**LESSON 12: GROUP DEVELOPMENT**

**Introduction**

This lesson consists of:

1. Group Development

2. Case Study

3. Student Journal Entry

**Assignment**

1. **Read the Course Guide**, pages 2 - 9.

2. When you solve a case study or act as a leader in your organization:

I. ***Identify*** the **Areas of Interest**.

II. ***Analyze*** the situation using Group Development Theory.

A. ***Identify*** the task and relationship issues that are evident in the group’s behavior.

B. ***Classify*** the group’s stage of development.

III. ***Explain*** how the group’s stage of development influences the group’s individual, group, and organizational outputs.

IV. ***Select*** an appropriate theoretical leader strategy(ies) to address Areas of Interest.

V. ***Apply*** the theoretical leader strategy(ies) to the situation in the form of a specific leader plan that addresses all Areas of Interest.

VI. ***Assess***, evaluate, and revise your leader plan.

3. **Complete a Student Journal entry** for Group Development Theory.

Think about your current work group. What task and relationship issues do you see? What stage of development is your work group in? What is the impact of this stage on individual, group, and organizational outcomes of the group? What theoretical leader actions are appropriate for your group? Describe what leader action(s) you currently see in your work group. Are they synchronized with Group Development Theory? What leader actions could be taken to enhance individual, group, and/or organizational outcomes?

**Group Development**

Groups, like individuals, go through stages of development and maturation. There are four primary stages of group development: orientation, internal problem-solving, growth and productivity, and evaluation and control. As a group progresses through these stages, members may face issues related to task activities and relationship activities. Understanding this sequence of events can enable leaders to take actions that facilitate the group's transition to the next, more effective stage.

**Figure 21. Stages of Group Development**



**Orientation Stage**

During the orientation stage, individuals who join a functional group are primarily concerned with the psychological and tangible rewards of membership, the goals they need to pursue to attain these rewards, and the costs associated with pursuing these goals. This first aspect of task activity is known as goal orientation. For instance, when a person joins the Catholic priesthood, the satisfaction of serving others selflessly may be a reward, but they must first undergo extensive formal education and training, and consider the cost of celibacy. All groups, to some extent, go through a similar process to orient new members.

The second aspect of task activity during orientation is learning about member roles and task requirements. New members in established groups rely on existing members, superiors, and written procedures and policies for information. In new groups, members must agree on the roles each will assume and consider each person's abilities, talents, weaknesses, and social connections that can aid in making the group effective.

The third aspect of task activity during orientation is the amount of energy required within the group to achieve desired outcomes. The importance of group goals to its members dictates the energy they invest and the expectation to achieve those goals. If, for example, a basketball team aims to become world champions and believes they have the talent and coaching to do so, their energy input will likely be substantial. It is through synergy, the collective energy inputs towards a common goal, that a group may move through the stages of group development and achieve its ultimate objective. For individuals, the question during the Orientation Stage is, "How much energy do I need to contribute for the group to achieve its goal?"

Interpersonal relations issues arise when a person meets group members for the first time. New members seek belonging and acceptance, while older members assess the potential contribution of new members. Both sides may also want to determine the level of closeness they will have with each other.

During the Orientation Stage, group synergy is divided between task and relationship issues, which may result in a new group structure. Communication networks start to align, cohesiveness may develop, and leadership roles become more defined. This is especially important for the officially appointed group leader. Informal leaders may emerge during orientation due to seemingly minor factors that are actually of major importance to the group, especially during its formative stage. For instance, the oldest member of the group may be perceived to have more job experience and thus hold higher status and prestige, or another member may have a strong desire to address a particular problem and handle it. Informal leaders can be very helpful to the appointed leader during this formative stage if they have the leader’s confidence.

However, there are cases where leaders emerge based on criteria that are not beneficial to the group, and may even be harmful. Sometimes, an emerging leader is more interested in dominating the group personally than anything else. More information on this topic of informal leadership will be discussed as we delve into the Growth and Productivity Stage of group development.

During the Orientation Stage, leaders of formal groups must focus on four processes: clarifying, facilitating, evaluating, and coordinating. When managed effectively, each of these processes can enhance the commitment of individual members. For example, leaders who teach new employees how to operate equipment or explain that employees can earn rewards for engaging in specific activities are clarifying. They are making the task requirements and organizational rewards associated with task completion clear. This process can enhance group synergy, particularly when group effort is required for high performance. However, competitive efforts for limited resources, such as promotions, may reduce synergy.

Leaders also facilitate by easing the working relationships between existing and new members. Specific ways, in which leaders can facilitate, such as team building and clarifying goals, are explained in our lesson on group cohesion. Leaders also need to evaluate the level of knowledge and skills that members possess to effectively leverage their strengths. Finally, coordinating training programs to address the deficiencies identified during evaluations is also a critical leader function during this stage.

**Internal Problem-Solving Stage**

During the Orientation Stage, group members start addressing and resolving problems, known as the Internal Problem-Solving Stage of group development. One common issue is reaching an agreement about the group's goals to ensure that all members work toward the same outcome. The success of a group in reaching a consensus depends on its cohesiveness and the collective pressure put on members, which can be subtle or direct. The group finalizes its preparation for reaching mutually agreed goals by assigning roles and duties to each member according to their capabilities. Role acceptance also depends on the successful resolution of interpersonal relations issues. Group members need to accept reasonable influence attempts to gain rewards that come with membership. The leader and the group rely on the unique contributions of each member to accomplish the group's mission. Resistance to dependency on the appointed leader can manifest through various behaviors such as limited performance or backbiting. Resolving dependency and intimacy issues is crucial to forming a cohesive group. Other interpersonal issues that may arise in the Internal Problem-Solving Stage relate to leader actions, such as role negotiation, coalition formation, and conflict resolution. The leader's management of these issues can determine the group's ability to organize itself, resolve dependency issues, and move into the Growth and Productivity Stage.

Role negotiation is an important aspect of group dynamics. Leaders often have the power to reward and punish, and group members typically conform to their role expectations as long as they want the benefits of group membership. However, when members are unable or unwilling to accept their expected role, role negotiation ensues. A leader must pay attention to role negotiation to prevent negative effects on group structure.

For example, studies show that when leaders use an authoritarian management style and disregard members’ expectations, group norms may develop to express hostility and aggressiveness toward the leader. Communication within the group may also suffer. A leader’s failure to address followers’ role concerns can push the group back to the Orientation Stage, where members question the value of their membership.

When individual members are unable to address their role expectations one-on-one with their leaders, they may join with disaffected group members to consolidate their power. This collective power can be used to force the leader to consider their expectations, a process known as coalition formation. This concept is exemplified on a large scale by the union movement.

Coalitions can also work against other group members, not just leaders. For instance, if a member objects to a group process or goal, other group members may ridicule or marginalize that person, particularly in highly cohesive groups. If other members object to the treatment of the deviant member, two antagonistic coalitions may form within the same group.

These scenarios highlight two important points for leaders:

1. Leaders should be aware of dependency issues and establish open communication to allow members to voice their concerns. Failing to do so increases the likelihood of hostility and aggression between coalitions, or even toward the leader.

2. Unresolved dependency issues often lead to the formation of divisive coalitions if not attended to by the leader.

Conflicts may arise when a group’s work on one task interferes with the accomplishment of another. This typically occurs when one organizationally generated task supersedes another, or when a personal task is displaced by a group task.

Despite the importance of bringing conflicts to the leader's attention, followers often fear that their predicament will not be understood or resolved in their favor. They may worry that other members will perceive their complaints as an attempt to avoid work, or fear being seen as incompetent for needing help.

People in these situations often feel trapped, leading to a decline in performance and personal satisfaction. Hostility toward the perceived cause of the conflict, often the leader, becomes likely. When dependency issues hinder the expression and resolution of conflicting tasks, the entire group suffers.

Most conflicts arise between individuals in a group, particularly when they compete for limited resources such as a promotion or tangible reward. Conflict can persist even after resource issues are resolved, poisoning the group's future performance.

Leaders appointed by organizations may overlook interpersonal conflicts within their group, endangering its cohesion. A group entrenched in interpersonal conflict may struggle to progress beyond the Internal Problem-Solving Stage, expending significant energy on conflict resolution that could otherwise be devoted to task problem-solving.

Leaders must possess and demonstrate skills in understanding and managing interrelated tasks and interpersonal issues during the Internal Problem-Solving Stage of group development.

**Growth and Productivity Stage**

Once the internal problems of organizing work are resolved, the group normally begins to devote its full attention to the tasks at hand. As it does, it enters the Growth and Productivity Stage of group development. During this stage, the organizationally appointed leader takes on the most direct role. It’s his or her responsibility to make sure that the task the group applies its energy to is the task that contributes to organizational goals. Leader actions that maximize the probability of favorably orienting followers include displaying appropriate respect for the organizational goal, fulfilling individuals’ needs within the required task, and developing group members’ beliefs in an ideology or philosophy that supports the task activities.

Another aspect of the Growth and Productivity Stage is collective problem solving—that is, problem solving directed at accomplishing the group’s specific task. There are many advantages to using the group in problem-solving. The most obvious one is that members represent a pool of resources to the group in the form of information and knowledge. In addition, they bring different approaches and perspectives to the table. When a problem is complex and resolving it requires a variety of perspectives, the use of the group may result in superior outcomes.

Of equal importance are the interpersonal advantages of collective problem-solving efforts. Group members’ participation enhances their worth to others and demonstrates their value to the group. When dependency issues are resolved and there is improved communication, the result is usually greater member satisfaction. Remember that this satisfaction is one indication of an effective group. In addition, because participating helps people understand the decisions that are made, how they are to be implemented, and the rewards they may bring, resistance to change (some of which are normal) is often greatly reduced through participation. Moreover, something else to consider is that the ego boosts people get from participating tend to create a commitment to the resulting plan as well as more support during its implementation.

Yet with all these assets, there are still some liabilities that come with collective problem solving that need the leader’s attention. For example, if group members do not see a clear advantage to engaging in this time-consuming and sometimes frustrating process, they may feel manipulated or dumped on, as if given a burdensome task without incentive. A second liability is that one or more members may inhibit the quality of a group effort, either by domination based on rank or status (a particular problem when the dominating member is the appointed leader), or by more subtle actions that sway others to the dominating person’s point of view before other views can be considered. Goal displacement is a third liability, whereby someone tries to dominate or win arguments rather than accomplish the tasks or goals of the group.

However, probably the subtlest liability of collective problem-solving is a phenomenon called groupthink. Groupthink, the tendency for unanimity or “we-ness” to exist in close-knit groups, can bar effective group problem-solving. To really understand it, let us first look at how groups deal with deviance.

In a group, members usually hesitate to do or say anything that might disrupt the strong relationships they have built. Therefore, conformity is highly valued, and cohesive groups act swiftly to address anyone who does not conform. Rational arguments may first be used, followed by emotional manipulation if needed. If these tactics fail, the group may resort to directly confronting the nonconformist, making it clear that good standing depends on conformity. As a last resort, the group may exclude the nonconformists by ignoring them, a severe measure rarely taken. Just the threat of such a sanction is often enough to encourage conformity.

It is important to note that nonconformists can be helpful to a group. They help establish boundaries of acceptable behavior and may bring new and better ideas to the group's tasks. They can also alert the group to improper actions.

Groupthink, where everyone seems to agree, can be a danger to conformity as it can create an illusion of the best solution being reached.

Participating in group problem-solving may take longer than individual efforts but can ensure that all relevant facts are considered. However, group responsibility can lead to riskier solutions, which may have high costs. Sometimes, it is beneficial for the group to take risks to maximize outcomes.

Facilitating collective problem-solving requires leadership skills, including fostering dissenting opinions, promoting communication and listening, and integrating alternative viewpoints to encourage well-informed decisions.

Leadership within a group may shift from the appointed leader to other members with unique expertise. Informal task leaders may emerge to complement the appointed leader, while socio-emotional leaders attend to the group's social and emotional needs.

Appointed leaders can benefit from the skills of informal leaders by involving them in the leadership team. Acknowledging the unique expertise of a specific member does not necessarily weaken the power or status of the appointed leader; it can enhance it. On the other hand, alienating informal leaders can lead to the breakdown of the group. This is especially true if the leader lacks the skills possessed by the informal leaders. Moreover, the appointed leader may be seen as the reason for the group's failure to achieve its goals. In such instances, group members may question whether it is worthwhile to continue following their appointed leader. At best, they may follow reluctantly. If these issues are not addressed, the leadership structure may collapse.

Another strategy available to the leader during the Growth and Productivity Stage involves motivating the group through rewards and penalties. Personalized feedback can be provided to group members based on their respective contributions to the group's output. However, the group reward, whatever it may be, should still be appealing enough to incentivize group members to address any shortcomings through normal group processes to attain the desired rewards. In essence, the leader can leverage the group to administer social rewards and penalties, recognizing that the pressure to conform can be a potent leadership tool.

**Evaluation and Control Stage**

As a group makes progress on its tasks, it enters the Evaluation and Control Stage of development. In this stage, members collectively and intentionally evaluate themselves to determine how well they are accomplishing their goals. From a systems perspective, this is the phase where the group self-corrects and analyzes group processes and inputs to see how desired outcomes are affected. If weaknesses are identified, the group plans ways to correct them, sometimes returning to the Internal Problem-Solving Stage to address them.

The Evaluation and Control Stage is characterized by the loosening of rigid group structures. Unfavorable norms might be abandoned to make way for more appropriate ones; communication processes may be adjusted, and informal leadership may change. In short, this stage offers the group the opportunity to improve performance and enhance member satisfaction.

Unfortunately, few groups have reached this stage. Due to dependency and intimacy issues, individuals are often not confident enough in their position within the group to risk critical analysis. Concerns about negative reactions from leaders or the organization, attempts to avoid sanctions, and the risk of damaging friendships and group solidarity are powerful deterrents to reaching this phase. Ironically, working groups usually have factors that reduce efficiency, and without addressing these issues, problems will grow. Unresolved issues can threaten to disrupt group cohesion, leading individuals to leave the group. However, successful handling of issues often restores cohesion and energizes the group for task accomplishment.

When groups successfully undergo the evaluation and control stage, members realize that conformity is not always necessary and might encourage rather than punish deviant behavior. Additionally, they become more accepting of different attitudes and beliefs, recognizing that this can enhance overall performance and satisfaction.

The processes involved in evaluation and control are complex, and there is a whole field of organizational development dedicated to dealing with them. We will explore this topic in detail in Area IV.

Figure 21 summarizes the events defining each stage of group development, showing the issues, structural occurrences, and leader actions appropriate to each developmental stage. Progression through stages is graphically presented, and it is important to note that while the normal progression is from Orientation to Internal Problem Solving, then Growth and Productivity to Evaluation and Control, the group may revert to an earlier stage at any point in order to confront unresolved issues. Therefore, group development may be viewed as a cybernetic process.

**Figure 21. Stages of Group Development**



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Case Study

As the commanding officer of a patrol division, you have noticed that your day watch is a long way from being a top-notch team. A large influx of new people has joined the watch, and there seems to be some conflict between the newer personnel and the more tenured employees. Many of the new officers want to implement long-term problem-solving strategies; the old timers are happy just to stop the clock and get out of Dodge.

There is also a vacancy in the position of assistant watch commander. In fact, a senior sergeant named Bill Jones had been the acting lieutenant for the last six months. Now, a young lieutenant named Dave Aviles has come in as watch commander. At first, Sergeant Jones appeared to be uncomfortable taking orders from someone so junior as Lieutenant Aviles; Jones obviously wasn’t too happy about a young lieutenant taking any of the control away from him. However, it seemed as though the relationship between Aviles and Jones had been improving lately. You noticed that Lt. Aviles usually assigned Sgt. Jones to be the inside sergeant. Jones was assisting with most of the area’s administrative duties, including roll call training and deployment of personnel.

Come to think of it, you noticed that the same personnel were constantly being assigned to work the desk or administrative details. The officers new to the division always seemed to get these less desirable assignments, even if they had several years of experience in other divisions. Just last week, two of these new officers had become very lax in their procedures when working the desk. This resulted in a failure to properly document citizen complaints. On the other hand, two officers who had been in the division for several years and were good friends of Sergeant Jones had just finished a tour in Vice. Now, Lt. Aviles and Sgt. Jones were recommending them for a loan to Detectives.

You knew you were going to discipline the officers involved in the desk incident, but you decided to personally talk with their supervisors as well. Your discussion with Sergeant Randy Allen, their patrol sergeant, was very enlightening. Although Sgt. Allen was concerned about the failure to document complaints, he did not believe that he was responsible for the actions of the officers on his watch. Sgt. Allen was resentful of Sgt. Jones and felt Jones was entirely at fault. “Commander, just because Lt. Aviles lets Sgt. Jones run the show, I get stuck responding to all the requests for supervisors in the field, plus several projects for the area and a lot of personnel complaints each month. While I am running around, trying to respond to field situations and get all these projects done, Sgt. Jones sits around the watch commander’s office drinking coffee. I have even checked with Sergeant Sherry Wright, who is also on day watch, and she feels the same way. I know that I have to check on my officers, but Sgt. Jones is the station supervisor. That makes him totally responsible for any screw-ups that happen at the desk! I cannot wait until my time on day watch is up and I can go to night watch.”

You checked out these facts with Sgt. Jones and he was livid. His side of the story sounded like this: “Commander, I can’t believe you’re going to accept that sorry excuse for what happened. You know the lieutenant needs a good, experienced sergeant to be inside and handle all the administrative duties. Running this sector is complicated, and Lt. Aviles has confidence in me. The officers on my watch are the best field officers in this division and that is a reflection on me. It would be stupid to assign them to work the desk or admin. These newer officers need to pay their dues before they complain. They could not even handle the desk correctly. Obviously, Sgt. Allen should have trained and supervised them better. Lt. Aviles and I would have things under control if these other sergeants would just do their job!”

You reviewed the other two watches and noticed that their performance was higher than that of Day Watch in almost all areas. You noticed that the desk and administrative assignments were divided up between newer and more tenured officers and often went to people who wanted to work those jobs. Officer-initiated arrests and tickets were up, several Community-Police Problem Solving efforts were underway, the quality of their preliminary investigations was better, and there was far more esprit de corps between the personnel. You wondered what you could do to improve the performance of the Day Watch.

I*.* ***Identify*** the **Areas of Interest**.

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4.

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10.

(If necessary, continue listing **Areas of Interest** on another page.)

II. ***Analyze*** the situation using Group Development Theory.

What is the relationship among the Areas of Interest listed above? More specifically, is there a chronological order or **logical chain of events** that helps you make sense of the facts you have? If so, outline the time sequence of events.

Which task issues are evident in this group’s activities?

Which relationship issues are evident in this group’s activities?

What stage of group development is this group in?

III. ***Explain*** how the group’s stage of development influences the group’s individual, group, and organizational outputs.

How does this group’s stage of development influence individual motivation, satisfaction, and performance?

Likewise, how is the stage of group development influencing the group’s structural dimensions and performance?

Finally, how is this group’s stage of development affecting the organization’s performance?

Do the facts of the case and your explanation form a pattern that allows you to identify a fundamental or **root cause** (i.e., is there something in the case information that suggests it is the underlying cause of all or most of the Areas of Interest)?

IV. ***Select*** an appropriatetheoretical leader strategy(ies) that would be effective in this situation.

Which theoretical leader strategy(ies) should the leader use to address the Area(s) of Interest in this situation?

V. ***Apply*** the theoretical leader strategy(ies) to the situation in the form of a specific leader plan that addresses all Areas of Interest. The plan should be realistic and holistic, address all the Areas of Interest you have identified, and translate the theoretical leader strategies into action. What will you do and say to whom, when, where, and how?

VI. ***Assess*** the effectiveness of your leader plan and revise as needed. After your leader plan, list the measures you would use to evaluate your actions. In this step, leaders need to ask, “What information do I need to tell whether or not my leadership is having the desired effects? How will I obtain the information I need? How can it be generated? Who can help me get what I need? How often should I collect data and in what form?”

Name:

**Complete a Student Journal entry** for Group Development Theory.

Think about your current work group. What task and relationship issues do you see? What stage of development is your work group in? What is the impact of this stage on individual, group, and organizational outcomes of the group? What theoretical leader actions are appropriate for your group? Describe what leader action(s) you currently see in your work group. Are they synchronized with Group Development Theory? What leader actions could be taken to enhance individual, group, and/or organizational outcomes?