**COMMUNICATION IN SMALL GROUPS**

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Nowadays people play, work and live in groups. It is a stable social and psychological phenomenon, which has been a focus across the social and behavioral sciences for over 50 years in psychology, sociology, management, communication, education, social work and political science and it’s still not discovered completely. Mostly people interact in groups. Groups, or work teams, can accomplish great things in small and large businesses alike. A group's overall effectiveness, however, hinges to a great extent on the effectiveness of the participants' communication abilities. Without positive flows of communication, misunderstandings can occur between groups, creating a fractious work environment. Without clear communication between group leaders and workers, productivity can slow as workers struggle to understand their specific job functions. Communication styles can vary according to group dynamics. Geographically dispersed groups connected via the Internet, for example, are likely to communicate much differently than individuals who work in the same room with each other every day. Whatever the setting, the way groups communicate in your company can directly influence the success of your strategic goals.

Group is [a](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=a) [set](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=set) [of](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=of) [people](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=people) [who](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=who) [meet](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=meet) [or](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=or) [do](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=do) [something](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=something) [together](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=together) [because](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=because) [they](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=they) [share](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=share) [the](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=the) [same](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=same) [purpose](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=purpose) [or](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=or) [ideas](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=ideas). According to the quantity of members there are small, medium and big groups. A group discussion can be a very stimulating communication activity for those who have the skill. It is a very useful activity in organizations. It helps in understanding a situation, in exploring possibilities and in solving problems because it allows a multiple point of view. It also gives a sense of participation to all those who participate in it. [1, p.64-76].

Communication in small groups is interpersonal communication within groups of between 3 and 20 individuals. This kind of communication is widely spread in business because of benefits it brings. Most companies and organizations have people working in small teams. It is more effective and productive than a single individual work. When you have three, four or more people working on an issue, you have the advantage of having access to more ideas and solutions for the project. Such groups will have more protection against any flaws in the plan and become attractive in establishing more permanent business relations. When compared to a single person, a group is also more likely to take on and complete large-scale, complex projects, efficiently and quickly. However, for the team to work successfully, there must be open and efficient communication between its members.  
Since 1950, literally thousands of studies on many aspects of groups have appeared. For example there is a well-known model, called linear phase model. The idea is that all groups performing a given type of task go through the same series of stages in the same order with most finding four phases of discussion. For example, communication researcher B. Aubrey Fisher showed groups going sequentially through an orientation stage, a conflict stage, a stage in which a decision emerges and a stage in which that decision is reinforced.

The second model is idea development model. This study was made in 1960s by Thomas Scheidel and Laura Crowell. They concluded that after a proposal is made, groups discuss it in an implied attempt to determine their "comfort level" with it and then drop it in lieu of a different proposal.  
Working in a group people can’t avoid such phenomenon as social influence. There are two examples of social psychological research. The first was made by [Muzafer Sherif](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muzafer_Sherif) in 1935 using the [auto kinetic effect](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autokinetic_effect). He asked people to voice their judgments of light movement in the presence of others. As a result most of those judgments tended to converge.

The second of these was a series of studies by [Solomon Asch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_Asch), in which naive participants were asked to voice their judgments of the similarity of the length of lines after hearing the "judgments" of several confederates (research assistants posing as participants) who purposely voiced the same obviously wrong judgment. On about 1/3 of the cases, participants voiced the obviously wrong judgment. When asked why, many of these participants reported that they had originally made the correct judgment but after hearing the partners, decided the judgments of several others (the partners) should be trusted over theirs.

Of course during communication process people face communication difficulties like conflicts, disagreements and different points of view. So all the members should know and follow these simple rules:

* All the group members have to listen carefully to each other
* Understand the different points of view that were discussed
* Be respectful and show interest in maintaining a good relationship with the group members
* Try and find a common ground
* Come up with new solutions to the problem or situation
* Reach on a fair agreement that will benefit everyone.

1. Many methods may be used in reaching group decisions. The most popular method in Western culture is by majority, but other ways to make team decisions are available. Firstly, voting by majority brings quick decision making, and that is one of the reasons why it is the most widely used. A second method is by consensus. Reaching decisions by consensus is time consuming, but it allows everyone to bring forward their opinion. A third method is by averaging. This method requires all teammates to reach a decision by compromising. Reaching decisions by minority decision calls for a subcommittee getting together and reaching decisions without the whole group being involved. A final method is by authority rule. In this method, the group leader listens to individual group member's ideas, and has final say on a decision [1, p.40–43].

There is one more important point in small group communication. It is nonverbal communication. The first type is body language. It is a form of nonverbal communication, consisting of body pose, gestures, eye movements and paralinguistic cues. Humans send such signals unconsciously. It is often said that human communication consists of 93% body language and paralinguistic cues, while only 7% of communication consists of words themselves. The second type is physical expressions. It is shown like waving, pointing, touching and slouching. The study of body movement and expression is known as [kinesics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinesics). Humans move their bodies when communicating because as research has shown, it helps "ease the mental effort when communication is difficult." Physical expressions reveal many things about the person using them for example, gestures can emphasize a point or relay a message, posture can reveal boredom or great interest, and touch can convey encouragement or caution.

An understanding of non-verbal methods and aspects of communication helps a person to improve oral and written presentation by using the methods and by gaining control over body language [3, p. 727].

Understanding small groups has been an important area of study for many disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences for many years. However, scientists interested in small groups have largely been working in this field made a great deposit not only in psychological sphere, but also in business and management sciences. By identifying where the field has been and where it is now, other scholars would have a great chance to make large strides in describing, predicting, and explaining the behavior of small groups [4, p. 22].

**Literature**

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