

Table 8-3

Functional Roles of Group Members

Task Functions

1. *Information or opinion giver.* Offers facts or opinions relevant to group task.
2. *Information or opinion seeker.* Asks others for task-related information or opinions.
3. *Starter or energizer.* Initiates or encourages task-related behavior (e.g., "We'd better get going on this").
4. *Direction giver.* Provides instructions regarding how to perform task at hand.
5. *Summarizer.* Reviews what has been said, identifying common themes or progress.
6. *Diagnoser.* Offers observations about task-related behavior of group (e.g., "We seem to be spending all of our time discussing the problem without proposing any solutions").
7. *Gatekeeper.* Regulates participation of members.
8. *Reality tester.* Checks feasibility of group ideas against real-world contingencies.

Relational Functions

1. *Participation encourager.* Encourages reticent members to speak, letting them know that their contribution will be valued.
2. *Harmonizer.* Resolves interpersonal conflicts between members.
3. *Tension reliever.* Uses humor or other devices to release anxiety and frustration of members.
4. *Evaluator of emotional climate.* Offers observations about socioemotional relationships between members (e.g., "I think we're all feeling a little defensive now," or "It sounds like you think nobody trusts you, Bill").
5. *Praise giver.* Reinforces accomplishments and contributions of group members.
6. *Empathic listener.* Listens without evaluation to personal concerns of members.

Dysfunctional Roles

1. *Blocker.* Prevents progress by constantly raising objections.
2. *Attacker.* Aggressively questions the competence or motives of others.
3. *Recognition seeker.* Repeatedly and unnecessarily calls attention to self by relating irrelevant experiences, boasting, and seeking sympathy.
4. *Joker.* Engages in joking behavior in excess of tension-relieving needs, distracting members.
5. *Withdrawer.* Refuses to take stand on social or task issues; covers up feelings; does not respond to others' comments.

problem. As business instructor Joel Baum puts it, "How you decide is just as important as what you decide. The process you use has a direct impact on how members feel about the decision. It can influence commitment, excitement, and buy-in; or it can create feelings of resentment and exclusion."⁵³ There are a number of ways to make business decisions like these.