

Use the inventory below to identify how well your group is performing these important communication practices.

As a Group, How Well Did You	Not Well			Very Well	
Define or clarify the task	1	2	3	4	5
Exchange and share information	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage expression of various points of view	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluate and analyze data	1	2	3	4	5
Use the best decision-making approach (consensus, majority rule, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Focus on tasks, not individuals	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrate respect for all	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage expression of opinion	1	2	3	4	5
Build on others' ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Ask for clarification of ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrate equality	1	2	3	4	5
Address disagreements or misunderstandings	1	2	3	4	5
Stay on task	1	2	3	4	5

the community—and ultimately lead to more business. Notice the relationships between some common group and individual goals:

Group Goal

Sales department wants to meet annual sales target.

Retailer wants to expand hours to attract new business.

Company wants employee to attend a seminar in Minneapolis.

Individual Goal

Sales representative wants to earn bonus.

Employees want to avoid working nights and weekends.

Employee wants to visit family in Minneapolis.

As some of these examples show, personal goals aren't necessarily harmful to a group or an organization if they are compatible with the group's objectives. In fact, under these

circumstances they can actually help the group to achieve its goals. For instance, sales representatives who want to increase their commissions will try to sell more of the company's products. Similarly, an otherwise reluctant employee might volunteer to attend a January seminar in Minneapolis to see her family during the visit.

Only when an individual's goals conflict with the organization's or group's goals do problems occur. If Lou and Marian hate each other, their arguments could keep the group from getting much done in meetings. If Bill is afraid of losing his job because of a mistake that has been made, he may concentrate on trying to avoid being blamed rather than on solving the problem.

The range of personal goals that can interfere with group effectiveness is surprisingly broad. One or more team members might be concerned with finishing the job quickly and getting away to take care of personal business. Others might be more concerned with being liked or appearing smart than with doing the job as quickly or effectively as possible. Someone else might want to impress the boss. All these goals, as well as dozens of others, can sidetrack or derail a group from doing its job.

As Table 8-4 shows, groups will be harmonious and most efficient when the members are also reaching their personal goals. You can boost the effectiveness of your group by doing everything possible to help members satisfy those goals. If the people in your group are looking for fun and companionship, consider ways to tackle the job at hand that also give them what they want. On the other hand, if they are in a hurry because of busy schedules, concentrate on keeping meetings to a minimum. If some

Table 8-4

Group Process Variables Associated with Productivity

1. Members are clear about and agree with group goals.
2. Tasks are appropriate for group versus individual solutions.
3. Members are clear about and accept their formal roles.
4. Role assignments match member abilities.
5. Level of leader's direction matches the group's skill level.
6. All group members are free to participate.
7. Group gets, gives, and uses feedback about its effectiveness and productivity.
8. Group spends time defining and discussing problems it must solve or decisions it must make. Members also spend time planning how they will solve problems and make decisions.
9. Group uses effective decision-making strategies that were outlined in advance.
10. Group evaluates its solutions and decisions.
11. Norms encourage high performance and quality, success, and innovation.
12. Subgroups are integrated into the group as a whole.
13. The group contains the smallest number of members necessary to accomplish its goals.
14. Group has enough time to develop cohesiveness and accomplish its goals.
15. Group has cooperative orientation.
16. Periods of conflict are frequent but brief and the group has effective ways of dealing with conflict.

Source: Research summarized in S. A. Wheelan et al., "Member Perceptions of Internal Group Dynamics and Productivity," *Small Group Research* 29 (1998), pp. 371-393.