individuals do not bring existing interpersonal conflicts with them to group meetings, conflicts often develop because of (a) participants' competing wills and egos, and (b) differences in their feelings, attitudes, knowledge, values, opinions, goals, interests, and expectations. When conflicts develop, the communication of ideas, information, and honest feelings tends to break down, thereby limiting the effectiveness of group think-work.

Fewer extraneous matters. An individual does not get bogged down with the extraneous matters that group participants often inject into discussions.

Less input overload. An individual does not get bogged down with information overload and the additional alternatives that are often introduced in groups.

Fewer interfering or distracting pressures. The competing organizational pressures and responsibilities faced by an individual manager are multiplied in groups, whose participants are also faced with competing pressures and responsibilities that interfere with their attention, concentration, and contributions.

Greater expertise. An individual manager's knowledge and experience may be greater than group participants' combined knowledge and experience. Thus, the quality of the individual's solution or decision may be greater in some cases.

Greater control of the thinking process. An individual has more control over his or her own process than a group process. In group processes, a group leader tends to lose some control because of (a) the social interactions and pressures that are inherent in more socially oriented group processes and (b) the personal objectives and agendas of subordinates, which may differ considerably from those of the manager. This loss of control is more significant when those involved have not been properly trained in team-think principles and practices.

Less dysfunctional compromise or consensus. Some groups tend to arrive at dysfunctional compromise or consensus. Groups often seek compromise or consensus so that no one completely wins or loses. However, the most comfortable decision for all involved is not always the best.

Quality may be sacrificed in order to reach a compromise or consensus. The extent to which quality is sacrificed largely depends on how compromise or consensus is reached. If facts and differing attitudes or opinions are not considered openly and honestly, quality will suffer. The probability of arriving at a less-than-optimal decision is greater when one or more participants are relatively more determined, talkative, persuasive, dominant, prestigious, knowledgeable, or powerful than others. Such persons often suppress good ideas and honest disagreements that would contribute to more fruitful deliberations.

More consistency with organizational goals, policies, or procedures. An individual manager's solution or decision may be more consistent with organizational goals, policies, and procedures than that of a group—if a manager is more concerned and knowledgeable about them than the group. Group participants with little concern or knowledge about organizational goals and policies may inject organizationally dysfunctional goals, opinions, feelings, or expectations into solutions or decisions.

Clearer responsibility for results. Responsibility for results is clear-cut for an individual but is diffused within a group. When responsibilities for formulating and implementing a decision are shared by a group, it is generally more difficult to monitor results, pinpoint any ensuing problems, and assess each group member's individual performance. Such diffusion of responsibility often makes effective implementation difficult. And shared responsibility often hampers problem-solving or decision-making processes. Some individuals hide in groups so that their performance cannot be easily measured and evaluated. In order to hide, they must make few contributions during a group process and then shoulder as little responsibility for results as possible.

Clearer rewards. Rewards are clear-cut for an individual but are diffused and unclear for group members. When responsibilities for formulating solutions and making and implementing a decision are shared, any resulting praise or other rewards are divided among group participants; thus, no one individual receives maximum reward or satisfaction. Such a lack of clear rewards is often frustrating, especially to high achievers who have worked hard to make significant contributions and who seek positive feedback for their efforts. Many group members, therefore, will try to compensate by (a) dominating group discussions, (b) working harder in order to make more significant contributions, or (c) taking more credit than they deserve. Regardless of whether useful competition results, this behavior often adversely influences group effectiveness. In contrast, if an individual formulates solutions and makes a decision, responsibility is clear-cut, and he or she can take all the credit for good results if he or she desires.

Greater distance from subordinates. Thinking individually, a manager can maintain some distance from subordinates. Many managers prefer to keep some distance between themselves and their subordinates. This is more difficult to do when one is involved with subordinates in a group process.

Better managerial image. A manager's image may be adversely affected by using a group approach. In an organization in which participative or team processes are the exception rather than the rule, a manager's superiors, colleagues, or subordinates may view the manager as permissive, indecisive, or weak if he or she engages subordinates in team think-work. In such an atmosphere, a manager's effectiveness may be reduced.

Less skill required. Guiding group planning, problem-solving, and decision-making processes requires more developed skills than individual think-work. (So does participating effectively in such processes.) Structuring group think-work, dealing effectively with interpersonal obstacles, and overcoming other problems associated with group processes all require more sophisticated skills than many managers or group leaders possess.

Advantages of Group Think-Work Processes (Disadvantages of Individual Processes)

The following are the advantages that superior-subordinates team-think processes have over individual think-work:

More knowledge and experience inputs. A group's collective knowledge and experience is almost always greater than that of an individual. Because everyone's knowledge and experience are somewhat limited, two or more heads contain more than one. In fact, according to Egan (2005), groups made up of different *types* of people produce better decisions that result in greater success. Thus, group processes have these significant input-related advantages over individual think-work: (a) consideration of a larger number of causal or influential variables involved in a situation; (b) analysis of a greater amount of associated facts or data; (c) development of deeper and broader insights into a situation; (d) consideration of a larger number of potentially effective solutions or plans; (e) consideration of more advantages and disadvantages of alternatives; and (f) consideration of more of the possible consequences and obstacles associated with alternatives. More and better inputs contribute to more effective think-work in the short term, which in turn reduces the need for corrective problem solving and decision making later.

Greater integration and synergy. Groups often formulate more comprehensive, more systematic, and better integrated solutions and plans than individuals. Especially when situations involve several interdependent jobs, it is necessary to formulate comprehensive, systematic, well-integrated solutions or plans. Notwithstanding problems associated with group dynamics, this can generally be accomplished most successfully through a team process that enables participants to determine how best to coordinate their activities.

Greater understanding and acceptance of and commitment to solutions or decisions. People's understanding of, acceptance of, and commitment to solutions and decisions is greater when they take part in formulating them. Participation not only increases group members' understanding of situational objectives, problem causes, alternative solutions or plans, and the bases for final decisions but also gives them opportunities to incorporate personal opinions, feelings, and goals into the chosen alternatives. As a result, they tend to be more accepting of the decisions, more committed to them, and more motivated to implement them successfully. According to Moon and others (2003), this is especially the case when individuals have done their homework and considered options before they make decisions that will have ongoing effects.

Greater understanding and acceptance of and commitment to change. People's understanding of, acceptance of, and commitment to change are greater when they participate in identifying the need for it and in planning it. Participation reduces fear and resistance because people know what change is coming, why, how its effects will be handled, and how it will affect them.

Functional consensus or compromise. Consensus reached in groups can be beneficial in many respects. *Consensus* is achieved when participants come to agree on a decision—not through bargaining and voting but through rational exploration and evaluation of factors and their relationships, facts, estimates, ideas, possible alternatives, possible outcomes, probabilities of events, opinions, and feelings. (Because *compromise* involves bargaining and voting, it bypasses more rational deliberation and is usually not as beneficial.) People involved in or affected by a solution, decision, or change generally have something to gain or to lose. If a group decision results in a loss to one or more participants, their acceptance of and commitment to it may be relatively low. Therefore, reaching a consensus (in which everyone gains something) or even a compromise (a middle ground where any wins for one or more parties are not too great and any losses

for one or more parties are more or less acceptable) is often advantageous, especially when the decision must be accepted by everyone concerned in order to make it work successfully. Because the road to consensus is usually difficult, actually achieving it tends to generate feelings of accomplishment and security in a group, which contribute to everyone pulling together.

More effective implementation and more successful results. More effective implementation and better results are often obtained through a group process. Especially when job interdependencies exist and a relatively complicated solution or plan requires coordinated implementation, the probabilities of effective action and successful results are greater when all those involved (a) understand and accept the chosen course of action, (b) understand and accept the activities for which they will be held responsible, and (c) fully understand how their own activities must be coordinated with others' activities.

Time savings in the short and long term. Group think-work can actually save time in the short term and the long term. When a manager unilaterally makes a decision, he or she is often asked by subordinates to explain it. This often takes some time, especially when the matter is relatively complicated. If subordinates' acceptance and commitment are required for the sake of effective implementation, the manager may also have to take the time to justify the decision and do a "sales job" on subordinates. But even then, he or she may not get the desired results. In the short term, therefore, the time wasted in explanation and persuasion might well have been saved through the use of the participative approach. Furthermore, the group approach can also save time over the long term for these reasons: First, consideration of more and probably better informational and experiential inputs in group processes tends to generate better solutions and plans than those generated by a single individual. The implementation of better solutions and plans tends to produce better initial results, thereby reducing and often precluding the need for time-consuming corrective thought and action later. Second, because group processes usually generate greater understanding of and commitment to decisions than individual decision processes do, group processes usually result in more effective implementation, better initial results, and less need for time-consuming corrective thought and action later.

Note that all of the following points can be related to the development of an effective management team.

Improved superior-subordinate relationships. Participative processes offer a manager opportunities to improve his or her relationships with subordinates. When a manager makes a decision unilaterally, subordinates may feel that they have been treated unfairly. They may also resent the manager's apparent lack of trust in and concern or respect for them. Such feelings often undermine superior-subordinate relationships and widen any gaps that already exist. On the other hand, participative processes provide a manager with opportunities to demonstrate trust in and concern and respect for subordinates. In turn, this enables the manager to *earn subordinates' trust, respect, and loyalty.* Participative processes also give a manager opportunities to observe subordinates' behavior and to develop deeper insights into their feelings, fears, concerns, and attitudes. This leads to more sensitive, people-oriented managerial behavior, which contributes to better superior-subordinate relationships.

Enhanced orientation, training, and cross-pollination of ideas. Subordinates learn more during group processes than during individual think-work. Problem solving is a major mode of learning. Therefore, analyzing situations, formulating solutions or plans, and making decisions are all learning situations. When subordinates are involved in group think-work, they (a) learn more about

the technical and managerial aspects of their job; (b) learn more about and develop a greater understanding of others' jobs and problems; (c) learn from others' knowledge, experience, and ideas; (d) develop a better understanding of the interrelationships among their own and others' jobs; and (e) learn more about their organization's structure, objectives, policies, and procedures. In addition, they can determine what they know, what they do not know, what they need to learn, and from whom they might learn it. During participative processes, both the manager and subordinates have opportunities to contribute to each other's knowledge and experience. Such learning and reinforcement contribute to better individual and team development and performance.

Better conflict resolution, working relationships, and team spirit. Group processes provide opportunities to resolve interpersonal conflicts, improve working relationships, and improve team spirit. Conflicts within a group hamper individual and team performance by (a) interfering with effective communication, (b) hindering performance of technical and integrative tasks, (c) subverting working relationships, and (d) undermining people's job satisfaction and group morale. Interpersonal conflicts often stem from (a) differences (and sometimes similarities) between personal characteristics, (b) differences between tasks, and (c) a lack of understanding and acceptance of these differences (or similarities). Group processes provide opportunities to explore sources of conflicts, better understand them, and deal openly and honestly with them. They also enable group members to exert social pressures on other members to resolve their interpersonal problems. Dealing with sources of interpersonal problems improves working relationships, which in turn boosts team spirit.

More insightful and effective development of subordinates. Group processes provide a manager with opportunities to further develop subordinates' knowledge, thinking skills, and job-related attitudes. Outside of group processes, managers cannot necessarily sense what is going on inside subordinates' heads and hearts. However, during participative processes, a manager can observe subordinates' behavior, hear what they are saying, sense what they are feeling, and better determine the following: (a) what they know, (b) what they do not know and need to learn, (c) what they are thinking, (d) what thinking skills they might need to develop further, (e) what guidance they might require, and (f) what other of their characteristics or attitudes could stand improvement. Having identified subordinates' developmental needs, the manager can furnish technical, professional, or managerial inputs through training and provide other inputs shown in Figure 11.1 (page 262) during subsequent group processes.

Major Issues: Quality Versus Acceptance

Two main issues weave in and out of discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of individual and group approaches to think-work processes. One is the *need for quality* in resulting goals, plans, solutions, or decisions. The other is the *need for acceptance* of the resulting goals, plans, solutions, or decisions. The need for quality involves the technical impact of think-work outputs on the organization. The need for acceptance the involves feelings, attitudes, needs, and motivation of people who will be affected by the outputs or results. Combinations of levels of these needs vary from situation to situation.

High quality need, low acceptance need. When technical quality is important but people involved will not be affected significantly, individual managerial decision making can be justified.

Low quality need, high acceptance need. In this case, technical matters are relatively unimportant but the potential effects on subordinates or colleagues require their acceptance. Participative problem solving or decision making is most appropriate here, particularly if solutions or decisions must be implemented successfully by subordinates or colleagues.

High quality need, high acceptance need. This situation calls for the participative approach for two reasons: First, technical quality will be improved by whatever expertise subordinates have to offer. Second, because their jobs, needs, feelings, and motivation are likely to be affected, their acceptance and effective implementation of the decision are more likely if the team approach is used.

In our view, many organizational problem-solving and decision-making situations are higher in the needs for both quality and acceptance than many managers think they are. Managers do not always recognize that (a) their subordinates' and colleagues' performance, development, and satisfaction are highly interrelated; (b) task-related and people-related results are interdependent; (c) most, if not all decisions have the potential to affect people's attitudes and behavior in many subtle ways; and (d) they may not know as much as they think they know.

Conclusions About Individual and Group Think-Work Processes

Acknowledging that there are exceptions to most generalizations, we draw the following conclusions from the preceding discussion.

First, in far too many situations in which both quality and acceptance are important, people try to solve problems or make decisions by themselves. A few situations, however, do come closer than others to justifying an individual rather than a group approach: (a) emergency or high-stress situations such as surgery, fire fighting, police actions, and combat; (b) situations in which the needs for quality and acceptance are both unquestionably low; and (c) specific situations or decisions that were assigned for action or delegated to particular individuals during previous superior-subordinate group processes.

Second, most thinking situations lead to some degree of change. Change, whether technical, attitudinal, or behavioral, usually affects people to some degree. Thus, there are few organizational problem-solving, goal-setting, planning, or decision-making situations in which acceptance is of little concern.

Third, due to interdependencies among jobs and units in most organizations, improvement (or change) within an organization usually requires coordinated implementation. Effective implementation is facilitated by participative analysis, planning, and decision making both within and between units.

Fourth, because the managerial process is a problem-solving process, participative processes develop subordinates' and colleagues' individual and team managerial skills.

Fifth, the major disadvantages of group processes are largely caused by faulty mechanics. Effective processes depend on the absence of methodological and interpersonal obstacles. These obstacles can be minimized or overcome by developing participants' problem-solving, communicative, and interpersonal skills.

Sixth, group processes are superior to individual think-work processes in most respects and in most situations—particularly when the participants' group think-work skills have been adequately developed. Managers should seriously consider using the team approach before deciding to think things out entirely on their own and make unilateral decisions affecting the jobs and lives of people with whom they work.

Symptoms of Faulty Team-Think Processes

The left-hand column of Table 16.1 lists symptoms of faulty group processes (many of which are also the symptoms of faulty communications listed in Table 15.2). The middle and right-hand columns indicate possible causes of faulty think-work, which are often the result of the

Table 16.1. Conducting Effective Team-Think Processes

SYMPTOMS OF FAULTY PROCESSES (Most Are Found in Most Phases)	**RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PREVENTING CAUSES OF FAULTY TEAM-THINK PROCESSES**	
	LEADER'S GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN ALL PHASES	**LEADER'S PHASE-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES**
	ADVANCE AND ONGOING IMPROVEMENT OF INPUTS	
Unrecognized problems, threats, or opportunities to improve things Only occasional use of full analytic approach Little or limited knowledge of variables and their interrelationships Illogical reasoning; overly simplistic solutions Dysfunctional traits, attitudes, or behavior Faulty implementation, communication, or coordination; resulting mistakes, difficulties, and problems	1. Do personal and organizational goal setting and planning. 2. Make a habit of using the analytic approach (and ensure that subordinates do, too). 3. Increase your own and subordinates' knowledge and experience. 4. Further develop your own and subordinates' thinking abilities. 5. Adjust your own and guide subordinates' adjustment of personal characteristics and behavioral tendencies. 6. Further develop implementation and communication skills.	**KNOW, BE ABLE TO USE, AND BE ABLE TO GUIDE PARTICIPANTS' USE OF THE METHODOLOGY (PHASES AND STEPS) OF THE ANALYTIC APPROACH** ↓ **KNOW HOW TO FACILITATE THE PROCESSING OF INFORMATION, IDEAS, AND FEELINGS DURING THE PROCESS**
Ill-Conceived or Poor Meetings →		**PRIOR TO A TEAM THINK-WORK PROCESS**
Meeting not well attended Appropriate participants not in attendance Distractions, interruptions Participants not at ease or comfortable	**KNOW, BE ABLE TO USE, AND BE ABLE TO GUIDE PARTICIPANTS' USE OF THE METHODOLOGY (PHASES AND STEPS) OF THE ANALYTIC APPROACH** ↓ **KNOW HOW TO FACILITATE THE PROCESSING OF INFORMATION, IDEAS, AND FEELINGS DURING THE PROCESS**	1. Identify that a think-work situation exists. 2. Perform a **preview analysis** of the situation: briefly analyze its nature and scope; importance and priority; possible objectives; how much time there is to act; and the need for group process. 3. Analyze potential participants: determine whom to invite based on how the person is involved, what inputs he or she can provide, how he or she will be affected by decisions, and how he or she might affect the process. 4. Advise participants and **plan** the meeting time and place: tell participants the agenda and importance of the topic; request that they do preliminary analysis, collect information, and organize the needed information and other materials; determine a mutually convenient time; and agree on a conducive place (with minimal noise, distractions, interruptions; adequate seating and lighting; and so on).

Poor or Incomplete Introduction

Symptoms of Attention and Motivation Problems

- Selective attention or perception
- Tuning out, daydreaming
- Socializing
- Dysfunctional frame of mind or mood

Effectively Alleviate Attention and Motivation Problems

a. Discuss real versus perceived importance of topic or situation.

b. Discuss perceived risks (for example, change; ego or status threats).

PREPARATION (AT MEETING'S OUTSET)

1. Introduce the topic.
2. Increase **motivation:** outline how organizational objectives are involved, the seriousness of the planning or problem situation, and what the results of the process will do for participants.
3. Get **organized** (data, materials, references, equipment).
4. Establish a **team atmosphere** (congenial, trusting, cooperative): emphasize team spirit and the need for contributions by all.
5. Provide a **preview** of the situation: description; type of think-work involved; nature, possible scope, possible complexities; constraints such as time and resources available.
6. **Review approach**—for example, "we'll take one phase at a time and not jump back and forth between them; we'll seek consensus."
7. **Review leader's roles and responsibilities:** provide procedural guidance; be gatekeeper for the flow of ideas; elicit inputs and ideas; facilitate discussion, evaluation, and arrival at consensus; foster a team atmosphere; contribute inputs after others do; reinforce functional behavior.
8. **Review participants' responsibilities:** make contributions; be open-minded; avoid blaming and faultfinding; accept and look for merit in others' contributions; stick to facts; stick to the point; **listen;** speak out, but think first; build on others' points; avoid arguments; **explore** differences in perceptions, ideas, feelings, opinions, and conclusions; avoid "I win, you lose" decisions; trust others; don't betray others' trust; reinforce functional group behavior.

Superficial or Poor Analyses

Too few variables and their relationships considered

Symptoms of Methodological Problems

- Disagreement over method or steps
- Disagreement over when to proceed to the next phase

Symptoms of Interpretive or Information Processing Problems

- Disagreement over information or ideas
- Disagreements over opinions or conclusions
- Bypassing the receiver
- Sidetracking

Effectively Elicit Contributions of Inputs (Information, Ideas) (All Phases)

Help participants identify, deal with, and relate factors and associated facts and data:

1. Encourage spontaneous, free expression of inputs.
2. Ask for all relevant—or even diverse or unusual—input
3. Be patient; tolerate silences while participants are thinking.
4. Acknowledge and accept each idea, observation, or other input.
5. Request specific illustrations, elaboration, and clarification.
6. Rephrase or summarize a contribution in words all can understand; post idea on, for example, a whiteboard or similar surface.
7. Test for participants' understanding and agreement with input.
8. Do not judge inputs or allow others to evaluate them until all inputs have been contributed.
9. Protect minority views or views received unfavorably by the group.

ANALYSIS PHASE

1. Elicit in-depth description of situation.
2. Elicit both broad and deep identification of potentially causal variables involved and their interrelationships; use **checklists** as necessary.
3. **Diagram or model** factors and their relationships.
4. Connect facts and data with factors or variables.
5. Identify which factors to correct and which obvious *and* underlying causes to correct or improve.
6. Guide formulation of criteria for testing, comparing, and selecting among alternative plans or solutions.
7. Refrain from discussing suggested alternatives until the situation has been fully explored for causes.
8. Keep discussion focused on the situation or problem at hand.

(*Continued*)

Table 16.1. Conducting Effective Team-Think Processes (*Continued*)

SYMPTOMS OF FAULTY PROCESSES (Most Are Found in Most Phases)	RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PREVENTING CAUSES OF FAULTY TEAM-THINK PROCESSES	
	LEADER'S GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN ALL PHASES	**LEADER'S PHASE-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES**
Confusion Wheel spinning Limited input Meta-talk (hidden meanings)	10. Reinforce idea-building or idea-refining behavior. 11. Post extraneous contributions to one side of the flipchart for later consideration (or slow death). 12. Refrain from making personal contributions until the ball has gotten rolling and the group has contributed its inputs. 13. Check to see if all relevant contributions have been made and the group is ready to go on to the next phase.	
Too Many, Too Few, or Poor Alternatives (Plans or Solutions) →	**Effectively Guide Evaluation of Posted Contributions (All Phases)** 1. Allow each contribution to be evaluated in its turn. 2. Use controversial ideas as springboards to generate evaluation, new ideas, recognition of implications. 3. Allow disagreement; even stimulate disagreement if there is too quick, too much, or too easy agreement. 4. Protect the ego and personality of any disagreeing contributor. 5. Do not become embroiled in irrational, unproductive disagreements. 6. Ask nonjudgmental questions to stimulate objectivity, further analysis, insight generation, or greater understanding. 7. Post or diagram information and ideas in order to guide discussion, keep participants on track, and maintain your role.	**FORMULATION OF PLANS OR SOLUTIONS PHASE** 1. Guide identification of which variables need changing, adjusting, improving, or correcting. 2. Identify the end results (objectives) desired. 3. Formulate plans for reaching objectives: strategies and tactics; program and projects; action plans; budgets. 4. Ensure that action plans are part of any solution: specify who will do what, when, and in what sequence. 5. Ask for more alternatives if just a few are suggested.
Too Quick Agreement or Failure to Arrive at an Effective Decision, Consensus, or Compromise →	8. Describe disagreements (conflicts) in nonpersonal and nonjudgmental terms. 9. Promote deeper exploration of disagreements and the possible rational and emotional reasons for them. 10. Occasionally summarize points being raised. 11. Occasionally review the group's progress.	**DECISION-MAKING PHASE** 1. Facilitate evaluation of alternatives: a. Guide anticipation of possible outcomes. b. Guide estimation of probabilities of events. c. Guide comparison of both advantages and disadvantages of alternatives. d. Seek supporting evidence or experience. e. Use stalemates constructively to further explore pros and cons. f. Guide exploration of potential problems that could be encountered during implementation. 2. Guide the selection process: a. Guide exploration of combining alternatives. b. Guide reduction of alternatives, if there are too many. c. Guide recognition and elimination of unacceptable alternatives.
Symptoms of Other Problems Stemming from Participants' Feelings or Attitudes Exaggeration Resistance Non-acceptance of ideas or feelings Conflicts over acceptance or agreement Arguments	**Effectively Identify and Deal With Dysfunctional Feelings (All Phases)** 1. Constantly test for frustration or other negative emotions. 2. Encourage participants to express and describe feelings, so that they can get them into the open and deal with them. 3. Tolerate initial silences; draw out discussion with nonverbal questioning or expectant facial expressions. 4. Do not interrupt or evaluate a person's feelings until they are fully expressed.	

Polarity Stereotyping (indiscrimination) Interpersonal conflicts (clashes of values or beliefs) Interpersonal conflicts (personality clashes) Interpersonal conflicts (ego clashes) Who's right versus what's right "Allness" (know it all, said it all) Double standards (OK for me but not for you) Condescension	5. Do not question expressed feelings by asking for evidence; instead, request elaboration or illustrations. 6. Expect some face-saving and rationalizing behavior. 7. Help clarify vague or ambiguous expressions of feelings (partly by asking others to describe themselves in the person's shoes). 8. Ask other participants if they share the same feelings, and why. 9. Protect those who express feelings (for example, ask the group to listen with empathy). 10. Acknowledge expressions of feelings as valid perceptions. 11. Guide group exploration of reasons for feelings and how the group can deal with them. 12. Compliment participants on their effective handling of feelings. **Effectively Guide Arrival at Group Consensus (All Phases, especially Decision Making)** 1. Do not allow voting or bargaining on ideas or alternatives. 2. Guide the effort to synthesize ideas or alternatives (so that synthesized alternatives contain positive points that all in the group can accept). 3. Do not let any one individual or faction dominate arrival at consensus. 4. Test for consensus (but not until it appears fairly likely).	3. Deal with anxieties about change and threats to ego or status: a. Be honest about implications for those affected. b. Guide the anticipation of risks and the exploration of ways to deal with them. c. Get fears out into the open and explored. d. Explore modifications that deal with concerns. e. Suggest a trial or experimentation period. f. Promote consensus, not just compromise. 4. Guide finalizing of decision: a. Summarize situation's aspects in detail. b. Guide formulation of standards and conditions for evaluating implementation and results. **IMPLEMENTATION PHASE** 1. Make summary notes or visual aids available to all. 2. Conduct follow-up meetings to evaluate progress, identify problems, and make adjustments. 3. Reward successful behavior and efforts.

group leader not carrying out his or her responsibilities properly. The middle column lists the process leader's responsibilities during all phases of the process. The right column lists responsibilities during each specific phase of the analytic approach (preparation, analysis, formulation of plans or solutions, decision making, and implementation). Note that item 8 in the preparation phase outlines participants' responsibilities. (Many of their responsibilities are listed in more detail in Table 15.2 on page 356.) Table 16.1 has been developed for leaders and participants to use as a handy guide during group processes.

Symptoms of faulty think-work processes (left column). While there are *thought-related symptoms* directly associated with the problem-solving phases, most of the symptoms listed in the left column are *symptoms of faulty communications*. Group processes require communication among participants, and faulty communications contribute to faulty processes. Table 16.1, however, categorizes communication-oriented symptoms and other symptoms somewhat differently. The three major categories are shown in bold type: "Symptoms of Attention and Motivation Problems," "Symptoms of Methodological Problems," and "Symptoms of Ineffective or Inefficient Interpretive and Information Processing Problems." All the categories include symptoms of faulty communication. Even symptoms of methodological problems often develop because of faulty communication. It is most important to note, however, that nearly all symptoms of faulty group processes can occur *at any point in the process*. They are not necessarily associated with the phases directly across from them in the right-hand column. In addition, however, there are major symptoms associated with each particular phase. In Table 16.1, these items are shaded and connected with their associated phase by arrows pointing to the right—for example, "Superficial or Poor Analyses" is associated with the analysis phase.

Leader's general responsibilities in all phases (middle column). These begin at the top with "Advance and Ongoing Improvement of Inputs" and continue to "Effectively Guide Arrival at Group Consensus." Two major responsibilities are shown in boldface type. The primary responsibility is "know, be able to use, and be able to guide participants' use of the methodology (phases and steps) of the analytic approach." The secondary responsibility is "know how to facilitate the processing of information, ideas, and feelings during the process." We have broken the second responsibility into the five categories shown in the remainder of the column (beginning with "Effectively Alleviate Attention and Motivation Problems"). Here again, it is important to note that all of these general responsibilities apply to each phase of the analytic approach, not just the phase directly across in the right-hand column.

Leader's phase-specific responsibilities (right column). Each phase is shaded. Given Table 13.1 and the accompanying discussion in Chapter Thirteen on problem solving, these responsibilities require no further discussion here. However, it should be pointed out that the primary responsibility is "know, be able to use, and be able to guide participants' use of the methodology (phases and steps) of the analytic approach" during each particular phase.

It is difficult to say whether communication errors and underdeveloped soft skills (such as interpersonal awareness and sensitivity) cause more faulty think-work processes than improper use of the phases and steps of the analytic approach. However, we have concluded that while it is true that participants may bring a host of dysfunctional feelings and attitudes to group processes, many of these problematic influences can be minimized by performing each phase of the analytic approach in its turn and not jumping back and forth between phases. For example, jumping immediately from one person's identification of a causal variable to formulating a solution for it—and not attempting to identify all the possibly significant causal or influential variables first—simply exacerbates some emotional obstacles and often generates new ones. On the

other hand, using only the phases and steps of the analytic approach to deal with competing wills and egos and dysfunctional feelings and attitudes is like trying to solve problems with one hand tied behind your back. This is especially true when managers use the analytic approach to confront and deal with interpersonal conflicts. In these cases, in which feelings usually run high, it is particularly important to "know how to facilitate the processing of information, ideas, and *feelings* during the process."

BEYOND THE BASICS

This section deals with team-think styles and advance and ongoing activities for continually improving team think-work effectiveness.

Managers' Team-Think Styles

Several earlier tables and figures describe the think-work styles of various types of managers. Table 16.2 summarizes and adds to the earlier tables. It outlines the following:

a. Specific think-work behavior patterns (from Tables 8.2 and 8.3)
b. Relationships between think-work and managerial behavior (from Figures 8.2 and 8.3)
c. Think-work styles identified by Vroom and Yetton (1975)
d. Think-work styles identified by Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) (in Figure 8.2, ranging along the diagonal line from HT,LP up to LT,HP)
e. Which socio-technical factors each type tends to analyze—or not (from Table 8.3)
f. What each type emphasizes or attempts to maximize as a result of the process
g. What each type tends to integrate through plans or solutions (from Table 8.3)
h. What each type communicates as a result of the think-work process, depending on the extent to which a particular type involves subordinates (from Tables 8.3 and 15.3)

Advance and Ongoing Activities for Continually Improving Team Think-Work Effectiveness

Figure 13.1 on page 298 first illustrated advance and ongoing steps for improving inputs that increase effectiveness in planning, problem-solving, and decision-making situations. Figure 15.2 on page 364 did the same for improving inputs that increase the effectiveness of communication processes. Rather than present another figure that reiterates the same points, here we simply emphasize the obvious: it takes increasing, improving, further developing, or adjusting the inputs to individual thought to improve team think-work processes. These activities are shown at the top of the middle column in Table 16.1.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

First, management seminars usually describe concepts, principles, phases, and steps of the analytic approach. Then they have participants practice applying what they have learned for several hours, so that they will develop a basic skill level. However, several hours' practice does not make using the analytic approach a habit or do much to further develop participants'

Table 16.2. Managerial Think-Work Styles Associated with Five Managerial Styles

MANAGERIAL STYLE	High Task, Low People	Low Task, High People	Medium Task, Medium People	Low Task, Low People	High Task, High People
Other style names or descriptions	Authoritarian; 9,1; Theory X; directive and controlling	Permissive; 1,9; country club	Consultive; 5,5; middle-of-the-road; balanced	Nonmanagerial; 1,1	Team; participative; 9,9; Theory Y
General behavior and description of person	Controller, dominator, taker, competitor, results seeker, blamer, attacker; utilitarian	Pleaser, supporter, giver, accommodator, suppressor, yielder	Compromiser, balancer	Avoider; isolationist	Thinker, communicator, achiever, developer, team builder, integrator, confronter, influencer
DESCRIPTIONS OF THINK-WORK STYLES	**Personally** performs all planning, problem-solving and decision-making activities of any importance	Makes few decisions; lets subordinates do most planning, problem solving, and decision making within established guidelines	First obtains subordinates' inputs (possible causes, solutions, and so on), then make decision	Lets superiors do the thinking; pass on their decisions to subordinates	Guides subordinates' participation in all significant planning, problem-solving, and decision-making situations
Vroom and Yetton (1975)	a. Manager solves problem alone, using whatever information is available at the time.		a. Manager gets ideas and suggestions from **individual subordinates** before making decision on his or her own.		Manager plans, solves problems, and makes decisions **with group.**
	b. Manager gets information from subordinates first, then makes decision on his or her own.		b. Manager meets with **group** to get ideas and suggestions, then makes decision alone.		
Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958)	a. Make decision, tell subordinates	a. Give subordinates autonomy	a. Present problems, get suggestions, make decision		
	b. Make decision, sell subordinates	b. Define limits, let subordinates make decisions	b. Present tentative decision subject to changes		
			c. Make decision, tell subordinates, invite questions		
Socio-technical factors analyzed or considered	Considers only task-related and organizational factors (what can be seen)	Considers mostly individual and social factors (what can be felt, sensed)	Analyzes mostly task-related and organizational factors but also considers individual and social factors to some extent	Thinks only about personal situation and maintaining a comfortable, worry-free atmosphere for self	Analyzes all variables: task-related, individual, social, organizational, and external (what can be seen **and** what cannot be seen)
Primary emphasis	Productivity	Satisfaction	Balance or compromise between productivity and satisfaction	Comfortable atmosphere for self	Productivity and satisfaction (through participation and development)
What is integrated	Mostly integrates tasks with tasks (mechanics of operation)	Mostly integrates people with people (social interactions and atmosphere)	Integrates both tasks and people, to a balanced (medium) degree	Integrates little or nothing	Integrates tasks with tasks, people with tasks, people with people, people with organization
Nature of communications	Instructions, decisions, orders	Feelings, support	Mostly instructions and decisions	Few communications of any kind	Advice, information, guidance

thinking skills. The organizations from which seminar participants come must follow up, using participative practices and mutual reinforcement by personnel throughout the organization to (a) solidify knowledge and application of the analytic approach until its use becomes a habit and (b) further develop personnel's thinking skills.

Second, many chapters of this book mention two major mental limitations on problem-solving effectiveness. The first is a limited knowledge of possible causal variables. Again, a very good way to compensate for this limitation is to refer to *checklists of factors* in order to identify all the significant variables that could be causing or influencing a problem situation. The second limitation is the mind's inability to juggle many variables and their relationships at one time. And again, using *diagrams and models* helps personnel actually see the entire analysis and (a) handle much more qualitative and quantitative information; (b) better and more easily deal with complexity; (c) gain more insights; (d) formulate better solutions and plans; (e) make better decisions; (f) record more information in memory for future use; and, as a result, (g) meet goals more successfully.

Third, the importance of organizational goal setting and planning cannot be overemphasized. As mentioned before, the better that goals and plans (intended or expected occurrences) are recorded in memory, the greater is the chance that managers and their personnel will do the following: (a) stop to think about what they are doing, (b) use what they have learned to do it more effectively, (c) use the analytic approach often enough to make its use a habit, and (d) further develop the thinking (and communication) skills involved.

Fourth, as pointed out at the end of the last chapter, it is usually very difficult for an individual to use all of these practices if others with whom he or she is interacting do not also know and use them. Therefore, we again assert the following important principle: In order for individual managers to successfully apply the concepts, principles, and practices covered in the last three chapters, their subordinates, superiors, and colleagues must also know and apply them as well. If they do not, few will make a habit of using the analytic approach or develop significantly better thinking and communication skills. As mentioned numerous times throughout the book, in order to achieve all that is possible for organizations to achieve, everyone must know what everyone else is expected to know; everyone must be trying to communicate and solve problems effectively; everyone must try to work well together; and everyone must mutually reinforce others' efforts. In short, both group leaders and participants must be well versed in (a) structuring think-work processes; (b) acting as a gatekeeper for inputs and ideas; and (c) dealing with motives, attitudes, and feelings.

Fifth, both leaders and participants in group think-work processes should try to keep in mind what Figures 7.2 (page 154), 10.13 (page 251), 13.2 (page 304), and 15.3 (page 366) have shown up to this point: that effective management—which means participative management—involves planning, decision making, problem solving, and communicating together as a group or team.

Before all these concepts, models, methods, skills, and practices can be tied together, one more very important management and organization development topic must be covered: individual and organizational learning. Chapter Seventeen, which constitutes the training portion of Module 6, deals with that topic.

The next section contains recommendations for conducting the superior-subordinates discussion, OD application, and team-building sessions that conclude Module 5. Once this series of group processes has been completed, participants will be ready to cover Module 6's materials on individual and organization learning in Chapter Seventeen.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONDUCTING SUPERIOR-SUBORDINATES DISCUSSION, OD APPLICATION, AND TEAM-BUILDING SESSIONS FOLLOWING THE TRAINING PORTION OF MODULE 5

General Information

In both seminar and superior-subordinates sessions (especially the latter), participants apply all that they have learned through Module 5 by more fully analyzing and solving important organizational problems of their choice. What they have learned includes (a) improved think-work knowledge and skills (having practiced applying the think-work concepts, principles, methods, and tools discussed in Modules 1, 3, 4, and 5) and (b) all the behavioral information and insights that they have been accumulating about what is going on in their organization and why (as a result of learning individual, organizational, managerial, and interpersonal behavior concepts and terminology in Modules 2 and 4).

Objectives

As shown in the lower Module 5 box in Figure 1.1 on page 20, these sessions are aimed at correcting or improving organizational problem situations involving causal relationships among many important socio-technical variables.

Preparation

If participants have used the session preparation guide provided on the CD-ROM for Chapter Sixteen, they will have already thought about many of the following issues and will be better prepared to discuss them.

Sessions should be scheduled for at least four hours, including breaks. Participants may choose to continue their discussions during subsequently scheduled sessions.

Examples of Areas, Problem Situations, or Issues to Address

- Major interdepartmental conflicts (involving many possible socio-technical influences)
- Organizational or structural problems involving, for example, horizontal or vertical integration of units' activities (possibly involving task-related, organizational, social, or external factors)
- Information system problems affecting a number of units (possibly involving technical, structural, managerial, or other phenomena)
- Problems involving organizational policies, rules, or procedures
- Staffing problems
- Problems involving external forces or factors (such as markets, customers, suppliers, technologies, national and global economies, or sociocultural trends)

The more in-depth the analyses at this point, the more and greater will be the insights into the real, underlying (socio-technical) causes of various problems. In systems of variables, many factors are causes of more than one problem situation. Also, the more detailed the analyses, the larger are the number of influential variables that can be identified and targeted for improvement. Be sure to formulate goals and plans regarding situations picked for exploration and improvement.

Commitments to Actions and Results

Superiors and their immediate subordinates should contract with each other on the following specifics of goals and plans: (a) who is going to be held responsible for which final outcomes; (b) milestones on the way to the end results; and (c) who will do what, when, with whom, and over what period of time. Some issues may be tabled for more detailed analysis, formulation of alternatives, and decision making at a later date.

Participants should apply the principles, practices, and visual tools discussed in Chapters Two through Six. They should also take into consideration other anticipated changes and their priorities and costs.

Facilitation

If, in the judgment of the OD consultant, professional outside facilitator, or expert internal facilitator, the unit or work group's leader, supervisor, or manager is capable of effectively facilitating his or her superior-subordinates sessions (using Table 16.1 as a guide), then that responsibility can be transferred at this point. If not, these discussions should continue to be facilitated by the OD consultant, professional outside facilitator, or well-trained internal facilitator.

At this point in the program, the session leader or facilitator should make certain that all participants have and are familiar with Table 16.1 (also on the CD-ROM), which outlines the leader and participant responsibilities involved in preparing for and conducting group think-work processes.

In addition to guiding mechanical aspects of the group process, the facilitator should use his or her knowledge and experience to lead participants toward identification of (a) real, underlying causes of problems; (b) other influential (or possibly causal) factors, whose impacts are not always obvious; and (c) solutions or plans that have been or would tend to be most successful.

Evaluation and Follow-Up

Facilitators should have participants critique their sessions by filling out or discussing the items on the Group Process Evaluation Form (found with the Chapter Sixteen content on the CD-ROM).

After the sessions are over, monitor participants' planned activities and their adherence to the commitments they made during these sessions. With guidance from an OD consultant, a facilitator, or an appropriate high-level manager, participants (superiors and their subordinates) should evaluate results upon arrival at each planned milestone.