

TABLE 9.1 Characteristics of a Well-Functioning, Effective Group

- The atmosphere tends to be relaxed, comfortable, and informal.
- The group's task is well-understood and accepted by the members.
- The members listen to one another; most members participate in a good deal of task-relevant discussion.
- People express both their feelings and their ideas.
- Conflict and disagreement are present and centered around ideas or methods, not personalities or people.
- The group is aware and conscious of its own operation and function.
- Decisions are usually based on consensus, not a majority vote.
- When actions are decided, clear assignments are made and accepted by members of the group

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Group Behavior

Group behavior has been a subject of interest in social psychology for a long time, and many different aspects of group behavior have been studied over the years. We now look at four topics relevant to groups functioning in organizations: norms of behavior, group cohesion, social loafing, and loss of individuality. Group behavior topics related to decision making, such as group polarization and groupthink, are addressed in Chapter 10.

Norms of Behavior

The standards that a work group uses to evaluate the behavior of its members are its **norms of behavior**. These norms may be written or unwritten, verbalized or not, implicit or explicit. As long as individual members of the group understand them, the norms can be effective in influencing behavior. Norms may specify what members of a group should do (such as a stated dress code for men and women), or they may specify what members of a group should not do (such as executives not behaving arrogantly with employees). Morality norms are more important than competence norms when it comes to making decisions to work at improving the status of one's in-group.⁶

Norms may exist in any aspect of work group life. They may evolve informally or unconsciously within a group, or they may arise in response to challenges, such as the norm of disciplined behavior by firefighters in responding to a three-alarm fire to protect the group.⁷ Performance norms are among the most important group norms from the organization's perspective. Even when group members work in isolation on creative projects, they display conformity to group norms.⁸ Group norms of cooperative behavior within a team can lead to members working for mutual benefit, which in turn facilitate team performance.⁹ On the other hand, verbal expressions of negativity within the group can be detrimental to team performance and a violation of group norms.¹⁰ We discuss performance standards further in a later section of this chapter. Organizational culture and corporate codes of ethics, such as Johnson & Johnson's Credo (see Chapter 2), reflect behavioral norms

- 2** Explain four important aspects of group behavior.

norms of behavior

The standards a work group uses to evaluate member behavior.