



This is “Work Effectively in Groups”, chapter 7 from the book [Beginning Human Relations \(index.html\)](#) (v. 1.0).

This book is licensed under a [Creative Commons by-nc-sa 3.0](#) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>) license. See the license for more details, but that basically means you can share this book as long as you credit the author (but see below), don't make money from it, and do make it available to everyone else under the same terms.

This content was accessible as of December 29, 2012, and it was downloaded then by [Andy Schmitz](#) (<http://lardbucket.org>) in an effort to preserve the availability of this book.

Normally, the author and publisher would be credited here. However, the publisher has asked for the customary Creative Commons attribution to the original publisher, authors, title, and book URI to be removed. Additionally, per the publisher's request, their name has been removed in some passages. More information is available on this project's [attribution page](http://2012books.lardbucket.org/attribution.html?utm_source=header) (http://2012books.lardbucket.org/attribution.html?utm_source=header).

For more information on the source of this book, or why it is available for free, please see [the project's home page](#) (<http://2012books.lardbucket.org/>). You can browse or download additional books there.

Chapter 7

Work Effectively in Groups

Significant portions of this chapter were adapted from [citation redacted per publisher request] with permission of the author.

[citation redacted per publisher request].

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

- Andrew Carnegie

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

Teamwork at Quick-Lube

At Quick-Lube, the promise to customers is to change oil within ten minutes. There is no way that Quick-Lube could do this without teamwork. For example, in one shift, there is someone assigned as the customer interface, the below hood, and the above hood. The duties of the customer interface include checking people in, moving the car into the stall, and managing the oil change process. The below the hood person is responsible for draining the oil and replacing it. The above hood person washes the windows, vacuums the floors, and also checks the above the hood items such as the air filter. All of these people must communicate well in order to finish the job in ten minutes. Sometimes, on busy days such as Saturday afternoon, this can be stressful, but each team member knows their job, which creates a better and faster customer experience.

As humans, we are social beings. We naturally form relationships with others, as in our opening example of Quick-Lube. Sometimes forming relationships is necessary to serve the customer best. In fact, relationships are often noted as one of the most important aspects of a person's life, and they exist in many forms. Interpersonal

communication occurs between two people, but group communication may involve two or more individuals. Groups are a primary context for interaction within the business community. Groups may have heroes, enemies, and sages alongside new members. Groups overlap and may share common goals, but they may also engage in conflict. Groups can be supportive or coercive and can exert powerful influences over individuals.

Within a group, individuals may behave in distinct ways, use unique or specialized terms, or display symbols that have meaning to that group. Those same terms or symbols may be confusing, meaningless, or even unacceptable to another group. An individual may belong to both groups, adapting his or her communication patterns to meet group normative expectations. Groups are increasingly important across social media venues, and there are many examples of successful business ventures on the web that value and promote group interaction.

Groups use words to exchange meaning, establish territory, and identify who is a stranger versus who is a trusted member. Are you familiar with the term “troll”? It is often used to identify someone who is not a member of an online group or community; does not share the values and beliefs of the group; and posts a message in an online discussion board to initiate flame wars, cause disruption, or otherwise challenge the group members. Members often use words to respond to the challenge that are not otherwise common in the discussions, and the less-than-flattering descriptions of the troll are a rallying point.

Groups have existed throughout human history and continue to follow familiar patterns across emerging venues as we adapt to technology, computer-mediated interaction, suburban sprawl, and modern life. We need groups, and groups need us. Our relationship with groups warrants attention on this interdependence as we come to know our communities, our world, and ourselves. This will be the focus of this chapter.

7.1 What Is a Group?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Be able to explain the meaning of a group and a team.
2. Discuss how primary and secondary groups meet our interpersonal needs.
3. Discuss how we can understand group norms in our own current or future workplace.

Our ability to work effectively in a group shows our emotional intelligence skills of social awareness, self-awareness, and our ability to manage relationships. We cannot have relationships with others if we do not have a sense of ourselves. To maintain those relationships, we need to have social awareness and be able to manage those relationships in a positive way. Let's get into a time machine and travel way, way back to join early humans in prehistoric times. Their needs are like ours today: they cannot exist or thrive without air, food, and water—and a sense of belonging. How did they meet these needs? Through cooperation and competition. If food scarcity was an issue, who got more and who got less? This serves as our first introduction to roles, status and power, and hierarchy within a group. When food scarcity becomes an issue, who gets to keep their spoon? In some Latin American cultures, having a job or earning a living is referred to by the slang term *cuchara*, which literally means “spoon” and figuratively implies food, safety, and security.

Now let's return to the present and enter a modern office. Cubicles define territories and corner offices denote status. In times of economic recession or slumping sales for the company, there is a greater need for cooperation, and there is competition for scarce resources. The loss of a “spoon”—or of one's cubicle—may now come in the form of a pink slip, but it is no less devastating.

We form self-identities through our communication with others, and much of that interaction occurs in a group context. A group may be defined as three or more individuals who affiliate, interact, or cooperate in a familial, social, or work context. **Group communication**¹ may be defined as the exchange of information with those who are alike culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically. Group members may be known by their symbols, such as patches and insignia on a military uniform. They may be known by their use of specialized language or jargon; for example, someone in information technology may use the term “server” in reference to the Internet, whereas someone in the food service industry may use “server” to refer to

1. The exchange of information with those who are culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically alike.

the worker who takes customer orders in a restaurant. Group members may also be known by their proximity, as in gated communities. Regardless of how the group defines itself, and regardless of the extent to which its borders are porous or permeable, a group recognizes itself as a group. Humans naturally make groups a part of their context or environment.

Types of Groups in the Workplace

As a skilled communicator, learning more about groups and group dynamics will serve you well. Mergers, forced sales, downsizing, and entering new markets all call upon individuals within a business or organization to become members of groups. Groups may be defined by function. They can also be defined, from a developmental viewpoint, by the relationships within them. Groups can also be discussed in terms of their relationship to the individual and the degree to which they meet interpersonal needs.

Some groups may be assembled at work to solve problems, and once the challenge has been resolved, they dissolve into previous or yet to be determined groups. Functional groups like this may be immediately familiar to you. You take a class in sociology from a professor of sociology, who is a member of the discipline of sociology. To be a member of a discipline is to be a disciple, and adhere to a common framework for viewing the world. Disciplines involve a common set of theories that explain the world around us, terms to explain those theories, and have grown to reflect the advance of human knowledge. Compared to your sociology instructor, your physics instructor may see the world from a completely different perspective. Still, both may be members of divisions or schools, dedicated to teaching or research, and come together under the large group heading we know as the university.

In business, we may have marketing experts who are members of the marketing department, who perceive their tasks differently from a member of the sales staff or someone in accounting. You may work in the mailroom, and the mailroom staff is a group in itself, both distinct from and interconnected with the larger organization.

Relationships are part of any group and can be described in terms of status, power, control, as well as role, function, or viewpoint. Within a family, for example, the ties that bind you together may be common experiences, collaborative efforts, and even pain and suffering. The birth process may forge a relationship between mother and daughter, but it also may not. An adoption may transform a family. Relationships are formed through communication interaction across time and often share a common history, values, and beliefs about the world around us.

Figure 7.1



Groups and teams are an important part of any type of communication that happens at work.

In business, an idea may bring professionals together and they may even refer to the new product or service as their “baby,” speaking in reverent tones about a project they have taken from the drawing board and “birthed” into the real world. As in family communication, work groups or teams may have challenges, rivalries, and even “birthing pains” as a product is developed, adjusted, adapted, and transformed. Struggles are a part of relationships, both in families and business, and form a common history of shared challenges overcome through effort and hard work.

Through conversations and a shared sense that you and your coworkers belong together, you meet many of your basic human needs, such as the need to feel included, the need for affection, and the need for control. Schutz, W. (1966). *The interpersonal underworld*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books. In a work context, “affection” may sound odd, but we all experience affection at work in the form of friendly comments like “good morning,” “have a nice weekend,” and “good job!” Our professional lives also fulfill more than just our basic needs (i.e., air, food, and water, as well as safety). While your work group may be gathered together with common goals, such as to deliver the mail in a timely fashion to the corresponding departments and individuals, your daily interactions may well go beyond this functional perspective.

In the same way, your family may provide a place for you at the table and meet your basic needs, but they also may not meet other needs. If you grow to understand yourself and your place in a way that challenges group norms, you will be able to choose which parts of your life to share and to withhold in different groups, and to choose where to seek acceptance, affection, and control.

Primary and Secondary Groups

There are fundamentally two types of groups that can be observed in many contexts, from church to school, family to work. These two types are primary and secondary groups. The hierarchy denotes the degree to which the group(s) meet your interpersonal needs. **Primary groups**² meet most, if not all, of one's needs. Groups that meet some, but not all, needs are called **secondary groups**³. Secondary groups often include work groups, where the goal is to complete a task or solve a problem. If you are a member of the sales department, your purpose is to sell.

In terms of problem solving, work groups can accomplish more than individuals can. People, each of whom have specialized skills, talents, experience, or education come together in new combinations with new challenges, find new perspectives to create unique approaches that they themselves would not have formulated alone.

Secondary groups may meet your need for professional acceptance and celebrate your success, but they may not meet your need for understanding and sharing on a personal level. Family members may understand you in ways that your coworkers cannot, and vice versa.

If Two's Company and Three's a Crowd, What Is a Group?

This old cliché refers to the human tendency to form pairs. Pairing is the most basic form of relationship formation; it applies to childhood best friends, college roommates, romantic couples, business partners, and many other dyads (two-person relationships). A **group**⁴, by definition, includes at least three people. We can categorize groups in terms of their size and complexity.

When we discuss demographic groups as part of a market study, we may focus on large numbers of individuals that share common characteristics. If you are the producer of an ecologically innovative car such as the Smart ForTwo and know your customers have an average of four members in their family, you may discuss developing a new model with additional seats. While the target audience is a group, car customers don't relate to each other as a unified whole. Even if they form car clubs and have regional gatherings, a newsletter, and competitions at their local race tracks each year, they still subdivide the overall community of car owners into smaller groups.

The larger the group grows, the more likely it is to subdivide. Analysis of these smaller, or microgroups, is increasingly a point of study as the Internet allows individuals to join people of similar mind or habit to share virtually anything across time and distance. A **microgroup**⁵ is a small, independent group that has a link,

2. Groups that meet most, if not all, of one's needs.
3. Groups that meet some but not all of individuals' needs.
4. Three or more individuals who affiliate, interact, or cooperate in a familial, social, or work context.
5. A small, independent group that has a link, affiliation, or association with a larger group.

affiliation, or association with a larger group. With each additional group member the number of possible interactions increases. Harris, T., & Sherblom, J. (1999). *Small Group and Team Communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. McLean, S. (2003). *The basics of speech communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Small groups normally contain between three and eight people. One person may involve intrapersonal communication, while two may constitute interpersonal communication, and both may be present within a group communication context. You may think to yourself before making a speech or writing your next post, and you may turn to your neighbor or coworker and have a side conversation, but a group relationship normally involves three to eight people, and the potential for distraction is great.

In [Table 7.1 "Possible Interaction in Groups"](#), you can quickly see how the number of possible interactions grows according to how many people are in the group. At some point, we all find the possible and actual interactions overwhelming and subdivide into smaller groups. For example, you may have hundreds of friends on MySpace or Facebook, but how many of them do you regularly communicate with? You may be tempted to provide a number greater than eight, but if you exclude the “all to one” messages, such as a general tweet to everyone (but no one person in particular), you’ll find the group norms will appear.

Table 7.1 Possible Interaction in Groups

Number of group members	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Number of possible interactions	2	9	28	75	186	441	1,056

Group norms are customs, standards, and behavioral expectations that emerge as a group forms. If you post an update every day on your Facebook page and your friends stop by to post on your wall and comment, not posting for a week will violate a group norm. They will wonder if you are sick or in the hospital where you have no access to a computer to keep them updated. If, however, you only post once a week, the group will come to naturally expect your customary post. Norms involve expectations that are self and group imposed and that often arise as groups form and develop.

If there are more than eight members, it becomes a challenge to have equal participation, where everyone has a chance to speak, listen, and respond. Some will dominate, others will recede, and smaller groups will form. Finding a natural balance within a group can also be a challenge. Small groups need to have enough

members to generate a rich and stimulating exchange of ideas, information, and interaction, but not so many people that what each brings cannot be shared. Galanes, G., Adams, K., & Brillhart, J. (2000). *Communication in groups: Applications and skills* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Forming groups fulfills many human needs, such as the need for affiliation, affection, and control; individuals also need to cooperate in groups to fulfill basic survival needs.
- Part of our ability to be successful at work depends on our ability to work in groups.
- A primary group is one that meets most, if not all of your needs.
- Secondary groups are groups that may meet some but not all of your needs. Secondary groups are normally those found in the workplace, while our family and friends might be considered a primary group.
- A group consists of at least three people.

EXERCISES

1. Think of the online groups you participate in. Forums may have hundreds or thousands of members, and you may have hundreds of friends on MySpace or Facebook, but how many do you regularly communicate with? Exclude the “all-to-one” messages, such as a general tweet to everyone (but no one person in particular). Do you find that you gravitate toward the group norm of eight or fewer group members? Discuss your answer with your classmates.
2. What are some of the primary groups in your life? How do they compare with the secondary groups in your life? Write a two- to three-paragraph description of these groups and compare it with a classmate’s description.
3. What group is most important to people? Create a survey with at least two questions, identify a target sample size, and conduct your survey. Report how you completed the activity and your findings. Compare the results with those of your classmates.
4. Are there times when it is better to work alone rather than in a group? Why or why not? Discuss your opinion with a classmate.

7.2 Group Life Cycles and Member Roles

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the typical stages in the life cycle of a group you have worked with.
2. Describe different types of group members and group member roles.

Groups are dynamic systems in constant change. Groups grow together and eventually come apart. People join groups and others leave. This dynamic changes and transforms the very nature of the group. **Group socialization**⁶ involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships. Just as you were once born and changed your family, they changed you. You came to know a language and culture, a value system, and set of beliefs that influence you to this day. You came to be socialized, to experience the process of learning to associate, communicate, or interact within a group. A group you belong to this year—perhaps a soccer team or the cast of a play—may not be part of your life next year. And those who are in leadership positions may ascend or descend the leadership hierarchy as the needs of the group, and other circumstances, change over time.

Group Life Cycle Patterns

Your life cycle is characterized with several steps, and while it doesn't follow a prescribed path, there are universal stages we can all recognize. You were born. You didn't choose your birth, your parents, your language, or your culture, but you came to know them through communication. You came to know yourself, learned skills, discovered talents, and met other people. You learned, worked, lived, and loved, and as you aged, minor injuries took longer to heal. You competed in ever-increasing age groups in your favorite sport, and while your time for each performance may have increased as you aged, your experience allowed you to excel in other ways. Where you were once a novice, you have now learned something to share. You lived to see some of your friends pass before you, and the moment will arrive when you too must confront death.

In the same way, groups experience similar steps and stages and take on many of the characteristics we associate with life. Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982). Socialization in small groups: Temporal changes in individual group relations. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 15, 153. They grow,

6. Involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships.

overcome illness and dysfunction, and transform across time. No group, just as no individual, lives forever.

Your first day on the job may be comparable to the first day you went to school. At home, you may have learned some of the basics, like how to write with a pencil, but knowledge of that skill and its application are two different things. In school, people spoke and acted in different ways than at home. Gradually, you came to understand the meaning of recess, the importance of raising your hand to get the teacher’s attention, and how to follow other school rules. At work, you may have had academic training for your profession, but the knowledge you learned in school only serves as your foundation—much as your **socialization**⁷ at home served to guide you at school. On the job they use jargon terms, have schedules that may include coffee breaks (recess), have a supervisor (teacher), and have rules, explicit and understood. On the first day, it was all new, even if many of the elements were familiar.

In order to better understand group development and its life cycle, many researchers have described the universal stages and phases of groups. While there are modern interpretations of these stages, most draw from the model proposed by Bruce Tuckman. B. Tuckman, “Developmental Sequence in Small Groups,” *Psychological Bulletin* 63, (1965): 384–99. This model, shown in **Table 7.2 "Tuckman’s Linear Model of Group Development"**, Tuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384–99. specifies the usual order of the phases of group development and allows us to predict several stages we can anticipate as we join a new group.

Table 7.2 Tuckman’s Linear Model of Group Development

Stages	Activities
Forming	Members come together, learn about each other, and determine the purpose of the group.
Storming	Members engage in more direct communication and get to know each other. Conflicts between group members will often arise during this stage.
Norming	Members establish spoken or unspoken rules about how they communicate and work. Status, rank, and roles in the group are established.
Performing	Members fulfill their purpose and reach their goal.
Adjourning	Members leave the group.

7. The process of learning to associate, communicate, or interact within a group.

Tuckman begins with the **forming stage**⁸ as the initiation of group formation. This stage is also called the orientation stage because individual group members come to know each other. Group members who are new to each other and can't predict each other's behavior can be expected to experience the stress of uncertainty.

Uncertainty theory⁹ states that we choose to know more about others with whom we have interactions in order to reduce or resolve the anxiety associated with the unknown. Berger, C., & Calabrese, R. (1975). Some explorations in initial interactions and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research*, 1, 99–112. Berger, C. (1986). Response uncertain outcome values in predicted relationships: Uncertainty reduction theory then and now. *Human Communication Research*, 13, 34–38. Gudykunst, W. (1995). Anxiety/uncertainty management theory. In R. W. Wiseman (Ed.), *Intercultural communication theory* (pp. 8–58). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. The more we know about others and become accustomed to how they communicate, the better we can predict how they will interact with us in future contexts. If you learn that Monday mornings are never a good time for your supervisor, you quickly learn to schedule meetings later in the week. Individuals are initially tentative and display caution as they begin to learn about the group and its members.

If you don't know someone very well, it is easy to offend. Each group member brings to the group a set of experiences, combined with education and a self-concept. You won't be able to read this information on a nametag, but instead you will only come to know it through time and interaction. Since the possibility of overlapping and competing viewpoints and perspectives exists, the group will experience a **storming stage**¹⁰, a time of struggles as the members themselves sort out their differences. There may be more than one way to solve the problem or task at hand, and some group members may prefer one strategy over another. Some members of the group may be more senior to the organization than you, and members may treat them differently. Some group members may be as new as you are and just as uncertain about everyone's talents, skills, roles, and self-perceptions. The wise business communicator will anticipate the storming stage and help facilitate opportunities for the members to resolve uncertainty before the work commences. There may be challenges for leadership, and there may be conflicting viewpoints. The sociology professor sees the world differently than the physics professor. The sales agent sees things differently than someone from accounting. A manager who understands and anticipates this normal challenge in the group's life cycle can help the group become more productive.

A clear definition of the purpose and mission of the group can help the members focus their energies. Interaction prior to the first meeting can help reduce uncertainty. Coffee and calories can help bring a group together. Providing the group with what they need and opportunities to know each other prior to their task can increase efficiency.

8. Initiation of group formation in which individual group members come to know each other.
9. States that we choose to know more about others with whom we have interactions in order to reduce or resolve the anxiety associated with the unknown.
10. Time of struggles as group members themselves sort out their differences.

Groups that make a successful transition from the storming stage will next experience the **norming stage**¹¹, where the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behavior and interaction. Who speaks first? Who takes notes? Who is creative, who is visual, and who is detail-oriented? Sometimes our job titles and functions speak for themselves, but human beings are complex. We are not simply a list of job functions, and in the dynamic marketplace of today's business environment you will often find that people have talents and skills well beyond their "official" role or task. Drawing on these strengths can make the group more effective.

The norming stage is marked by less division and more collaboration. The level of anxiety associated with interaction is generally reduced, making for a more positive work climate that promotes listening. When people feel less threatened and their needs are met, they are more likely to focus their complete attention on the purpose of the group. If they are still concerned with who does what and whether they will speak in error, the interaction framework will stay in the storming stage. Tensions are reduced when the normative expectations are known and the degree to which a manager can describe these at the outset can reduce the amount of time the group remains in uncertainty. Group members generally express more satisfaction with clear expectations and are more inclined to participate.

Ultimately, the purpose of a work group is performance, and the preceding stages lead us to the **performing stage**¹², in which the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals. To facilitate performance, group members can't skip the initiation of getting to know each other or the sorting out of roles and norms, but they can try to focus on performance with clear expectations from the moment the group is formed. Productivity is often how we measure success in business and industry, and the group has to produce. Outcome assessments may have been built into the system from the beginning to serve as a benchmark for success. Wise managers know how to celebrate success, as it brings more success, social cohesion, group participation, and a sense of job satisfaction. Incremental gains toward a benchmark may also be cause for celebration and support, and failure to reach a goal should be regarded as an opportunity for clarification.

It is generally wiser to focus on the performance of the group rather than individual contributions. Managers and group members will want to offer assistance to underperformers as well as congratulate members for their contributions. If the goal is to create a community where competition pushes each member to perform, individual highlights may serve your needs, but if you want a group to solve a problem or address a challenge as a group, you have to promote group cohesion. Members need to feel a sense of belonging, and praise (or the lack thereof) can be a sword with two edges: one stimulates and motivates while the other demoralizes and divides.

11. Time when the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behavior and interaction.

12. Time when the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals.

The Group Development Process

[\(click to see video\)](#)

The movie Remember The Titans shows the group development process.

Groups should be designed to produce and perform in ways and at levels that individuals cannot, or else you should consider compartmentalizing the tasks. The performing stage is where the productivity occurs, and it is necessary to make sure the group has what it needs to perform. Missing pieces, parts, or information can stall the group and reset the cycle to storming all over again. Loss of performance is inefficiency, which carries a cost. Managers will be measured by the group's productivity and performance. Make sure the performing stage is one that is productive and healthy for its members.

Imagine that you are the manager of a group that has produced an award-winning design for an ecologically innovative four-seat car. Their success is your success. Their celebrations are yours even if the success is not focused on you. A manager manages the process while group members perform. If you were a member of the group that helped design the belt line, you made a fundamental contribution to the style of the car. Individual consumers may never consider the line from the front fender, across the doors, to the rear taillight as they make a purchase decision, but they will recognize beauty. You will know that you could not have achieved that fundamental part of car design without help from the engineers in the group, and if the number-crunching accountants had not seen the efficiency of the production process that produced it, it may never have survived the transition from prototype to production. The group came together and accomplished its goals with amazing results.

Now, as typically happens, all groups will eventually have to move on to new assignments. In the **adjourning stage**¹³, members leave the group. The group may cease to exist or it may be transformed with new members and a new set of goals. Your contributions in the past may have caught the attention of the management, and you may be assigned to redesign the flagship vehicle, the halo car of your marque or brand. It's quite a professional honor, and it's yours because of your successful work in a group. Others will be reassigned to tasks that require their talents and skills, and you may or may not collaborate with them in the future.

You may miss the interactions with the members, even the more cantankerous ones, and will experience both relief and a sense of loss. Like life, the group process is normal, and mixed emotions are to be expected. A wise manager anticipates this stage and facilitates the separation with skill and ease. We often close this process

13. Time when group members leave the group.

with a ritual marking its passing, though the ritual may be as formal as an award or as informal as a “thank you” or a verbal acknowledgement of a job well done over coffee and calories.

On a more sober note, it is important not to forget that groups can reach the adjourning stage without having achieved success. Some businesses go bankrupt, some departments are closed, and some individuals lose their positions after a group fails to perform. Adjournment can come suddenly and unexpectedly or gradually and piece by piece. Either way, a skilled business communicator will be prepared and recognize it as part of the classic group life cycle.

Why Human Relations?

Without a doubt, most if not all of us will work in groups in our workplace. Even if we seem to have a somewhat isolated job, part of what we do will impact others. Developing skills that can help us work better in these groups relates to the social awareness and relationship management aspects of emotional intelligence, as we discussed in [Chapter 2 "Achieve Personal Success"](#). **These two skills—the ability to understand social cues that can be affecting others and our ability to communicate and maintain good relationships—are the cornerstones in any group situation.**

For example, in the group development process, we depend greatly on our social awareness skills in order to make successful first impressions during the forming stage. We use our ability to resolve conflict during the storming and norming phase. Having the skills to handle these different phases are key to successful and productive group work. Have you ever worked with a dysfunctional group, perhaps on a class project? These types of groups are lacking in communication and possibly emotional intelligence skills, which can make the group more cohesive. **Group cohesiveness is the goal in any type of group setting. This makes the performing stage more productive, less stressful, and maybe even enjoyable!**

In a study by Jordan and Troth, there was a significant correlation between higher team performance and the emotional intelligence skills of the team members. Jordan, Peter and Troth, Ashlea, "Managing Emotions during Team Problem Solving," *Journal of Human Performance*, Volume 17, Issue 2, pp 195-218. **Being able to understand your own emotions (self-awareness), manage them (self-management), and establish positive relationships built on trust is what makes groups work most effectively.**

Life Cycle of Member Roles

Just as groups go through a life cycle when they form and eventually adjourn, so do the group members fulfill different roles during this life cycle. These roles, proposed by Richard Moreland and John Levine, Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982). Socialization in small groups: Temporal changes in individual group relations. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 15, 153. are summarized in [Table 7.3 "Life Cycle of Member Roles"](#). Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982).

Socialization in small groups: Temporal changes in individual group relations. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 15, 153.

Table 7.3 Life Cycle of Member Roles

1. Potential member	Curiosity and interest
2. New member	Joined the group but still an outsider, and unknown
3. Full member	Knows the “rules” and is looked to for leadership
4. Divergent member	Focuses on differences
5. Marginal member	No longer involved
6. Ex-Member	No longer considered a member

Suppose you are about to graduate from school and you are in the midst of an employment search. You’ve gathered extensive information on a couple of local businesses and are aware that they will be participating in the university job fair. You’ve explored their websites, talked to people currently employed at each company, and learned what you can from the public information available. At this stage, you are considered a **potential member**¹⁴. You may have an electrical, chemical, or mechanical engineering degree soon, but you are not a member of an engineering team.

You show up at the job fair in professional attire and completely prepared. The representatives of each company are respectful, cordial, and give you contact information. One of them even calls a member of the organization on the spot and arranges an interview for you next week. You are excited at the prospect and want to learn more. You are still a potential member.

The interview goes well the following week. The day after the meeting, you receive a call for a follow-up interview that leads to a committee interview. A few weeks later, the company calls you with a job offer. However, in the meantime, you have also been interviewing with other potential employers, and you are waiting to hear back from two of them. You are still a potential member.

14. Individual who is qualified to join a group but has not yet joined.

After careful consideration, you decide to take the job offer and start the next week. The projects look interesting, you'll be gaining valuable experience, and the commute to work is reasonable. Your first day on the job is positive, and they've assigned you a mentor. The conversations are positive, but you feel lost at times, as if they are speaking a language you can't quite grasp. As a **new group member**¹⁵, your level of acceptance will increase as you begin learning the groups' rules, spoken and unspoken. Fisher, B. A. (1970). Decision emergence: Phases in group decision making. *Speech Monographs*, 37, 56–66. You will gradually move from the potential member role to the role of new group member as you learn to fit into the group.

Figure 7.2



As a member of a new group, you may learn new customs, traditions, and group norms.

Over time and projects, you gradually increase your responsibilities. You are no longer looked at as the new person, and you can follow almost every conversation. You can't quite say, "I remember when," because your tenure hasn't been that long, but you are a known quantity and know your way around. You are a full member of the group. **Full members**¹⁶ enjoy knowing the rules and customs and can even create new rules. New group members look to full members for leadership and guidance. Full group members can control the agenda and have considerable influence on the agenda and activities.

Full members of a group, however, can and do come into conflict. When you were a new member, you may have remained silent when you felt you had something to say, but now you state your case. There is more than one way to get the job done. You may suggest new ways that emphasize efficiency over existing methods. Coworkers who have been working in the department for several years may be unwilling to adapt and change, resulting in tension. Expressing different views can cause conflict and may even interfere with communication.

15. Individual who is still learning the group's norms and rules.
16. Individual who is a known quantity, is familiar with the group's norms, and feels free to express opinions.
17. Individuals who pull back, contribute less, and start to see themselves as separate from the group.
18. Individual who looks outside the group for fulfillment of personal needs.

When this type of tension arises, **divergent group members**¹⁷ pull back, contribute less, and start to see themselves as separate from the group. Divergent group members have less eye contact, seek out each other's opinion less frequently, and listen defensively. In the beginning of the process, you felt a sense of belonging, but now you don't. **Marginal group members**¹⁸ start to look outside the group for their interpersonal needs.

After several months of trying to cope with these adjustments, you decide that you never really investigated the other two companies, that your job search process was incomplete. Perhaps you should take a second look at the options. You will report to

work on Monday but will start the process of becoming an **ex-member**¹⁹, one who no longer belongs. You may experience a sense of relief upon making this decision, given that you haven't felt like you belonged to the group for a while. When you line up your next job and submit your resignation, you make it official.

This process has no set timetable. Some people overcome differences and stay in the group for years; others get promoted and leave the group only when they get transferred to regional headquarters. As a skilled business communicator, you will recognize the signs of divergence, just as you have anticipated the storming stage and do your best to facilitate success.

Group Member Roles

If someone in your group always makes everyone laugh, that can be a distinct asset when the news is less than positive. At times when you have to get work done, however, the class clown may become a distraction. Notions of positive and negative will often depend on the context when discussing groups. **Table 7.4 "Positive Roles"**Beene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37, 41–49.'McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. and **Table 7.5 "Negative Roles"**Beene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37, 41–49.'McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. list both positive and negative roles people sometimes play in a group setting.Beene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37, 41–49.'McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Table 7.4 Positive Roles

Initiator-coordinator	Suggests new ideas or new ways of looking at the problem
Elaborator	Builds on ideas and provides examples
Coordinator	Brings ideas, information, and suggestions together
Evaluator-critic	Evaluates ideas and provides constructive criticism
Recorder	Records ideas, examples, suggestions, and critiques

Table 7.5 Negative Roles

Dominator	Dominates discussion, not allowing others to take their turn
Recognition seeker	Relates discussion to their accomplishments; seeks attention

19. Individual who no longer belongs to a group.

Special-interest pleader	Relates discussion to special interest or personal agenda
Blocker	Blocks attempts at consensus consistently
Joker or clown	Seeks attention through humor and distracts group members

Now that we've examined a classical view of positive and negative group member roles, let's examine another perspective. While some personality traits and behaviors may negatively influence groups, some are positive or negative depending on the context.

Just as the class clown can have a positive effect in lifting spirits or a negative effect in distracting members, a dominator may be exactly what is needed for quick action. An emergency physician doesn't have time to ask all the group members in the emergency unit how they feel about a course of action; instead, a self-directed approach based on training and experience may be necessary. In contrast, the pastor of a church may have ample opportunity to ask members of the congregation their opinions about a change in the format of Sunday services; in this situation, the role of coordinator or elaborator is more appropriate than that of dominator.

The group is together because they have a purpose or goal, and normally they are capable of more than any one individual member could be on their own, so it would be inefficient to hinder that progress. But a blocker, who cuts off collaboration, does just that. If a group member interrupts another and presents a viewpoint or information that suggests a different course of action, the point may be well taken and serve the collaborative process. But if that same group member repeatedly engages in blocking behavior, then the behavior becomes a problem. To become effective at human relations skills, learn how to work in groups. The use of emotional intelligence skills in relationship management can help achieve this goal.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Groups and their individual members come together and grow apart in predictable patterns.
- Group lifecycle patterns refer to the process or stages of group development.
- There are five stages to the group development process, which include forming, norming, storming, performing, and adjourning.
- Within each of the stages, group members have a variety of roles, which include potential member, new member, full member, divergent member, marginal member, and an ex-member.
- You can take on a variety of roles when working with a group. These roles can be positive or negative, and you can rely on your emotional intelligence skills to make sure they are positive.

EXERCISES

1. Is it possible for an outsider (a nongroup member) to help a group move from the storming stage to the norming stage? Explain your answer and present it to the class.
2. Think of a group of which you are a member and identify some roles played by group members, including yourself. Have your roles, and those of others, changed over time? Are some roles more positive than others? Discuss your answers with your classmates.
3. In the course where you are using this book, think of yourself and your classmates as a group. At what stage of group formation are you currently? What stage will you be at when the school year ends?
4. Think of a group you no longer belong to. At what point did you become an ex-member? Were you ever a marginal group member or a full member? Write a two- to three-paragraph description of the group, how and why you became a member, and how and why you left. Share your description with a classmate.

7.3 Effective Group Meetings

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand how you can prepare for and conduct meetings.
2. Understand how you can use technology to aid in group communications.
3. Understand the basic principles of organizational communication.

Business and professional meetings are a part of the communication climate of any business. Some view meetings as boring, pointless, and futile exercises, while others see them as opportunities to exchange information and produce results. A combination of preparation and execution makes all the difference. Remember, too, that meetings do not have to take place in a physical space where the participants meet face to face. Instead, a number of technological tools make it possible to hold virtual meetings in which the participants are half a world away from one another. Virtual meetings are formally arranged gatherings where participants, located in distinct geographic locations, come together via the Internet.

Preparation

A meeting, like a problem-solving group, needs a clear purpose statement. The specific goal for the specific meeting will clearly relate to the overall goal of the group or committee. Determining your purpose is central to an effective meeting and getting together just to get together is called a party, not a meeting. Do not schedule a meeting just because you met at the same time last month or because it is a standing committee. Members will resent the intrusion into their schedules and quickly perceive the lack of purpose.

Similarly, if the need for a meeting arises, do not rush into it without planning. A poorly planned meeting announced at the last minute is sure to be less than effective. People may be unable to change their schedules, may fail to attend, or may impede the progress and discussion of the group because of their absence. Those who attend may feel hindered because they needed more time to prepare and present comprehensive results to the group or committee.

If a meeting is necessary, and a clear purpose can be articulated, then you'll need to decide how and where to meet. Distance is no longer an obstacle to participation, as we will see later in this section when we explore some of the technologies for

virtual meetings. However, there are many advantages to meeting in person. People communicate not just with words but also with their body language—facial expressions, hand gestures, head nodding or head shaking, and posture. These subtleties of communication can be key to determining how group members really feel about an issue or question. Meeting in real time can be important, too, as all group members have the benefit of receiving new information at the same time. For purposes of our present discussion, we will focus on meetings taking place face to face in real time.

If you have a purpose statement for the meeting, then it also follows that you should be able to create an agenda or a list of topics to be discussed. You may need to solicit information from members to formulate an agenda, and this premeeting contact can serve to encourage active participation. The agenda will have a time, date, place, and method of interaction noted, as well as a list of participants. It will also have a statement of purpose, a list of points to be considered, and a brief summary of relevant information that relates to each point. The start and end times need to be clearly indicated somewhere on the agenda, and it is always a good idea to leave time at the end for questions and additional points that individual members may want to share. If the meeting has an emotional point or theme, or the news is negative, plan for additional time for discussion, clarification, and recycling of conversations as the participants process the information.

If you are planning an intense work session, you need to consider the number of possible interactions among the participants and limit them. Smaller groups are generally more productive. If you are gathering to present information or to motivate the sales staff, a large audience, where little interaction is expected, is appropriate. Each member has a role, and attention to how and why they are interacting will produce the best results. Review the stages of group formation in view of the idea that a meeting is a short-term group. You can anticipate a “forming” stage, and if roles are not clear, there may be a bit of “storming” before the group establishes norms and becomes productive. Adding additional participants for no clear reason will only make the process more complex and may produce negative results.

Inviting the participants via e-mail has become increasingly common across business and industry. Software programs like Microsoft Outlook allow you to initiate a meeting request and receive an “accept” or “decline” response that makes the invitation process organized and straightforward. Reliance on a software program, however, may not be enough to encourage and ensure participation. A reminder on the individual’s computer may go off fifteen minutes prior to the meeting, but if they are away from their computer or if Outlook is not running, the reminder will go unseen and unheard. A reminder e-mail on the day of the meeting,

often early in the morning, can serve as a personal effort to highlight the activities of the day.

If you are the person responsible for the room reservation, confirm the reservation a week before the meeting and again the day before the meeting. Redundancy in the confirmation process can help eliminate **double-booking**²⁰ a room, where two meetings are scheduled at the same time. If technology is required at the meeting, such as a microphone, conference telephone, or laptop and projector, make sure you confirm their reservation at the same time as you confirm the meeting room reservation. Always personally inspect the room and test these systems prior to the meeting. There is nothing more embarrassing than introducing a high-profile speaker, such as the company president, and then finding that the PowerPoint projector is not working properly.

Conducting the Meeting

The world is a stage and a meeting is a performance, the same as an interview or speech presentation. Each member has a part to perform and they should each be aware of their roles and responsibilities prior to the meeting. Everyone is a member of the group, ranging from new members to full members. If you can reduce or eliminate the storming stage, all the better. A clearly defined agenda can be a productive tool for this effort.

People may know each other by role or title but may not be familiar with each other. Brief introductions can serve to establish identity, credibility, and help the group transition to performance. The purpose of the meeting should be clearly stated, and if there are rules or guidelines that require a specific protocol, they should be introduced.

Mary Ellen Guffey Guffey, M. (2007). *Essentials of business communication* (7th ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson/Wadsworth. provides a useful participant checklist that is adapted here for our use:

- Arrive on time and stay until the meeting adjourns (unless there are prior arrangements).
- Leave the meeting only for established breaks or emergencies.
- Be prepared and have everything you need on hand.
- Turn off cell phones and personal digital assistants.
- Follow the established protocol for turn taking.
- Respect time limits.
- Demonstrate professionalism in your verbal and nonverbal interactions.

20. Misunderstanding in which two meetings are scheduled at the same time in the same place.

- Communicate interest and stay engaged in the discussion.
- Avoid tangents and side discussions.
- Respect space and don't place your notebook or papers all around you.
- Clean up after yourself.
- Engage in polite conversation after the conclusion.

If you are cast in the role of meeting leader, you may need to facilitate the discussion and address conflict. The agenda serves as your guide and you may need to redirect the discussion to the topic, but always demonstrate respect for each and every member. You may also need to intervene if a point has reached a stalemate in terms of conflict (this text offers specific guidelines for managing interpersonal conflict that apply here).

There has been quite a discussion on the role of seating arrangements in meeting within the field of business communication. Generally, a table that is square, rectangular, or U-shaped has a fixed point at which the attention is directed, often referred to as the head of the table. This space is often associated with power, status, and hierarchy and may play an important role in the flow of interactions across the meeting. If information is to be distributed and presented from administration to managers, for example, a table with a clear focal point for the head or CEO may be indicated. Tables that are round, or tables arranged in a circular pattern, allow for a more egalitarian model of interaction, reducing the hierarchical aspects while reinforcing the clear line of sight among all participants. If a meeting requires intense interaction and collaboration, generally a round table or a circular pattern is indicated.

Some meetings do not call for a table but rather rows of seats all facing toward the speaker; you probably recognize this arrangement from many class lectures you have attended. For relatively formal meetings in which information is being delivered to a large number of listeners and little interaction is desired, seating in rows is an efficient use of space.

Transitions are often the hardest part of any meeting. Facilitating the transition from one topic to the next may require you to create links between each point. You can specifically note the next point on the agenda and verbally introduce the next speaker or person responsible for the content area. Once the meeting has accomplished its goals in the established time frame, it is time to facilitate the transition to a conclusion. You may conclude by summarizing what has been discussed or decided and what actions the group members are to take as a result of the meeting. If there is a clear purpose for holding a subsequent meeting, discuss the time and date and specifically note assignments for next time.

Feedback is an important part of any communication interaction. Minutes are a written document that serves to record the interaction and can provide an opportunity for clarification. Minutes often appear as the agenda with notes in relation to actions taken during the meeting or specific indications of who is responsible for what before the next meeting. In many organizations, minutes of the meeting are tentative, like a rough draft, until they are approved by the members of the group or committee. Normally minutes are sent within a week of the meeting if it is a monthly event and more quickly if the need to meet more frequently has been determined. If your organization does not call for minutes, you can still benefit by reviewing your notes after a meeting and comparing them with those of others to make sure you understood what was discussed and did not miss—or misinterpret—any key information.

How to Run an Effective Meeting

[\(click to see video\)](#)

While this video may show some exaggerated bad meetings, it gives tips on how to make running a meeting most effective.

Using Technology to Facilitate Meetings

Given the widespread availability and increasingly low cost of electronic communication, technologies that once served to bring people together across continents and time zones are now also serving people in the same geographic area. Rather than traveling (by plane, car, or even elevator within the same building) to a central point for a face-to-face interaction, busy and cost-conscious professionals often choose to see and hear each other via one of many different electronic interface technologies. It is important to be aware of the dimensions of nonverbal communication that are lost in a virtual meeting compared to an in-person meeting. Nevertheless, these technologies are a boon to today's business organizations, and knowing how to use them is a key skill for all job seekers. We will discuss the technologies by category, beginning with audio-only, then audio-visual, and finally social media.

Audio-Only Interactions

The simplest form of audio-only interaction is, of course, a telephone call. Chances are that you have been using the phone all your life, yet did you know that some executives hire professional voice coaches to help them increase their effectiveness in phone communication? When you stop to think about it, we use a great many audio-only modes of communication, ranging from phone calls and voice-activated telephone menus to radio interviews, public address systems, dictation recording

systems, and computer voice recognition technology. The importance of audio communication in the business world has increased with the availability of conference calls, web conferences, and voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) communications.

Your voice has qualities that cannot be communicated in written form, and you can use these qualities to your advantage as you interact with colleagues. If you are sending a general informative message to all employees, an e-mail may serve you well, but if you are congratulating one employee on receiving an industry award, your voice as the channel carries your enthusiasm.

Take care to pay attention to your **pronunciation**²¹ of words, stating them correctly in normal ways, and avoiding words that you are not comfortable with as you may mispronounce them. Mispronunciation can have a negative impact on your reputation or perceived credibility. Instead of using complicated words that may cause you to stumble, choose a simple phrase if you can or learn to pronounce the word correctly before you use it in a formal interactive setting.

Your voice quality, volume, and pitch also influence how your spoken words are interpreted. **Quality**²² often refers to emotional tone of your voice, from happy and enthusiastic to serious or even sad. In most business situations, it is appropriate to speak with some level of formality yet avoid sounding stilted or arrogant. Your **volume**²³ (the loudness of your voice) should be normal, but do make sure your listeners can hear you. In some situations, you may be using a directional microphone that only amplifies your voice signal if you speak directly into it.

If your audience includes English learners, remember that speaking louder (i.e., shouting) does not help them to understand you any better than speaking in a normal tone. Your word choices will make a much more significant impact when communicating across cultures; strive to use direct sentences and avoid figures of speech that do not translate literally.

Pitch²⁴ refers to the frequency, high or low, of your voice. A pleasant, natural voice will have some variation in pitch. A speaker with a flat pitch, or a monotone (one-tone) voice, is often interpreted as being bored and often bores his or her listeners.

21. The way a word or phrase sounds when stated orally.

22. Emotional tone of one's voice.

23. Loudness or softness of one's voice.

24. Frequency, high or low, of one's voice.

If you are leaving a voice mail, state all the relevant information in concise, clear terms, making sure to speak slowly; don't forget to include your contact information, even if you think the person already knows your phone number. Imagine you were writing down your phone number as you recite it and you will be better able to record it at a "listener-friendly" speed. Don't leave a long, rambling

voice mail message. You may later wish you had said less, and the more content you provide the more you increase the possibility for misunderstandings without your being present for clarification.

Audio-Visual Interactions

Rather than call each other, we often call and interact in both audio and visual ways via the Internet. There are several ways to interface via audio and video, and new technologies in this area are being invented all the time. For example, VoIP software allows the participants to see and hear each other across time and distance with one-on-one calls and video conferencing. The audio portion of the call comes through a headset, and the callers see each other on their computer monitors, as if they were being broadcast on television. This form of audio-visual communication is quickly becoming a low- or no-cost business tool for interaction.

If you are going to interact via audio and visual signals, make sure you are prepared. Appropriate dress, setting, and attitude are all required. The integration of a visual signal to the traditional phone call means that nonverbal gestures can now be observed in real time and can both aid and detract from the message.

If you are unfamiliar with the technology, practice with it before your actual business interaction. Try out the features with a friend and know where to find and access the information. If the call doesn't go as planned, or the signal isn't what you expected or experienced in the past, keep a good attitude and try again.

Social Media

Online communities, forums, blogs, tweets, cloud computing, and avatar-activated environments are some of the continually developing means of social media being harnessed by the business world. The Internet is increasingly promoting tools and platforms for people to interact. From bulletin boards that resemble the FreeNet posts of years past, to interactive environments like Second Life, people are increasingly representing and interpreting themselves online.

Humans seek interaction, and this has led to new ways to market, advertise, and interact; however, caution is warranted when engaging in social media online. When you use these media, remember a few simple cautions:

1. Not everything is as it appears. The individuals on the forum may not all be who they represent themselves to be.

2. The words you write and the images you send, regardless of how much you trust the recipient, may become public and can remain online forever.
3. Always consider what you access and what you post and how it represents you and your employer, even if you think others cannot know where you work or who you are.
4. Be aware that Internet service providers (ISPs) are required by law to archive information concerning the use and traffic of information that can become available under subpoena.

Forums²⁵ are often theme-based websites that gather a community of individuals dedicated to a common interest. From owner-enthusiast websites that celebrate the new Mini Cooper, where owners discuss modifications and sell parts to each other, to forums that emphasize a viewpoint, such as the Life After the Oil Crash (LATOC) discussion board, affectionately called doomers, people come together to compare notes around areas of interest.

Professional networking sites²⁶ such as LinkedIn allow people to link to, and interact with, others who work in their industry or related ones. More general social media sites include MySpace and Facebook, which also present threaded discussions and dynamic interfaces with groups that may or may not be limited to those that user intends. Interactive writing platforms such as blogs, wikis, and cloud computing involve having common documents stored on the Internet, which can be accessed from multiple sites at once, further facilitating the interaction.

Blogs²⁷ are Web pages with periodic posts that may or may not feature feedback responses from readers. **Wikis**²⁸ are collaborations on web content that are created and edited by users. **Cloud computing**²⁹ involves secure access of files from anywhere as information is stored remotely. Somewhere between a **social networking site**³⁰, where people gather virtually to interact, and a computer game lies the genre of avatar-activated virtual worlds such as Second Life. In these environments, users can meet others and make friends, participate in activities, and create and trade virtual property and services.

Business and industry organizations may also incorporate posts and threaded discussions but often under a password-protected design on a company's intranet or other limited-access platform. Employees may use their business-provided computer equipment to access sites that are not business related (if not specifically blocked), but all information associated with each business's computer is subject to inspection, archival, and supervision.

Every computer is assigned an Internet protocol or IP address. The IP address can be specifically traced back to the original user, or at least to the computer itself and

25. Theme-based websites that gather a community of individuals dedicated to a common interest.
26. A site that allows people to link to and interact with others who work in their industry or related ones.
27. Web pages with periodic posts that may or may not feature feedback responses from readers.
28. Collaborations on web content that are created and edited by users.
29. Involves secure access of files from anywhere as information is stored remotely.
30. A site where people gather virtually to interact.

to who is responsible for its use. From an e-mail via one of the free sites (e.g., Juno, Google's Gmail, or Yahoo! Mail) to cloud computing and wikis, your movements across the web leave clear "footprints."

Whether you maintain a personal web page or a blog or engage with peers and colleagues via Twitter, take care when considering what personal information to make public. Privacy is an increasing issue online and your safety is a priority. Always represent yourself and your organization with professionalism, knowing that what you search for and how you use your business computer can and often is subject to inspection.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Meetings require planning, appropriate conduction of the meeting, choice of appropriate technology, and understanding of organizational communication to enhance their success.
- Forming groups fulfills many human needs, such as the need for affiliation, affection, and control; individuals also need to cooperate in groups to fulfill basic survival needs.
- Primary groups are those groups that meet all or most of our needs. Secondary groups are those that meet some but not all of our needs.
- A group includes at least three people. Groups and their individual members come together and grow apart in predictable patterns. This is called the group development stages, which include forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Groups have norms, which can change over time.
- Each group member has a life cycle that defines their role as they enter and exit the group.
- There are a number of negative and positive roles that group members can play within a group.

EXERCISES

1. Take notes in one of your classes as if they were the official minutes of a meeting. Does the class “meeting” have a purpose? What preparations were made and what technology was used? Is there a follow-up or a plan for the next class meeting? Compare your notes with another student to see if you understood all the information conveyed in the class.
2. Collaborate with one or more classmates and contribute to a computing cloud or a wiki. What was the activity like? Did you learn new information that you would not have learned by studying individually?
3. Make an audio recording of your voice and listen to it. Are there aspects of your voice quality, pronunciation, or delivery style that you would like to improve? Practice daily and make more recordings until you notice improvement.

7.4 Chapter Summary and Case

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Part of our ability to be successful at work depends on our ability to work in groups.
- A primary group is one that meets most, if not all, of your needs.
- Secondary groups may meet some, but not all, of your needs. Secondary groups are normally those found in the workplace, while our family and friends might be considered a primary group.
- A group consists of at least three people.
- Group lifecycle patterns refer to the process or stages of group development.
- There are five stages to the group development process, which include forming, norming, storming, performing, and adjourning.
- Within each of the stages, group members have a variety of roles, which include potential member, new member, full member, divergent member, marginal member, and an ex-member.
- You can take on a variety of roles when working with a group. These roles can be positive or negative and rely on your emotional intelligence skills to make sure they are positive.
- Meetings require planning, choice of appropriate technology, and understanding of organizational communication.
- Groups have norms, which can change over time.
- There are a number of negative and positive roles that group members can play within a group to enhance the success of the meeting. Meetings require planning, appropriate conduct of the meeting, and choice of appropriate technology to enhance its success.

CHAPTER CASE

Assume you have been put in charge of a new task force to determine the cause of lost sales in the Western region of your plastics manufacturing firm. As leader of the task force, it is your job to schedule and run effective meetings. The outcome of the meetings will be a report that includes research and possible reasons and solutions for the decline in sales. On your task force will be representatives from the marketing, accounting, and manufacturing departments. Traditionally, your marketing team and manufacturing team have conflicting goals, and you are concerned about this as an issue in the meeting. Because you only have time to meet three times, you know the meetings need to be effective to complete the task at hand.

1. Write an agenda for your first meeting.
2. Discuss the phases of the group development process your team will likely go through.
3. As the team leader, you are concerned about personality conflicts that may occur during the storming phase. What are some strategies you can use to reduce or eliminate any issues?