**UMW Speaking Center Presents**



Group Communication Roles

Working in a group sometimes poses difficulties when members don’t understand the many roles they can take. Below is a list of *task roles* (which add substance to discussions and structure to the group), *social and maintenance roles* (which keep the group working together in a positive way), and *dysfunctional roles* (which are detrimental to the group’s progress and should be avoided). Take a look at the typical behaviors of each and determine how you and your group members interact.

**TASK ROLES**

Initiator/Contributor: Contributes ideas and suggestions; proposes solutions and decisions; proposes new ideas or states old ones in a novel fashion.

Information Seeker: Asks for clarification of comments in terms of their factual adequacy; asks for information or facts relevant to the problem; suggests information is needed before making decisions.

Information Giver: Offers facts or generalizations that may relate to the group’s task.

Opinion Seeker:Asks for clarification of opinions made by other members of the group and asks how people in the group feel.

Opinion Giver: States beliefs or opinions having to do with suggestions made; indicates what the group’s attitude should be.

Elaborator/Classifier:Elaborates ideas and other contributions; offers rationales for suggestions; tries to deduce how an idea or suggestion would work if adopted by the group.

Coordinator:Clarifies the relationships among information, opinions, and ideas or suggestions and integration of the information, opinions, and ideas of sub-groups.

Diagnostician: Indicates what the problems are.

Oriented/Summarizer: Summarizes what has taken place; points out departures from agreed on goals; tries to bring the group back to the central issues; raises questions about the direction in which the group is heading.

Energizer:Prods the group to action.

Procedure developer: Handles routine tasks such as seating arrangements, obtaining equipment, and handing out pertinent papers.

Secretary: Keeps notes on the group’s progress.

Evaluator/Critic: Constructively analyzes group’s accomplishments according to some set of standards; checks to see that consensus has been reached.

**SOCIAL/MAINTENANCE ROLES**

Supporter/Encourager: Praises, agrees with, and accepts the contributions of others; offers warmth, solidarity, and recognition.

Harmonizer:Reconciles disagreements; mediates differences; reduces tensions by giving group members a chance to explore their differences.

Tension Reliever: Jokes or in some other way reduces the formality of the situation; relaxes the group members.

Conciliator:Offers new options when his or her own ideas are involved in a conflict; willing to admit errors so as to maintain group cohesion.

Gatekeeper:Keeps communication channels open; encourages and facilitates interaction from those members who are usually silent.

Feeling Expresser:Makes explicit the feelings, moods, and relationships in the group; shares own feelings with others.

Follower: Goes along with the movement of the group passively, accepting the ideas of others, sometimes serving as an audience.

**DYSFUNCTIONAL ROLES**

Blocker:Interferes with progress by rejecting ideas or taking a negative stand on any and all issues; refuses to cooperate.

Aggressor:Struggles for status by deflating the status of others; boasts, criticizes.

Deserter:Withdraws in some way; remains indifferent, aloof, sometimes formal; daydreams; wanders from the subject, engages in irrelevant side conversations.

Dominator: Interrupts and embarks on long monologues; is authoritative; tries to monopolize the group’s time.

Recognition seeker:Attempts to gain attention in an exaggerated manner; usually boasts about past accomplishments; relates irrelevant personal experiences, usually in an attempt to gain sympathy.

Joker: Displays a lack of involvement in the group through inappropriate humor, horseplay, or cynicism.

Cynic: Discounts chances for group’s success.