



Training for Change
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Leadership Skills in Groups: Task & Maintenance

Good internal dynamics do not happen by accident. They come from an awareness of how the group functions. The activities necessary for effective group operation can be divided into "task" functions, needed to help the group achieve its goals, and "maintenance" functions, needed to build and maintain group cohesiveness or sense of community. Ability to perform these functions is not hereditary, but learned. The important skill to be learned is the ability to identify and fill unfilled functions. Interpersonal tensions may decrease as team members perceive problems not as people's "faults," but as unfilled functions.

Task Functions:

Function/Role	Purpose	Technique
Initiator	Give direction and purpose to the group	Proposing tasks, goals; defining problems; suggesting procedures and solutions
Information-seeking	Make group aware of need for information	Requesting relevant facts, clarification
Information-giving	Provide group information relevant to its work	Offering relevant facts, avoiding reliance on opinion when facts are needed
Opinion-giving	Provide basis for group decision	Stating feelings or beliefs, evaluating a suggestion
Clarifying	Eliminate confusion about the current task	Defining terms, interpreting ideas, identifying issues and alternatives
Elaborating	Reduce ambiguity, show consequences	Giving examples, developing of plans and meanings/explaining
Coordinating	Adjust or harmonize issues that may conflict	Suggesting ways that different issues can be handled
Procedure-developing	Establish an order to the meeting	Suggest agenda, procedures, where to go next

Summarizing	Show how ideas are related; draw ideas together	Pulling together related issues, showing contradictions, restating suggestions
Philosopher/ Critic	Show that a particular issue is not unique; bring in insights from similar experience	Drawing general statements from specific ones, critically examining assumptions and ideas (not people)

Maintenance Functions:

Function/Role	Purpose	Technique
Encouraging	Bring out others' opinions and give others recognition	Being friendly, warm and responsive to others; accepting others' contributions
Expressing feelings	Call group attention to reactions to ideas and suggestions made	Expressing own feelings and restating others' feelings
Relieving tension	Reduce tension; allow group to express feelings	Joking, clowning, breaks, light & livelies
Compromising, Harmonizing, Mediating	Maintain group cohesion; reconcile disagreements	Offering or accepting compromises; yielding status, admitting error; conciliating differences
Facilitate	Maintain open discussion, keep communication channels open	Drawing out silent members, suggesting procedures for discussions
Setting standards	Make group aware of direction and progress	Expressing the group concern, suggesting tasks, stating standards and goals for group to achieve
Interpreting	Explain what someone has said; help others understand each other	Paraphrasing initial speaker
Listening, following	Provide stimulating, interested audience for others	Accepting ideas of others; going along with the group

*Testing agreement	Find out how close group is to agreement	Noting progress, stating areas of agreement, making tentative proposals for group reaction, asking if agreement is possible
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*Evaluating	Keep group in line with goals; provide sense of progress	Measuring accomplishments against goals; note progress

*Excerpted and adapted from "Resource Manual for a Living Revolution", New Society Publishers, 1985.
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