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Oct. 23, 2008
LEAD 638
Team Reflection

To begin this reflection on how our regional group is functioning, I think it would be helpful to state my understanding of the purpose of the regional groups. I see my regional group primarily as a place to connect, get rejuvenated and inspired, and to learn from each other. Since our group members are all still fairly new to the program, most of us are still working on courses and have not yet made much progress on competencies. I think the next year and a half or so will see a transition in our regional group purpose from cheering and encouraging to more planned learning and presenting to each other. That said, I will next consider our group interaction and work from three theories or perspectives: group roles (Ginnett, 1990), group cohesion (Alderfer, 1977), and organizational shells (Hackman and Ginnett, 1993).

Ginnett (1990) suggested that within teams, people may occupy numerous goals as the situation changes. This is definitely true within our group. We take turns being the person to initiate the meeting and remind everyone to show up. We rotate the responsibilities of chairing the meeting, hosting the Skype call, offering worship and prayer, and taking the minutes. Granted, there are a few people who gravitate more to one task more often, but we try to share the responsibilities around. I think that Brenda and I tend to gravitate towards task leadership roles, while David, Collette and Bill focus more on relationship leadership roles. But even this is just a slight leaning, as we all have played those two types of leadership roles in our meetings and online conversations.

David is particularly strong in the guiding and gatekeeping roles to keep the group on track and make sure that everyone is heard. Brenda is good at encouraging and initiating. Bill often evaluates and asks questions to help us think of alternatives. Collette is good at asking questions, summarizes, and keeps us on track in both task and relationship roles. I think that we share the task and relationship roles well.

I don't see any evidence of the dysfunctional roles in our group, nor can I think of any examples of role conflict. We are all fairly straightforward and up front with each other, and I appreciate the openness. If there is any role ambiguity, usually the person who is wondering about roles takes the initiative to organize us and assign out the various roles for the next meeting.

Next, group cohesion is another important part of group interaction (Alderfer, 1977). One evidence of our group's cohesiveness is that we don't stop at the minimum required seven meetings a year. In addition to our monthly meetings, we also have an online space where we interact and share resources and thoughts. Some weeks this space is more active than others, but it gives us a consistent place to "hang out" together and record our thinking over an extended period of time. While one might think that our strong cohesiveness would make us wall ourselves in, we were open to adding new members in our second summer roundtable, and we have added those members and adjusted our interaction and technology tools to accommodate the growth.

Our cohesiveness may be a challenge to us due to the danger of group think. While I don't see any evidence yet of group think, it may be useful for us to encourage everyone to take a turn at being a "critical evaluator". When making decisions, we could take a little longer to make sure that all sides and perspectives have been heard. Since our

work is more individually task oriented, it seems that there is enough diversity of opinion and method to avoid group think in our regional group.

Finally, the concept of organizational shells (Hackman and Ginnett 1986, 1993) may apply to our regional group. One could argue that the industry shell in our case includes the leadership contexts in which we work. The organization is our Andrews University Leadership Program, and the group formation came out of the 2007 cohort. The four critical factors for team design come through these shells. The task has come fairly clearly from the Leadership program, as we have a rubric to guide the interaction in our regional group, as well as a rubric for our competencies that requires group interaction. Most of the norms we were allowed to establish for ourselves, and we have developed quite particular norms for how we function both in our asynchronous space and in our synchronous meetings. Everyone had input into these norms, except the new members. Since I'm not in the international subgroup where our new members joined, I don't yet have a sense if the norms need to be adjusted for the new members. I suspect that the strong leadership in that subgroup will take care of whatever is necessary to be adjusted. Our boundaries are defined by the Leadership Program of having only 7 members per group, and we all bring our own boundaries of available time and resources to our contributions to the group. My sense is that we are all fairly comfortable with the boundaries in our group. Finally, I do believe we are a great example of a self-managing group. We share the load, the leadership, and the following. We take turns and are willing to adjust and work towards conditions for the success of our group.

As our groups begin to spend more time on the competencies, I believe that the group leadership foundations we have laid in the first year and a half will make it

appropriately easy for us to adjust and adapt to the needs of the group members as we move towards graduation.

References

(Note: the Hackman and Ginnett reference from the textbook appears to be incorrect, so I wasn't able to track it down and list it here.)

Alderfer, C. P. (1977). Group and intergroup relations. In J. R. Hackman & J. L. Suttle (Eds.), *Improving life at work.* Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear.

Ginnett, R. (1990). Airline cockpit crew. In J. R. Hackman (Ed.), *Groups that work (and those that don't).* San Francisco: CA: Jossey-Bass.