

Maximizing Motivation

Leadership One-Sheet

The information in this one-sheet is based on: Bradford, Leland P., Stock, Dorothy, Horwitz, and Murray, "How to diagnose group problems," Adult Leadership, 2; 12, Dec. 1953.

Bradford points out five reasons for under-participation in groups. They are:

1. The goal seems unimportant. Traditions and goals should be re-examined at intervals because needs change and new members enter the group. When members ask, "What does it mean?" or "What is it worth?" or "Is this all we have to do?" they may be thinking the activity is unimportant
2. There is fear in working or fear of the solution. Unnecessary delays in completing a project or reluctance to discuss a problem can be cues of existing fears. We may fear to act because we are insecure or have been punished or ridiculed because of former mistakes. Psychological blocks such as aggression, regression, and rationalization can also appear where fear is present.
3. The group lacks skill in solving problems. Confusion reigns when members don't know how to approach a task or problem. When a group has trouble focusing and fails to evaluate steps to take, or forward movement is curtailed in controversial discussion and private conversation on the side, then the group lacks the ability or resources to solve problems.
4. The members feel their work will be useless. Members become apathetic when they feel powerless in the final decision. The quickest way to produce apathy is to ask for suggestion, then to ignore it. When doubts are expressed about "wasting our time" and there is more talk about power, prestige and influence than getting the job done, then your group may be feeling unneeded.
5. The group is involved in conflict. Three kinds of conflict can hamper group effectiveness: frustration, status-seeking behavior, and outside loyalties. Groups are easily frustrated when

instructions are inadequate or when the job is not suited to the group's abilities. Struggles for power and prestige can also throw a group into conflict. Members will often form cliques and attack leadership when struggling for power. Finally, the manner in which a group is organized will either assist or hinder conflict due to outside loyalties. An unhealthy dependence on outside resources is an indication of this kind of conflict.

Use these ideas to maximize members' potential:

- Be courteous and respectful.
- Give individual attention and demonstrate that you understand members and accept their strengths and weaknesses.
- Keep members informed—what they're not up on, they're likely to be down on.
- Listen to others.
- Be fair, honest, and consistent—show no favoritism.
- Provide honest feedback-praise their successes publicly and privately give constructive criticism to help them learn from their mistakes.
- Involve members in goal-setting of organization and their expectations of you.
- Occasionally serve food or have some kind of treat at your meetings.
- Have a context and give a small prize to the person who designs the best program, etc.
- Use team-building activities to re-energize the group and strengthen loyalty and commitment. (People will work harder for other people than for an impersonal entity called an organization).

More information is available from:
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