



# Communicating in Groups

*Applications and Skills*

Ninth Edition



Katherine L. Adams | Gloria J. Galanes

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# Communicating in Groups

Applications and Skills

Katherine Adams

California State University, Fresno

Gloria J. Galanes

Missouri State University

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Graw  
Hill  
Education



COMMUNICATING IN GROUPS: APPLICATIONS AND SKILLS, NINTH EDITION

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*We dedicate this book to our students,  
who teach us as much as we teach them.*



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## PREFACE

*Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.*

Henry Ford

Henry Ford invented the Model T car, founded the Ford Motor Company, and gave us the assembly line method of production. The sentiment in his quote captures the ongoing challenge of group participation. Coming together is only a beginning; what happens after is a matter of knowing how to effectively collaborate with others for success—together!! Group “work” is taxing, incredibly rewarding and a lot of fun. Both of us have had the experience of being in a group that so excited us, made us feel alive, gave us a way to express ourselves, helped us connect with others, and so enabled us to accomplish a tremendous amount of work, that we didn’t want to see the group end. Yes, that is a rare occurrence. But in this book, we hope to give students tools to help them attain those ideals by providing insight about how groups work and practical suggestions for applying those insights.

This book is designed for the first- or second-year student who may not have had a prior communication course and who may never take a subsequent course—but who *must* work in groups because that is the nature of corporate, educational, and civic participation in this day and age. Two overarching goals guide our writing. First, being able to work effectively in groups is not a luxury—it’s a necessity. Our introductory students want to cut to the chase; they want to know what works *right now*. That is the reason for our distinctly *practical* focus in *Communicating in Groups*. Although this text uses the same research foundation as our more advanced text, *Effective Group Discussion*, we strive here to provide information in a way that is both useful and immediately usable. Second, we want students to recognize that effective group work is, to a great extent, a matter of *communication behavior*, not a matter of personality or fate. Thus, it is to a great extent within their own control. We want students to start thinking about their own communicative choices in groups and to have the tools to make wise choices so they can make the groups they belong to as rewarding and productive as possible.

To meet our goals, we have chosen to use an informal writing style and to provide many examples from our own and others’ experiences. We also report research findings in much less detail, with more synthesis and distillation of findings, fewer footnotes, and less evaluation of competing theories than in our other text. This allows readers to focus on what is usually more important to them—the practical application of the research. Finally, we refer to ourselves, Kathy and Gloria, frequently throughout the text. We think of our readers as individuals with whom we are on a first-name basis, and we encourage you to think of us the same way, as if we were members of the same small group.

## Overview of the Text

With each revision, the hardest thing we have to do is decide what to retain and what to cut out. We try to focus on what we believe are the most important concepts, particularly those that will be most useful and practical for students to understand. General systems

theory and a transactional approach to communication continue to ground our view of small group communication. We remain focused on updating the use of technologies by small groups and add material on cultural dynamics relevant to group dynamics. As before, the chapters are ordered in a way that is logical to us but that does not preclude other methods of organizing a small group course. Each chapter is self-contained and can be read in an order different from what we provide here.

**Part One** provides basic information students need to understand how groups function. Chapter 1 introduces some basic terms encountered throughout the book, shows how to classify groups according to their major purpose, and introduces the concept of ethical communication behavior of group members. Chapter 2 presents general systems theory as a framework for understanding the complexity of group communication. We provide specific illustrations of systems concepts throughout the rest of the book as well.

**Part Two** provides the foundation for understanding communication in groups. Chapter 3 discusses basic communication theory, including what constitutes transactional communication and effective listening. Chapter 4 details verbal and nonverbal messages as well as compares computer-mediated communication with face-to-face communication.

**Part Three** explores in detail how we move from being individuals to connecting as a group. Chapter 5 explains how a group develops as a team from an initial collection of individuals. Chapter 6 focuses on how groups can work effectively with multiple levels of diversity: member motivation, learning styles, personality, culture, gender, ethnicity, and generational.

**Part Four** focuses on the group's throughput processes. Chapter 7 discusses the creative and critical thinking skills necessary for effective group problem solving. We believe creative and critical thinking are at the heart of the group problem-solving process and that students should know something about these processes before understanding problem solving in general. Chapter 8 describes the problem-solving process and introduces the procedural model of problem solving as a helpful guideline to follow. Chapter 9 explains why group conflicts occur and how they can be managed so that the group benefits instead of suffers. Chapter 10 provides a comprehensive picture of leadership and also gives suggestions for applying leadership principles effectively and ethically.

**Part Five** presents information about oral presentations, the culmination of much group effort. In Chapter 11 students will learn about the types of oral presentations, ways to prepare effective presentations, and criteria for evaluating presentations.

Finally, the **Appendix** presents information about a number of techniques a member or outside observer can use to gather information about a problem-solving group and help it improve its performance.

## New to This Edition

- Updated section on why people join groups including information on inclusion, control, and what is now referred to as openness.

- Single chapter on communication divided into two chapters. First, covers basic transactional principles of communication and listening. Second, covers verbal and nonverbal messages and their interpretation in small groups.
- Group use of technology is updated recognizing that group members use technology to perform group work from texting each other to selecting specific computer programs to assist in group tasks.
- Discussion of creativity sharpened by distinguishing between innovation and creativity. Material added on member characteristics that facilitate creativity.
- Added material on how to better utilize “expert” in group problem solving and how to avoid decision regret.
- Type of conflict restructured into task, relationship, and process to align the material with current research.
- Leadership discussion broadened to include material on leader qualities that impact member perceptions of leadership. Add tips on leading virtual group meetings.
- Discussion of group presentations now include updated information on presentational aids and using speaker notes.
- Integrated material across chapters with updated material from small group research.
- Case studies, apply now examples, and discussion examples updated.

## Features

**Case Studies:** Establish the main ideas of the chapter by providing realistic scenarios for student application, and utilizing a variety of group contexts, such as business, health care, social groups, and civic organizations.

**Apply Now Boxes:** Make concepts practical to everyday life, throughout the text.

**Ethical Dilemma Boxes:** Encourage critical evaluation of typical ethical scenarios faced by groups, and stimulate discussion of their causes, controversies, issues, and solutions.

**Media and Technology Boxes:** Look at how media and technology are changing the ways in which small groups can interact. Topics include online support groups, the contemporary media’s effect on groupthink, and presentation technology.

## Online Learning Center

There is a wealth of supplements to the ninth edition of *Communicating in Groups* available at [www.mhhe.com/adamsgalanes9e](http://www.mhhe.com/adamsgalanes9e):

**For Students:** Resources to help students study and grasp course goals, such as chapter objectives and outlines, videos featuring the authors, bibliography formats, an online



chapter on public presentations, as well as the appendix on Techniques for Observing Problem-Solving Groups.

**For Instructors:** Powerpoint lecture slides, a test bank, and an Instructor's Manual that includes exercises and sample syllabi—all of which will help faculty structure the course in ways that correspond with their teaching goals.

## CourseSmart

This text is available as an eTextbook at [www.CourseSmart.com](http://www.CourseSmart.com). With CourseSmart, your students take advantage of significant savings off the cost of the print book, reduce their impact on the environment, and gain access to powerful web tools for learning. CourseSmart eTextbooks can be viewed online or downloaded to a computer. The eTextbooks allow students to do full text searches, add highlighting and notes, and share notes with classmates.

## Create

With McGraw-Hill Education's custom publishing platform Create, content from *Communicating in Groups* can be easily incorporated into a resource for any course. With Create you can **find** the content you want, **arrange** it in the way you teach your course, and **personalize** your book by selecting from various formats. Visit [create.mcgraw-hill.com](http://create.mcgraw-hill.com) to get started!

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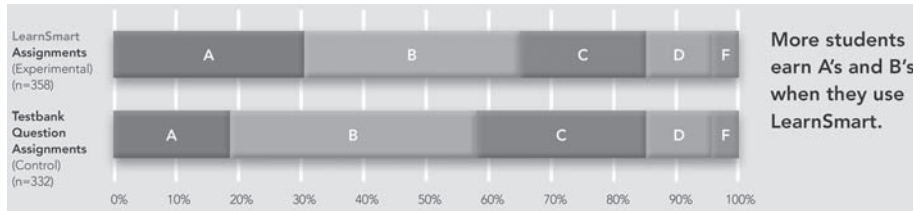
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**Speak to your McGraw-Hill Learning Technology Consultants today to find out more about adopting SmartBook with LearnSmart along with *Communicating in Groups, 9th edition!***

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**Gloria J. Galanes**

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# Orientation to Small Group Systems

**P**art One introduces you to the study of small groups. In Chapter 1 we explain why small groups are important to understand, and we define many of the terms you will encounter in your study of small groups. We discuss the types of small groups you are likely to experience, the ethics of participating in small groups, and the participant-observer perspective we use throughout the book. Chapter 2 presents you with a framework, general systems theory, to help organize the many concepts important to understanding how groups function.

# 1

## CHAPTER

# Small Groups as the Heart of Society

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

Groups in Your Life

Groups versus Individuals as  
Problem Solvers

Groups, Small Groups, Teams, and  
Small Group Communication

Classifying Groups by Their  
Major Purpose

Being an Ethical Group Member

The Participant-Observer Perspective

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

**After reading this chapter you should be able to:**

1. Explain why groups play a vital role in the personal and professional lives of individuals.
2. List criteria for determining whether a group or an individual should be used to solve a problem.
3. Define a group, a small group, a team, and small group communication.
4. Differentiate between small group communication, public communication, interpersonal communication, and intrapersonal communication.
5. Describe how groups use technology to enhance their interactions.
6. Explain the major reasons why people participate in small groups.
7. Explain and give examples of primary groups.
8. Explain and give examples of secondary groups.
9. Compare and contrast the different organizational groups.
10. Explain the four ethical standards any member of a group should be held to.
11. Explain and give examples of a member being an effective participant-observer.

## The Best Friends Animal Society

### CASE 1.1

Sinjin the cat was near death when he arrived at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Angel Canyon, Utah.<sup>1</sup> Someone had set him on fire after dousing him with gasoline, badly burning three-quarters of his body. The care at Best Friends, however, pulled him through; Sinjin the one-eyed cat became a sleek, confident creature who loved his treats! Best Friends Animal Society runs the largest animal sanctuary in the world, with over 1,500 resident animals at any one time. Best Friends has been a prime mover in the No More Homeless Pets movement, promotes spay-neuter programs and no-kill animal shelters, provides consultation services all over the world for those who want to set up no-kill shelters and spay-neuter programs in their communities, offers internships for veterinary students, runs a large volunteer program, provides wildlife rehabilitation, schedules educational programs and seminars, and, of course, takes in abandoned animals. What does this have to do with small groups? Best Friends Animal Society started out, nearly 50 years ago, as a small group of friends on a quest for spiritual fulfillment.

In the 1960s a group of friends from Great Britain traveled together to the Bahamas, Mexico, the United States, and Europe seeking a meaningful life. These diverse individuals were bound together by what members called the Universal Law and what we know as the Golden Rule: “As you give, so shall you receive. So do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”<sup>2</sup> The “others” included animals. Although individual members ended up living in different places, they stayed in touch, with love of animals the constant that united them. In 1982 the opportunity arose to buy 3,000 acres in Angel Canyon for an animal sanctuary. A core group of 20 members pooled their personal resources to establish what would ultimately become Best Friends. The group included an architect, an artist, a real estate professional, several community organizers, and workers from another animal sanctuary run by some of the members. Over the years the group has learned (among other things) to build dwellings, raise funds, tend sick and injured animals, and communicate with the media. The sanctuary is now one of the best known in the world. Several of the original members remain active, but new members have joined to contribute their expertise and energy.



The true story of Best Friends illustrates vividly what Margaret Mead said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”<sup>3</sup> This group of individuals, united by a vision of a world in which animals are respected and loved, shows what a small group can accomplish that an individual could never hope to achieve alone. The group demonstrates qualities that characterize effective group behavior: Members had a vision for what they wanted to accomplish; they appreciated and used the many different talents of their members; they trusted each other to work for the good of the group (and the animals); leadership was shared among them, as different needs and challenges arose; and the group continued to learn and develop by setting new goals that would increasingly stretch the abilities of its members. Throughout this text we will share what we know about how groups can achieve success like this. The glue that holds a group together and enables it to do its work is *communication*. Our focus is on how you can communicate effectively to help a group succeed.

The group that formed and continues to oversee Best Friends is a voluntary group of members who choose to work together. However, many of the groups you belong to, especially where you work or study, may not be voluntary. You may be assigned to a group because you have a particular expertise your employer believes is important to the group’s task or because small groups are an essential component of a course in which you are enrolled. No matter what the reason, you must be able to work well in teams, task forces, committees, and all kinds of special problem-solving groups if you want to succeed in the organized world of today. In fact, Monster Campus, part of Monster.com’s website geared to college students, notes that teamwork is one of the seven “hot skills” most employers want, no matter their size or type of industry.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Monster Campus reminds students that you can develop this skill during college.

Teams of all kinds, especially multidisciplinary teams, are becoming more common in all areas of American life: business, industry, education, health care, the nonprofit sector, and government. The biggest companies in the United States, including every Fortune 500 company, have some version of small groups and teams in place.<sup>5</sup> Being able to work effectively in a team is also expected in many professions. A recent article in the *New York Times* reported that a number of medical schools screen their applicants not just by grades but by their communication skills.<sup>6</sup> Prospective medical students are given a series of mini-interviews in which they must interact with mock patients so the evaluators can assess their social skills. Why is this important? According to the article, “medicine is evolving from an individual to a team sport,” with teams coordinating patient care. The effectiveness of the teams depends as much on members’ communication skills as on their expertise.

But there’s a dark side to small group work. In one study of 179 teams, only 13 percent were rated highly effective.<sup>7</sup> A *Newsweek* article highlights some of the problems.<sup>8</sup> The article reports that managers spend one to one-and-a-half days in meetings each week—and half of that is wasted time. One management consultant estimates that the average meeting in a large company costs approximately \$15,000. If meeting time isn’t used effectively, that waste can be staggeringly expensive.

We take the position that effective small group work—whether in meetings, on teams, on committees, and so forth—cannot be left to chance. When individuals come together, particularly individuals from differing backgrounds, perspectives, and areas of expertise, teamwork doesn't just happen. Training in *how* to be an effective team member is essential. If you want to succeed as a team member, you must learn how small groups function and what you personally can do to help ensure team success. Chapter 1 will help you start this process by asking you to consider how important groups are in your own life and by introducing you to concepts central to understanding small group processes, the variety of groups you will encounter, and the importance of being an ethical participant-observer in groups.

## Groups in Your Life

Lawrence Frey, a leading advocate for studying small groups in their natural settings, believes that the small group is *the* most important social formation: “From birth to death, small groups are interwoven into the fabric of our lives.”<sup>9</sup> The first group you encounter is your family, and in many ways this group forms the foundation for other groups that follow. Think about your family of origin, and consider how much of your identity was formed by that initial group. Development and maintenance of identity remain important functions that only groups can provide for us. This is obvious when we consider groups such as fraternities or sororities, spiritually based groups (churches, synagogues, other religious organizations, and even spiritually guided activist groups like Best Friends), gangs, book clubs, and poker clubs. Groups formed at work also contribute to who we think we are. Are you a member of a union, for example? A management group? A classroom group? A neighborhood coalition trying to prevent a zoning change in your neighborhood? Each of these groups, though not expressly formed as an identity-supporting group, will affect how you see yourself in relation to other people.

Professionally, the higher you go in any organization (government, service, manufacturing, education, communications, the military, or whatever), the more time you will spend working as a member of small groups. No matter what specific group you are in, you need to know how to behave in ways that are appropriate and helpful to the group and to any larger organization to which the group may be attached. If you don't work well in groups, you are more likely to be laid off or frozen at a low-level job. A survey of 750 leading American companies asked businesspeople to describe characteristics of the ideal MBA (Master of Business Administration) graduate.<sup>10</sup> The top preference was possession of good oral and written communication skills (listed by 83.5 percent of respondents). The fourth-ranked preference, the ability to work in teams, was listed by 71.4 percent. These communication skills far surpassed even cutting-edge knowledge of the company's field (14.8 percent) and previous work experience (31.9 percent) in importance. Clearly, knowing how to work in a small group can be of practical benefit to you.

Even as a student, you may be surprised to discover how many groups you belong to. For most students the list goes up to 8, 10, 15, or even 20 or more small groups. Humans are social beings with powerful genetic needs to belong to small groups. We need to affiliate with others of our kind, just as do many other animals.

## GROUPS AS PROBLEM SOLVERS

You are constantly solving problems: how to find a job, where to eat lunch, how to keep your car running on a limited budget, and even how to keep your company on the cutting edge of its industry in a turbulent economic climate. Solving any problem means coming up with a plan and executing it. In times past, only high-status people—monarchs, generals, managers, and so forth—were given the privilege of planning solutions to problems, and the rest of us had to carry out the plans. But times have changed. Now we all expect to be included in planning solutions to problems that affect us, and most of this planning occurs in small groups. Thus, everyone needs to know how to be an effective group member.

## PARTICIPATING IN GROUPS

Improving group problem solving requires focusing not only on the rational side of human behavior but also knowing something about human feelings. Effective group problem solving depends on how well members understand and manage such things as informational resources, how members feel about each other and about the task of the group, how skilled they are at expressing themselves and listening to others, and how well they collectively process the information they have to work with.

Group members must make sure they have the materials (information, tangible resources, time, and so forth) to complete the task, and they also must learn to manage their interpersonal relationships effectively enough to complete the task well. Thus, communication in groups performs two key functions: It accomplishes the group's task, and it creates "the social fabric of a group by promoting relationships between and among members."<sup>11</sup> This function—the group's relational communication—is just as important as the task-oriented functions of group work.

Samantha Glen's book about Best Friends describes several vivid examples of communication that convey just how much members of this group care about each other and how they express it.<sup>12</sup> At various times several members of the Best Friends core group encountered problems that seemed overwhelming and faced the real threat of burnout as they tried, in the early days, to keep the sanctuary running with little help, less money, and the ever-growing population of animals others had thrown away. In one encounter Faith lost it when she publicly confronted a prominent, well-respected local man who had adopted a puppy from the sanctuary but then abandoned it by the side of the road. Fellow group member, Michael, gently but firmly made Faith face the fact that she was getting burned out and needed help. His obvious concern allowed Faith to realize how deep her exhaustion was and to accept help from the others. In another example, the group's veterinarian, Bill, brought two gifts to the sanctuary: an Airstream trailer, accepted in lieu of payment from a client, that would serve as dedicated space for an operating table, and a goat to keep Sparkle the horse company while her leg healed. Faith, expressing the whole group's gratitude, said to Bill, "We love you, you know."<sup>13</sup> This comment may not be typical of what you hear in most work groups, but communication that conveys appreciation, gratitude, and liking goes a long way in creating a group that is also a community, and that can be a deeply satisfying experience. The Best Friends group succeeded because members focused on *both* task *and* relationship aspects of working in teams. Organizational and work skills

## The Instinctive Need to Group Together

### MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Some scholars have assessed situations in which a collection of individuals begins to group together. Such effort is common in face-to-face interaction where a particular force, problem, or crisis has created the need for individuals to group. Yet little is known about how and why individuals with nothing apparently in common or with no mediating force begin to group. A good example is in a computer-mediated environment.

To examine this unique grouping process, Tom Postmes, Russell Spears, and Martin Lea collected data on students who volunteered to complete an online statistics course, which offered participants e-mail options for contacting staff. Participants also used the function to send about 1,200 e-mails to fellow students. The messages were later classified into nine categories reflecting both task and relational functions (e.g., requests, complaints, reactions, humor, emotion, personal revelations). The researchers found that 11 groups formed, in which members spent most of their time (74 percent) interacting about socio-personal topics (reactions to contributions of other group members, humorous contributions, displays of affection and emotion). Despite having little impact on the successful completion of the course, these students grouped together to fulfill their need for relational interaction with fellow classmates.

SOURCE: T. Postmes, R. Spears, and M. Lea, "The Formation of Group Norms in Computer-Mediated Communication," *Human Communication Research* 26 (2001), pp. 341–71.

and people skills are essential. We hope our book furthers your understanding of and your knack for effective group participation.

Participation in a group always requires trade-offs. You give up the freedom to do *what* you want *when* you want for the advantages of affiliating with others to produce the kind of work possible only when several people coordinate their efforts. However, when individuals must coordinate their efforts, tensions always arise. This is true in all small groups, from a classroom work group to a task force of engineers designing new cell phone technology. This is what *Communicating in Groups* is about: knowing what produces tensions in a group (both in the individuals and in the group as a whole), and knowing how to manage the tensions so that the group's decisions are the best that can be made, members' relationships are enhanced, and the organization that gave birth to the group is improved by the group's work.

## Groups versus Individuals as Problem Solvers

If group work is so tricky and has such potential for problems, why not have *individuals* plan the solutions to all problems? The benefits of having a group tackle a problem *can* (but not necessarily *will*) outweigh the costs in time and tensions.

Research has shown that group solutions can be far more effective than individual ones for solving many types of problems.<sup>14</sup> Groups tend to do much better than individuals when several alternative solutions to the problem exist, none of which is known to be superior or “correct.” They also are better at conjunctive tasks, where no one person has all the information needed to solve a problem, but each member has some needed information.<sup>15</sup> These are the very sorts of problems most groups and organizations face. For example, which of several designs for a car is most likely to sell well? What benefit options should be available to employees? How can the federal government give citizens a tax cut and still ensure sufficient funds for health care and homeland defense?

Many college courses require small group activity of some sort. When instructors move from teacher-centered to more student-centered instruction, they use small groups. This forces students to become active, not passive, learners.<sup>16</sup> Students can improve problem solving, critical and creative thinking, and social skills in small group learning contexts. Moreover, group activity is a preferred way to learn for some cultures (e.g., Asians, Native Americans, African Americans, and females).<sup>17</sup>

The Best Friends story illustrates how a group’s greater resources help solve problems. Of the friends who bought Angel Canyon, one was an architect and several had rudimentary construction skills—enough to design and build places for the animals and shelter for themselves. The friends were also committed to the animals and willing to work, including feeding the growing number of animals twice daily and taking animals to public events where they might be adopted. Bill, local veterinarian, initially provided low-cost spay-neutering and other veterinary care services. These have since been expanded to the point that Best Friends now has a veterinary internship program with much expanded animal care. Estelle, who had polio as a child and thus was unable to perform physical labor, had experience running an office and provided administrative services. Matthias, a technical whiz, used his expertise to set up a membership database and to organize the sanctuary’s records. Jana used her photography skills to take pictures of the animals and increase the likelihood that they would be adopted. In recent years, Best Friends has used many different kinds of expertise to expand the reach of what it can do for animals: *National Geographic* produced a television series about Dogtown, wildlife rehabilitation specialists work with injured wild animals to return them to the wild or, if that is not possible, to use them in educational programs. Volunteer coordinators work with the many people who come to Best Friends to volunteer their efforts as dog feeders, poop scoopers, trainers, foster parents, and so forth. Others work with sanctuaries across the country to help establish no-kill shelters nationwide. The Best Friends website is remarkable and frequently updated with stories of the animals. One person working alone could never have accomplished all of this.

### WHEN A GROUP IS A GOOD CHOICE

Groups working on problems with multiple solutions typically make higher-quality decisions than do individuals for several reasons. Groups usually have a much larger number of possible solutions from which to choose. Group members can help each other think critically by correcting one another’s misinformation, faulty assumptions, and invalid reasoning. Several people can often think of issues to be handled in the process of solving a problem that might be overlooked by any one member. In addition,

several people can conduct more thorough investigative research than one person working alone. Group members often counteract each other's tendencies to engage in self-defeating behavior.<sup>18</sup>

An example from the *Today Show* illustrates the value of group problem solving. Doctors at the University of Michigan studied the value of a multidisciplinary team approach to providing breast cancer patients with a second opinion.<sup>19</sup> Patients who were diagnosed with breast cancer and whose doctors had recommended a course of treatment were referred for a second opinion to a team that included a variety of cancer treatment specialists: a radiologist, surgeon, pathologist, medical oncologist, and radiation oncologist. The team met, usually with the patient, to discuss options. Over half the time, the team recommended an approach different from that proposed by the original physician. Sometimes, a team member was aware of new treatment protocols or techniques the original doctor hadn't known. Other times, the original doctor had not followed national treatment guidelines. Having qualified, dedicated team members work together to address an important issue can produce better results.

A further advantage to having a team work out a problem is that group members who are involved in solving a problem or planning a procedure usually understand that procedure and work hard to implement it. In addition, people are more likely to accept a solution they had a hand in designing. Satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and learning tend to be higher when people have a voice. This is clearly evident with the Best Friends group, who continue to expand their skills, stretch their comfort zones, and care for one another as they care for the animals. These principles have resulted in such small group techniques as quality control circles, self-managed work groups, and collaborative learning groups.

## WHEN A GROUP IS NOT A GOOD CHOICE

Not all problems are suitable for groups, nor is group decision making always a wise or productive use of time. When a problem has a best or correct solution (such as an arithmetic or accounting task), a skilled person working alone often performs better than a group of less-knowledgeable people, even if the group includes the highly skilled person as a member. When conditions are changing rapidly (as in a weather disaster, battle, or ballgame), coordinating the work of several people may be done best by one person (a commander, chief, or coach). Likewise, if small groups have certain social, procedural, or personality-mix problems, the output may be inferior, even though members may be confident of the results. Much of our text addresses how to apply small group theory—based as much as possible on scientific research—to make sure that groups work on the kinds of problems for which they are best suited, and to do so in ways likely to produce a high-quality solution (see Table 1.1).

Your experiences in groups may have been unpleasant ones. In fact, you may dread hearing a teacher tell you that you'll be working on a group project. Unfortunately, this kind of **group hate** is common, probably because many groups do not function as well as they should. If this is how you feel about group participation, it is especially important for you to become familiar with group processes because you won't be able to avoid group participation but you *will* be expected to perform well.

Thus far, we have seen that small groups are commonly involved in problem solving. We now introduce you to the types of small groups that engage in problem solving and

## GLOSSARY

### Group hate

Hating or dreading participation in groups