

COMMUNICATING IN SMALL GROUPS

Principles and Practices

ELEVENTH EDITION

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STEVEN A. BEEBE • JOHN T. MASTERSON

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Communicating in Small Groups

Principles and Practices

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**Dedicated to
Sue and Nancy**

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PREFACE

From our first edition to this, our eleventh edition, our goal in writing this book has remained the same: to write a book students find interesting and practical, and instructors find clear and comprehensive. We are pleased that the previous ten editions continue to be praised and widely used by both teachers and students.

We have written the eleventh edition of *Communicating in Small Groups: Principles and Practices* to serve as the primary text for a college-level course that focuses on group communication. We continue to seek a balanced approach to presenting the latest small group principles, while also identifying practical practices that bring the principles to life.

New to the Eleventh Edition

In this new edition we have thoroughly updated the research that anchors the principles and skills we present, incorporated new pedagogical features to enhance student learning, and added new applications of technology to enhance collaborate. Here's an overview of what's new.

Expanded Emphasis on Virtual Groups and Teams. From the first page of Chapter 1 through the final appendix, we have included additional research-based information about the role technology plays in facilitating collaboration in contemporary society. Students who have used technological tools all of their lives are increasingly becoming more sophisticated about the use of technology. We have revised our coverage of technology and the use of new media to reflect students' existing knowledge while also building on it.

Increased Application of Group Skills. Students take a course in group communication not only to improve their knowledge but also to become more skilled communicators. How to develop a discussion plan, create an agenda, facilitate a meeting, manage conflict, make efficient and effective decisions, lead others, and collaboratively solve problems are just a few of the skill sets that are presented. To help students bolster their communication competence, we have expanded our application of specific group communication skills throughout the book. Our "Theory into Practice" feature has been re-titled "Putting Principles into Practice," and we've added new material and applications to ensure students can increase their group communication skill.

Linking Chapter Objectives with Chapter Headings. To help students learn, review, and master chapter content, each learning objective that appears at the beginning of a chapter corresponds to a specific major heading. Students can easily confirm their mastery of each section of the material by reviewing the chapter objectives.

New Chapter-End Study Guide. We have completely revised our chapter-end material to help students assess their understanding of chapter content. Our new Study Guide features use the revised chapter objectives to organize their study. We review information linked to each objective and help them clinch chapter content; we identify key terms and page numbers where students can review their understanding of the term. Finally, we present activities and assessment measures—including several new assessment measures—linked with each objective in the book.

Revised Ethics Feature. To help students explore their own values and ethics when collaborating with others, we have revised several of the “Collaborating Ethically: What Would You Do?” features. These mini case studies can be used for student journal entries or spark insightful class discussions.

Crisp Presentation of Chapter Content. Sometimes less is more. To help students quickly grasp ideas and information, we have looked for ways to structure the text’s content using bullets, new subheads, and streamlined prose to assist students’ mastery of the material.

New Inclusion of Contemporary Group Communication Research. As we have for 30 years, we’ve done our best to find the latest research about small group communication and add it to our already comprehensive digest of small group communication research applications. *Each* chapter includes new and updated references to the latest applications of and insights into communicating in small groups.

New Diversity Material Integrated into Every Chapter. As we have in previous editions, we continue to integrate research and application of diversity throughout the text. For example, in Chapter 8 we offer new, practical strategies for addressing conflict in diverse groups looking at both surface and deep diversity. Thanks to an increased use of technology as well as an increasingly diverse society, we ensure students can adapt and respond to others from different backgrounds and cultures. Rather than relegating culture and diversity topics to a boxed feature, we carefully integrate our discussion of culture and diversity into every chapter.

And Much, Much More. Each chapter includes new examples, illustrations, cartoons, and updated pedagogy to make *Communicating in Small Groups: Principles and Practices* the best learning tool possible. We’ve made a special effort to streamline our coverage of content to make room for new research and additional pedagogical features so as not to add to the overall length of the book.

Chapter-by-Chapter Revision Overview

Here’s a brief summary highlighting several specific changes we’ve made to the eleventh edition:

Chapter One: Introducing Group Principles and Practices

- New material about the importance of virtual groups and teams.
- Extensively revised discussion of communicating in virtual groups and teams.
- New research about best practices for virtual group and team collaboration.

Chapter Two: Understanding Small Group Communication Theory

- Updated, more contemporary case study.
- New research on gender and culture.
- New application and assessment chapter-end materials to help students grasp the theories presented.

Chapter Three: Facilitating Group Development

- More streamlined discussion of individual and group goals and motivators.
- Enhanced treatment of formation in virtual teams.
- New discussion of homogeneity and diversity in groups.

Chapter Four: Preparing to Collaborate

- Revised discussion on how to develop a discussion plan including a new review box that lays out specific suggested steps and actions.
- Updated information about how to ensure that all group members share what they know.
- New assessment activity to help students review their understanding of types of reasoning.

Chapter Five: Relating to Others in Groups

- Expanded treatment of gender and culture.
- New discussion of structuration and formation of group norms.
- Enhanced focus on status and power in groups.

Chapter Six: Improving Group Climate

- New research on the costs and benefits of diversity.
- Updated material on the relationship of group size to group climate.
- New research-based recommendations about building cohesiveness in virtual teams.
- New assessment of group cohesiveness.

Chapter Seven: Enhancing Communication Skills in Groups

- Updated practical nonverbal skills section.
- New nonverbal virtual communication feature.
- New review section on word barriers and how to avoid them.
- New section on backchannel communication.

Chapter Eight: Managing Conflict

- New discussion about the causes of conflict.
- New information about how group members often respond when trust is violated.
- Revised and streamlined discussion of pseudo, simple, and ego conflict.
- New research inclusion about conflict in virtual groups and teams.
- New assessment activity of pseudo, simple, or ego conflict.
- New assessment activity about identifying advantages of different conflict styles.

Chapter Nine: Leading Groups

- Updated, more contemporary examples.
- Expanded coverage of transformational leadership.
- New research on shared leadership in teams.
- Additional research on leadership and gender.
- New material on traits of “servant leaders.”

Chapter Ten: Making Decisions and Solving Problems

- New discussion of the elements of effective and ineffective group decision making.
- Streamlined description of group problem solving.
- New research conclusions about virtual groups and problem solving.

Chapter Eleven: Using Problem-Solving Techniques

- New discussion of how to conduct a SWOT analysis.
- Streamlined discussion of group problem analysis techniques.
- New applications of problem-solving techniques in virtual groups.
- New material about when to trust “gut instincts” in groups.

Chapter Twelve: Enhancing Creativity in Groups and Teams

- New revised discussion of principles of group and team productivity.
- New research on how to enhance team creativity.
- New references to the value of introverts in solving problems creatively.

Balanced Coverage: Principles and Practices

We provide a carefully crafted integration of both principles and practices that provide a strong theoretical scaffolding for the “how to” practical skills needed for communicating in small groups. Theory without application can leave students understanding group principles but not knowing how to enhance their performance. On the other hand, presenting lists of techniques without providing an understanding of the principles that inform their skill would result in a laundry list of do’s and don’ts without insight as to when to apply the skills. The balanced tension between theory and application, structure and interaction, as well as task and process is especially evident in all communication study, but especially in the dynamic context of a small group. We believe that emphasizing theory without helping students apply principles can result in highly informed yet under-skilled group members. And while it’s true that our students often clamor for techniques to enhance their skills, such approaches alone do not give students the underlying principles they need to inform their newfound applications.

When we summarize research conclusions, we hear our students’ voices echoing in our heads, asking, “So what?” In response to those, we ask ourselves how the research conclusions we cite can enhance the quality of collaboration. We seek to provide principles and practices of small group communication that make a difference in our students’ lives.

We both abhor boring meetings that are adrift. Consequently, we draw upon our almost 75 years of combined university administrative and teaching experience as we sift through classic and contemporary group communication research to keep our focus on application while anchoring our prescriptions in principled theory. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive yet laser-focused compendium of the latest thinking about group and team communication.

Popular Features We’ve Retained

A hallmark of this book, according to educators and students, is our get-to-the-point writing style coupled with our comprehensive distillation of contemporary and classic group communication research. We continue to receive praise for the clear applications of the research we describe. We’ve done our best to keep the features instructors and students like best about our book: a lively, engaging writing style, references to the most recent research, and not overwhelming readers with unnecessary rambling narratives. As we have in previous editions, we’ve revised and updated all of our pedagogical features, including chapter objectives, discussion questions, and end-of-chapter activities.

Supplemental Resources for Instructors

An Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank (0133809323) accompanies *Small Group Communication*. The Instructor’s Manual portion of the IM/TB includes the following resources: Sample syllabi for structuring the course, an outline and summary for each chapter which includes the major ideas covered, chapter objectives, discussion questions and experiential activities. The Test Bank portion of the IM/TB contains approximately 300 multiple-choice, true/false, and essay

questions, all of which are organized by chapter. This supplement is available for downloading at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc (access code required).

MyTest online test generating software (ISBN 0133809218) is available at www.pearsonmytest.com (access code required).

The PowerPoint presentation (0133809307) that accompanies *Small Group Communication* includes lecture slides based on key concepts in the text. This supplement may be downloaded from www.pearsonhighered.com/irc (access code required).

For a complete listing of the instructor and student resources available with this text, please visit the *Communicating in Small Groups* e-Catalog page at www.pearsonhighered.com.

This text is available in a variety of formats—digital and print. To learn more about our programs, pricing, and customization options, visit www.pearsonhighered.com.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Three and a half decades ago we met as new college professors sharing an office at the University of Miami. Today we live only miles apart in different Texas communities and remain united by a common bond of friendship that has grown stronger over the years. Our collaboration as friends continues to make this book a labor of love. This book is a partnership not only between us as authors, but also with a support team of scholars, editors, colleagues, reviewers, students, and family members.

We are grateful to those who have reviewed this edition of our book to help make this a more useful instructional resource. Specifically we thank Jeanne Christie, Western Connecticut State University; Meikuan Huang, California State University-Stanislaus; Daryle Nagano, El Camino College; David Kahl, Jr., Penn State Erie, The Behrend College.

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John thanks his friends, colleagues, and students at Texas Lutheran University, who have taught, challenged, and inspired him.

Finally, as in our previous editions, we offer our appreciation and thanks to our families, who continue to teach us about the value of teamwork and collaboration. Our sons are taking their place in the world and our spouses continue to be equal partners in all we do. John's sons, John III and Noah, are older than we both were when we began the first edition of this book. John III and Noah continue to make their dad smile with pride at their successes. Nancy Masterson continues, as always, as John's greatest love, best friend, and most respected critic.

Steve's sons, Mark and Matt, are now also older than their dad when he started this project. Matt and his wife, Brittany, teach us the power of supportive collaboration and teamwork. Mark continues to teach his dad the importance of endurance and ever-present power of renewal, even when life presents ongoing challenges. Susan Beebe has been an integral part of the author team in this and every previous edition for over 30 years. She continues to be Steve's personal Grammar Queen, life's love, and best friend.

Steven Beebe, *San Marcos, Texas*
John Masterson, *Seguin, Texas*

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Introducing Group Principles and Practices

“Working together works.”

—Rob Gilbert



CHAPTER OUTLINE

What Is Small Group Communication?

What Is Team Communication?

Communicating Collaboratively: Advantages and Disadvantages

Communicating in Different Types of Groups

Communicating in Virtual Groups and Teams

How Can You Become a Competent Small Group Communicator?

OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define small group communication.
- Discuss the characteristics of a team.
- List and describe the advantages and disadvantages of working with others in groups and teams.
- Compare and contrast primary and secondary groups.
- Describe five virtual communication methods.
- Identify nine group communication competencies.

Human beings are creatures who collaborate. We *need* to establish relationships with others. We are raised in family groups. We are educated and entertained in groups, and we work and worship in groups.

Regardless of your career choice, you will spend a considerable part of your work life collaborating with others. One survey of Fortune 500 companies found that 81 percent use team-based approaches to organize the work that needs to be done.¹ In addition, 77 percent use temporary teams and work groups when new projects develop.² The typical manager spends a quarter of the workweek in group meetings. The higher you rise in position and leadership authority, the more time you'll spend in meetings. Top-level leaders spend up to two-thirds of their time—an average of three days a week—in meetings or preparing for meetings.³

Not all of our collaborations are face-to-face. In the twenty-first century, our collaboration has dramatically increased because of our use of technology. We are *hyperconnected*. Computer power that once needed a room-size space now fits in our pocket. We not only *GoToMeetings* online (thanks to *GoToMeeting* software), but because of “iCommunication” devices (iPhone, iPad, iPods), numerous apps, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and ultra-high-speed-big-data-cloud-computing methods, we are connected to virtual groups and teams nearly all of our waking moments. Collaboration is a daily element of our work, family, and social lives.⁴

Yet despite our constant collaboration, we sometimes (even often) have difficulty working collectively. Collaboration is hard. Collaboration takes skill. And groups can exist for constructive as well as destructive reasons.⁵ Communication researcher Susan Sorenson coined the term **grouphate** to describe the dread and repulsion many people have about working in groups, teams, or attending meetings.⁶ We have good news. Grouphate diminishes when people receive training and instruction about working in groups. The purpose of this book, therefore, is to help you learn communication principles and become skilled in the practices that make working in groups productive and enjoyable.

Communication is the central focus of this book. Communication makes it possible for groups and teams to exist and function. If you use the book as a tool to help you learn to communicate in groups, you will distinguish yourself as a highly valued group member.

What Is Small Group Communication?

Consider these situations:

- After the stock market plunges 1000 points in a week, the President of the United States appoints a high-level team of economists to identify the causes of the market collapse.
- In a bid by the social networking site Connect.com to merge with a rival company, Relate.com, the Chair of the Board of Connect.com calls the board together to consider the virtues and pitfalls of the possible merger.
- To prepare for the final exam in your group communication class, you and several class members meet three nights each week to study.

Each of these three examples involves a group of people meeting and communicating for a specific purpose. And as group members communicate with one another, they are communicating transactively—they are simultaneously responding to one another and expressing ideas, information, and opinions. Although the purposes of the groups in these three scenarios are quite different, the groups have something in common—something that distinguishes them from a cluster of people waiting for a bus or riding in an elevator, for example. Just what is that “something”? What are the characteristics that make a group a group? We define **small group communication** as *communication among a small group of people who share a common purpose, who feel a sense of belonging to the group, and who exert influence on one another*. Let’s explore this definition in more detail.

Communication

Reduced to its essence, **communication** is the process of acting on information.⁷ Someone does or says something, and there is a response from someone else in the form of an action, a word, or a thought. Merely presenting information to others does not mean there is communication: Information is not communication. “But I told you what I wanted!” “I put it in the memo. Why didn’t you do what I asked?” “It’s in the syllabus.” Such expressions of exasperation assume that if you send a message, someone will receive it. However, communication does not operate in a linear, input-output process. What you send is rarely what others understand.

Human Communication: Making Sense and Sharing That Sense with Others

Human communication is the process of making sense out of the world and sharing that sense with others by creating meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages.⁸ Let’s examine the key elements of this definition.

Communication Is about Making Sense: We make sense out of what we experience when we interpret what we see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Typically, in a small group, multiple people are sending multiple messages, often at the same time. To make sense out of the myriad of messages we experience, we look for patterns or structure; we relate what happens to us at any given moment to something we’ve experienced in the past.

Communication Is about Sharing Sense: We share what we experience by expressing it to others and to ourselves. We use words as well as nonverbal cues (such as gestures, facial expressions, clothing, music) to convey our thoughts and feelings to others.

Communication Is about Creating Meaning: Meaning is created in the hearts and minds of both the message source and the message receiver. We don’t *send* meaning, we *create* it based on our experiences, background, and culture.

Communication Is about Verbal and Nonverbal Messages: Words and nonverbal behaviors are symbols that we use to communicate and derive meaning that makes sense to us. A **symbol** is something that represents a thought, concept, object, or experience. The words on this page are symbols that you are using to derive meaning that makes sense to you. Nonverbal symbols such as our use of gestures, posture, tone of voice, clothing, and jewelry primarily communicate emotions—our feelings of joy or sadness, our likes and dislikes, or whether we’re interested or uninterested in others.

Human Communication Is Transactional Live, in-person, human communication is **transactional**, meaning that when we communicate, we send and receive messages simultaneously. As you talk to someone, you respond to that person’s verbal and nonverbal messages, even while you speak. In the context of a small group, even if you remain silent or nod off to sleep, your nonverbal behavior provides information to others about your emotions and interest, or lack of interest. The transactive nature of communication suggests that you cannot *not* communicate. Ultimately, people judge you by your behavior, not by your intent. And since you behave in some way (even when you’re asleep), there is the potential for someone to make sense out of your behavior.

Human Communication Can Be Mediated Through Different Channels Key elements of communication include the source, message, receiver, and channel. The **source** of the message is the originator of the ideas and feelings expressed. The **message** is the information being communicated. The **receiver** of the message is the person or persons who interpret the message. The **channel** is the means by which the message is expressed to the receiver.

Do groups need to communicate face to face to be considered a group? More and more small group meetings occur in a **mediated setting**—a setting in which the channel of communication is a phone line, fiber-optic cable, wireless signal, the Internet, or other means of sending messages to others; the interaction is not face to face. In the twenty-first century, it has become increasingly easy and efficient to collaborate using the Internet, and other technological means of communicating. So, yes: A group *can* be a group without meeting face to face.

In the past three decades we have learned more about how mediated communication can enhance group communication. For example, there is evidence that groups linked together only by e-mail or a computer network can generate more and better ideas than groups that meet face to face.⁹ Such communication may, however, be hindered by sluggish feedback or delayed replies, which are not problems when we collaborate in person. And although more ideas may be generated in a mediated meeting, complex problems and relationship issues are better handled in person than on the Internet or through another mediated network.¹⁰ In most cases, in-person communication affords the best opportunity to clarify meaning and resolve uncertainty and misunderstanding. We will discuss the use of technology in groups and teams in a section in this chapter and throughout the book in a special feature called Virtual Groups.

Human Communication: Essential for Effective Group Outcomes Does the quality of communication really affect what a group accomplishes? Because this is a book about group communication, you won’t be surprised that our answer is yes. Researchers have debated, however, the precise role of communication in contributing to a group’s success.¹¹ Success depends on a variety of factors besides communication, such as the personality of the group members, how motivated the members are to contribute, how much information members have, and the innate talent group members have for collaboration. Nevertheless, several researchers have found that the way group members communicate with each other is crucial in determining what happens when people collaborate.¹² Research investigating the importance of small group communication in a variety of situations continues to increase.

A Small Group of People

A group includes at least three people; two people are a **dyad**. The addition of a third person immediately adds complexity and an element of uncertainty to the transactive communication process. The probability increases that two will form a coalition against one. And although the dynamics of group roles, norms, power, status, and leadership are also present in two-person transactions, they become increasingly important in affecting the outcome of the transaction when three or more people communicate.

If at least three people are required for a **small group**, what is the maximum number of members a group may have and still be considered small? Scholars do not agree on a specific number. However, having more than 12 people (some say 13, others say 20) in a group significantly decreases individual members' interaction. Research documents that larger groups just aren't as effective as smaller groups.¹³ The larger the group, the less influence each individual has on the group and the more likely it is that subgroups will develop.¹⁴ With 20 or more people, the communication more closely resembles a public-speaking situation when one person addresses an audience, providing less opportunity for all members to participate freely. The larger the group, the more likely it is that group members will become passive rather than actively involved in the discussion.

Meeting with a Common Purpose

The president's economic task force, the Connect.com company executives' group, and your communication study group have one thing in common: Their members have a specific purpose for meeting. They share a concern for the objectives of the group. Although a group of people waiting for a bus or riding in an elevator may share the goal of transportation, they do not have a *collective* goal. Their individual destinations are different. Their primary concerns are for themselves, not for others. As soon as their individual goals are realized, they leave the bus or elevator. On the other hand, a goal keeps a committee or discussion group together until that goal is realized. Many groups fail to remain together because they never identify their common purpose. While participants in small groups may have somewhat different motives for their membership, a common purpose cements the group together.

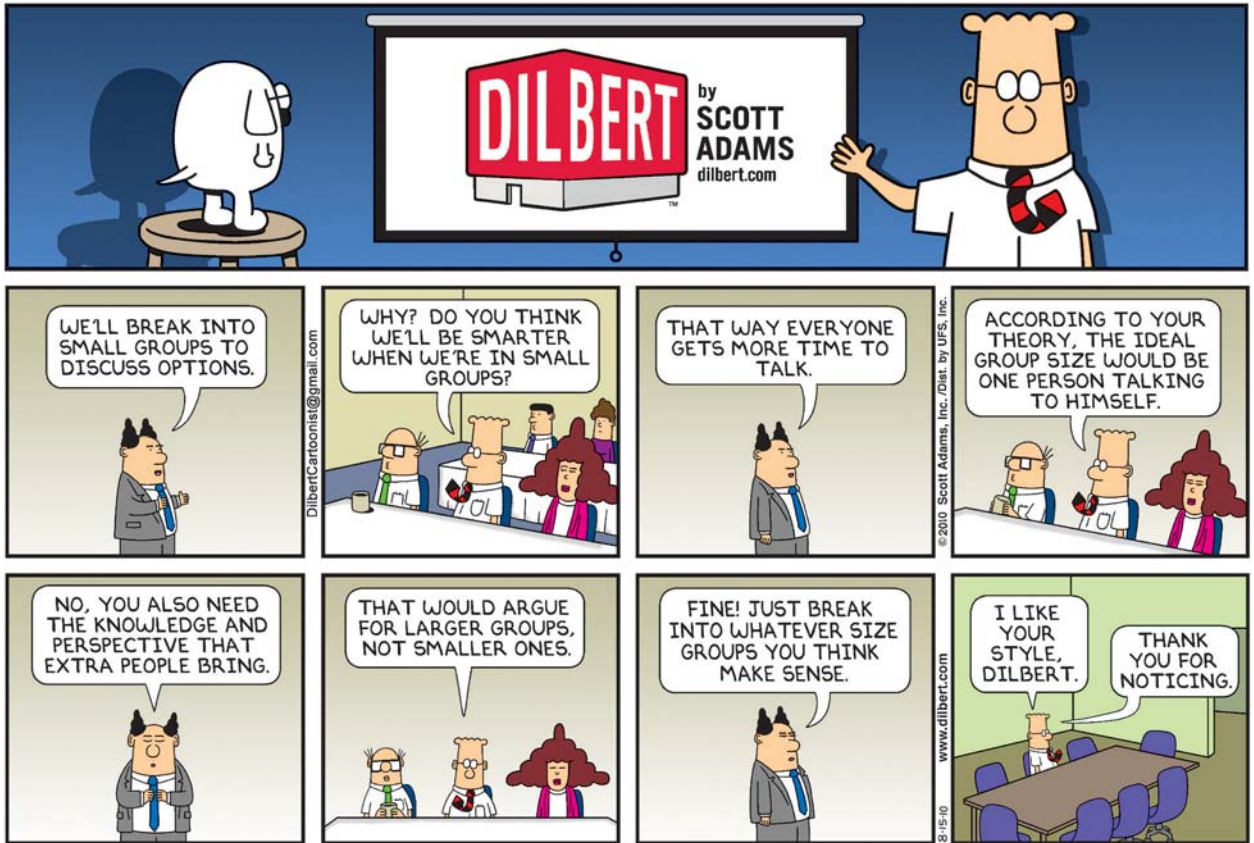
Feeling a Sense of Belonging

Not only do group members need a mutual concern to unite them, they also need to feel they belong to the group. Commuters waiting for a bus probably do not feel part of a collective effort. Members of a small group, however, need to have a sense of *identity* with the group; they should be able to feel it is their group.¹⁵ Members of a small group are aware that a group exists and that they are members of the group.

Exerting Influence

Each member of a small group, in one way or another, potentially influences others. Even if a group member sits in stony silence while other group members actively verbalize opinions and ideas, the silence of that one member may be interpreted as agreement by another. As we will discuss in Chapter 7, nonverbal messages have a powerful influence on a group's climate.

At its essence, the process of influencing others defines leadership. To some degree, each member of a small group exerts some leadership in the group because of his or her potential to influence others.¹⁶ Although some groups have an elected or appointed leader, most group members have some opportunity to share in how the work gets done and how group members relate to each other. Thus, if we define the role of leader rather broadly, each group member has



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an opportunity to fill the role of leader by offering contributions and suggestions. Regardless of its size, a group achieves optimal success when each person accepts some responsibility for influencing and leading others.

To repeat our definition: *Small group communication* is defined as communication among a small group of people who share a common purpose, who feel a sense of belonging to the group, and who exert influence on one another.

What Is Team Communication?

“Go, team!” You can hear this chant at most sports events. Whether playing a touch football game or in the Super Bowl, members of sports teams are rewarded for working together. Corporate America has also learned that working in teams can enhance productivity, efficiency, worker satisfaction, and corporate profits. Regardless of whether its members play football or construct web pages, a **team** is a coordinated group of individuals organized to work together to achieve a specific, common goal. Teamwork is increasingly emphasized as a way to accomplish tasks and projects because teamwork works.¹⁷ An effectively functioning team gets results.¹⁸ Research clearly documents the increased use of teams in corporate America during the past two decades, especially in larger, more complex organizations.¹⁹

Because we have clearly defined small group communication, you may be wondering, “What’s the difference between a group and a team?” Often people use the terms *group* and *team* interchangeably. But are they different concepts, or is there merely a semantic difference

between a group and a team? Our view is that teams are often more highly structured than typical small groups. All teams are small groups, but not all groups operate as a team.

Business and nonprofit organizations tend to use the term *team* rather than *group* to identify individuals who work together to achieve a common task. Corporate training departments often spend much time and money to train their employees to be better team members. What skills do such training programs focus on? Most programs cover the communication principles and practices that we will emphasize in this book: problem solving, decision making, listening, and conflict management. In addition to using communication skills, team members set goals, evaluate the quality of their work, and establish team operating procedures.²⁰ Research has found that people who have been trained to work together in a team are, in fact, better team members.²¹ So the news is good: There is evidence that learning principles and practices of group and team communication can enhance your performance.

Highly effective teams usually have at least four attributes that give the term *team* distinct meaning. Let's take a closer look at how distinctions are sometimes made between teams and groups.

1. Team goals are clear and specific (win the game, win the championship).
2. Teams have well-defined team-member responsibilities, such as positions on a sports team (first base, shortstop, and so on).
3. The rules for and expectations about how the team operates are spelled out; sports team competitions usually have a referee to enforce the rules of the game.
4. Teams usually develop a clear way of coordinating their efforts; sports teams discuss and practice how to work together.

Teams Develop Clear, Well-Defined Goals Team goals are clear, specific, and measurable. They are also more than could be achieved by any individuals on the team. Research has found convincing evidence that teams that develop and use clear goals perform better than groups without clear-cut goals.²² A sports team knows that the goal is to win the game. An advertising team's goal is to sell the most product. Yes, all groups, too, have a goal, but the goal may be less measurable or clear. A team develops a clear goal so that the members know when they've achieved it.

Teams Develop Clearly Defined Roles, Duties, and Responsibilities for Team Members People who belong to a team usually have a clear sense of their particular role or function on the team. As on a sports team, each team member has an understanding of how his or her job or responsibility helps the team achieve the goal. The roles and responsibilities of team members are explicitly discussed.²³ If one team member is absent, other team members know what needs to be done to accomplish that person's responsibilities. Sometimes team members may be trained to take on several roles just in case a team member is absent; this kind of training is called **cross-functional team-role training**. Team members' understanding other members' responsibilities helps the team to work more effectively.²⁴ In a group, the participants may perform specific roles and duties, but on a team, greater care must be devoted to explicitly ensuring that the individual roles and responsibilities are clear and are linked to a common goal or outcome. In fact, the key challenge in team development is to teach individuals who are used to performing individual tasks how to work together.

Teams Have Clearly Defined Rules for and Expectations about Team Operation A third difference between groups and teams is that teams develop specific operating systems to help them function well. A **rule** is a prescription for acceptable behavior. For

example, a team may establish as a rule that all meetings will start and end on time. Another rule may be that if a team member is absent from a meeting, the absent member will contact the meeting leader after the meeting. Although expectations develop in groups, in a team those expectations, rules, and procedures are often overtly stated or written down. Team members know what the rules are and how those rules benefit the entire team.

Teams Have Coordinated and Collaborative Methods for Accomplishing the Work

A fourth difference between groups and teams involves the methods team members use to accomplish their goals. Team members discuss how to collaborate and work together. Sports teams spend many hours practicing how to anticipate the moves of other team members so that, as in an intricate dance, all team members are moving to the same beat. Team members develop interdependent relationships; what happens to one affects everyone on the team. Of course, team members may be given individual assignments, but those assignments are clearly coordinated with other team members' duties so that all members are working together. Coordination and collaboration are the hallmark methods of a team. Research has found that teams that are trained to coordinate and adapt their communication with one another have greater success than teams not trained to coordinate their communication.²⁵ Although groups work together, they may accomplish their goal with less collaboration and coordination.

Even though we've made distinctions between groups and teams, we are not saying they are dramatically different entities. Think of these two concepts as existing on a continuum; some gatherings will have more elements of a group, whereas others will be closer to our description of a team. Keep in mind also that all teams are small groups, which means that throughout the book when we refer to a team we will also be referring to a small group. And the principles and practices of effective small group communication will thus also apply to teams.

Characteristics of an Effective Team

Several researchers have been interested in studying how to make teams function better.²⁶ One study found that team members need work schedules compatible with those of their colleagues, adequate resources to obtain the information needed to do the work, leadership skills, and help from the organization to get the job done.²⁷ Another study concluded that it's not how smart team members are, but how well they communicate that improves teamwork.²⁸ Using studies of several real-life teams (such as NASA, McDonald's, and sports teams), Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto identified eight hallmarks of an effective team. The more of these characteristics a team has, the more likely it is that the team will be effective.²⁹

A Clear, Elevating Goal Having a common, well-defined goal is the single most important attribute of an effective team.³⁰ But having a goal is not enough; the goal should be elevating and important—it should excite team members and motivate them to make sacrifices for the good of the team. Sports teams use the elevating goal of winning the game or the championship. Corporate teams also need an exciting goal that all team members believe is important.

A Results-Driven Structure To be results-driven is to have an efficient, organized, and structured method of achieving team outcomes. Team structure is the way in which a team is organized to process information and achieve the goal.³¹ Explicit statements of who reports to whom and who does what are key elements of team structure. It is useful, therefore, for teams to develop a clear sense of the roles and responsibilities of each team member. A team needs

REVIEW

► COMPARING GROUPS AND TEAMS

	Groups	Teams
Goals	Goals may be discussed in general terms.	Clear, elevating goals drive all aspects of team accomplishment.
Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities may be discussed but are not always explicitly defined or developed.	Roles and responsibilities are explicitly developed and discussed.
Rules	Rules and expectations are often not formally developed and evolve according to the group's needs.	Rules and operating procedures are clearly discussed and developed to help the team work together.
Methods	Group members interact, and work may be divided among group members.	Team members collaborate and explicitly discuss how to coordinate their efforts and work together. Teams work together interdependently.

individuals who perform task roles (getting the job done) and individuals who perform maintenance roles (managing the team process) to be high performing. A structure that is not results-driven, one that tolerates ineffective meetings, off-task talk, busywork, and “administrivia,” always detracts from team effectiveness.

Competent Team Members Team members need to know not only *what* their assignment is but also *how* to perform their job. Team members need to be trained and educated so they know what to do and when to do it. Without adequate training in both teamwork skills and job skills, the team will likely flounder.³²

Unified Commitment The motto of the Three Musketeers—“all for one and one for all”—serves as an accurate statement of the attitude team members should have when working together to achieve a clear, elevating goal. Team members need to feel united by their commitment and dedication to achieve the task.

A Collaborative Climate Effective teams foster a positive group climate and the skills and principles needed to achieve their goal. Effective teams operate in a climate of support rather than defensiveness. Team members should confirm one another, support one another, and listen to one another as they perform their work. In Chapter 5, we will identify strategies for enhancing team climate.

Standards of Excellence A team is more likely to achieve its potential if it establishes high standards and believes it can achieve its goals.³³ Goals that cause the team to stretch a bit can serve to galvanize a team into action. Unobtainable or unrealistic goals, however, can result in team frustration. If the entire team is involved in setting goals, the team is more likely to feel a sense of ownership of the standards it has established.

Does having high standards really have an impact on what a team can produce? If you've ever heard a Steinway piano—the gold standard of pianos—then you've benefited from the high standards of teamwork. Einrich Englehard Steinwege migrated from Germany to New