

Communication skills

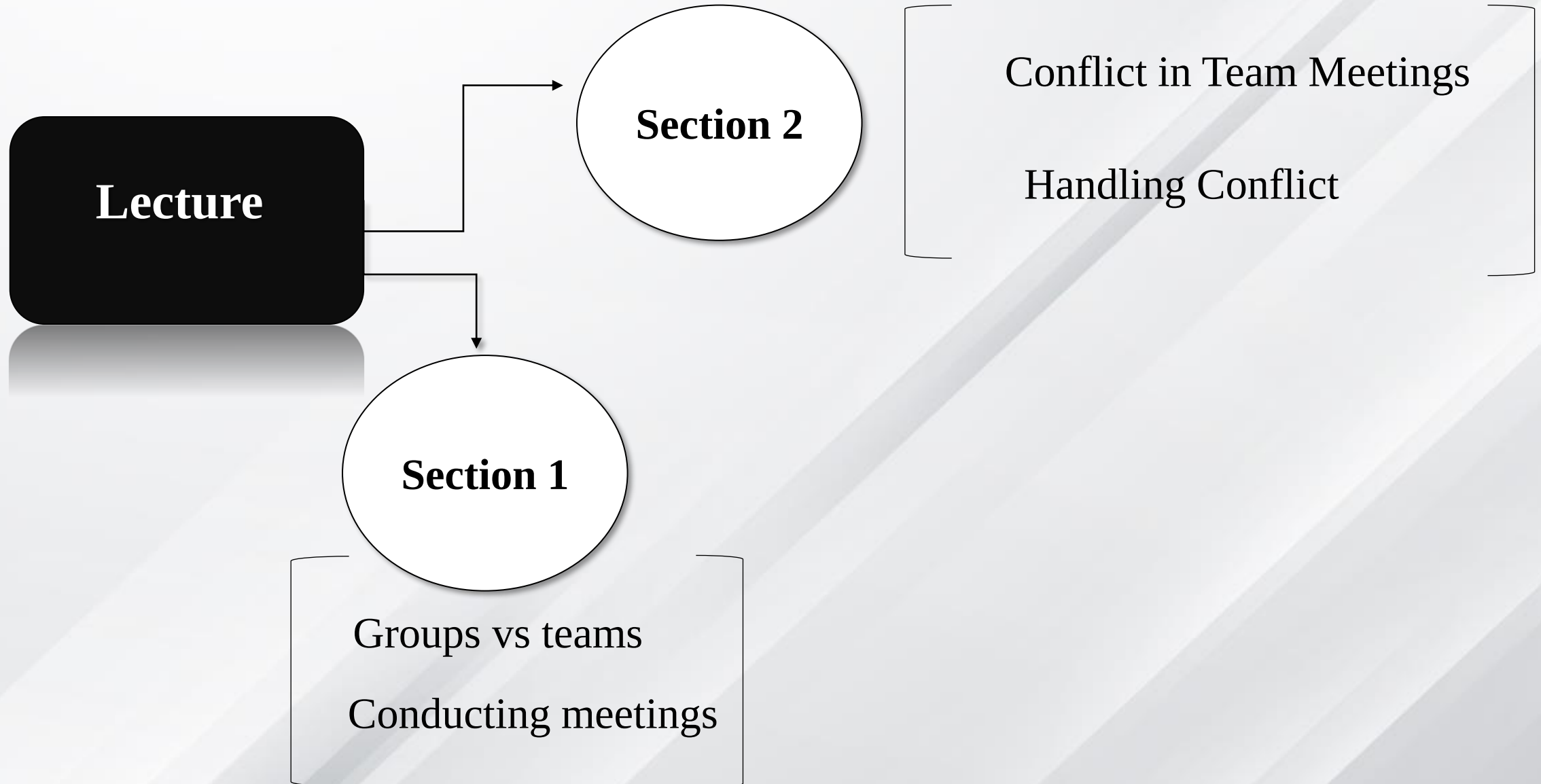
CMM201

Prepared by Dr. Merna Emad

Meetings

Lecture 9





Section One

Groups vs teams

Groups vs teams

Is there a difference between groups and teams? Although executives and managers often use these terms interchangeably, their definitions do differ. For those seeking professional excellence, understanding this difference is essential.

Definition of group

Two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person.

Definition of a team

A team is defined as a group in which members share leadership responsibility for creating a team identity, achieving mutually defined goals, and fostering innovative thinking.

Groups vs teams

This definition highlights four key differences between groups and teams.

First, unlike group members, team members share leadership responsibilities. There may be one team member who has a leadership title such as manager, vice president, or coach, but all team members demonstrate leadership when it comes to defining goals, making decisions, and implementing ideas.

Second, team members share an identity. They refer to their team as “us” and “we,” as opposed to “the group” or “them.”

Third, group members work toward common goals, while team members not only work toward common goals but also help define what those goals will be.

Finally, teams strive for innovation.

Conducting Meetings

Conducting Meetings

According to an old adage, groups outperform individuals, and teams outperform groups.

If you wish to achieve professional excellence in the workplace, you must learn to transform your groups into teams. Effective communication is essential for this transformation.

What makes meeting effective?

For meetings to run effectively, a few basics must always be considered. These basics include

The meeting environment

The meeting participants

The meeting topics

Conducting Meetings

Meeting Environment

What is a meeting environment?

The meeting environment is as much a part of the communication that occurs as the words that are said. Unfortunately, despite the importance of the meeting environment, most people spend little time thinking about it when they plan their meetings.

It includes both

The time of the meeting

The location of the meeting

Conducting Meetings

The time of the Meeting

If you wish to create an effective meeting environment, what factors should be considered?

First, you must consider the time. Time of day, Time of week, And time of year can all influence communication.

When selecting meeting times, be aware of differences in team members' schedules. If team members work different shifts with different days off, meeting times should be varied.

For
example

if half the team works from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and the other half from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., holding every meeting at 9:00 a.m. would repeatedly inconvenience the same half of the team. When team members work varied schedules, there is no ideal time to meet. Yet alternating the meetings between shifts shows that all team members are valued and respected, which positively impacts communication interactions.

Conducting Meetings

The Location of the Meeting

Location is also an important component in creating a positive meeting environment. In fact, you should consider the convenience, aesthetics, and comfort of the location.

When selecting a meeting location, you should also consider aesthetics and comfort. Many leaders get in the habit of holding all their meetings in the same room.

For
example

there is only one conference room in our building, so a lot of meetings are held there. The problem is that the conference room has an extremely long and narrow table. When sitting at the table, team members can't see one another, making it very difficult to hold discussions or brainstorming sessions. Further, the room is very dull and uninspired, with no windows and poor lighting. Fortunately, there is another room two floors down that has movable tables, excellent lighting, and a great view outside the window.

Conducting Meetings

Meeting Topics (Agenda)

What is a meeting Agenda?

An agenda is a guide or an overview of the topics that will be covered during the meeting. An agenda can be simple or complex.

Why should Agendas be distributed several days in advance of the meeting?

This will allow team members to comment on the agenda items and give the leader time to revise the agenda if necessary.

It will also give team members time to think about issues in advance of the meeting. If you'd like the participants to brainstorm ideas or share information, the agenda is a valuable preparation tool for team members.

Noting the allotted time for each topic also helps the leader determine which topics and how many can be covered in any given meeting. Leaders with professional excellence prioritize agenda items.

Conducting Meetings

Meeting Topics (Agenda)

Meeting Agenda content

Heading: Should include date, time, and location. May include a list of participants.

I. Welcome/opening

The leader should always orient the team and focus the meeting during the opening.

II. Approve minutes from the previous meeting

Minutes are a written record of the meeting.

III. Specific points to be discussed

The majority of the agenda will be a list of the specific items that will be covered during the meeting. Beside each item, state who will lead the discussion and/or report on this item. It is also wise to include the estimated time it should take to cover each item.

Conducting Meetings

Meeting Topics (Agenda)

Meeting Agenda content

IV. Old business

Allow time for the team to discuss items from previous meetings that may still be unresolved.

V. New business

Minutes are Allow time for the team to discuss any new items that may have come up after the agenda was finalized or during the meeting itself.
written record of the meeting.

VI. Arrangement of the next meeting

Summarize any assignments that must be completed by the next meeting. Also make certain to discuss the time and location of the next meeting.

VII. Closing

Always provide some sort of closing statement.

Conducting Meetings

Meeting Participants

When it comes to planning meetings, you should ask yourself two important questions.

First, who should be at this meeting? Determining the participants in a meeting should not be based on office politics. Leaders with professional excellence avoid the trap of inviting a representative of each department in order to be politically correct. Invite people who can contribute to the purpose of the meeting. Take time to assess the meeting's purpose, and then determine who can best serve that purpose.

Second, can all key members attend this meeting at this time? If key team members can't be present, the meeting should be rescheduled.

Section two

Conflict in Team Meetings

Conflict in Team Meetings

When was the last time you thought to yourself, “I have a meeting today. I hope it’s full of conflict”?

Chances are you’ve never had those thoughts. In fact, you may have thought the exact opposite on occasion: “I hope my meeting today has no conflict.”

Believe it or not, lack of conflict isn’t a good thing.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Lack of conflict is a strong sign that your group has some serious problems, such as:

Not develop innovative ideas, and never reach “team” status.

The whole purpose for having meetings is to get different people together to share a variety of ideas and develop innovative solutions to problems. If this is to occur, then conflict must occur, too.

If you replace the word conflict with something such as discussion or sharing of ideas, then the phrase sounds more appealing:

“I hope my meeting today is full of discussion and sharing of ideas.” To better understand the need for conflict in meetings and strategies for facilitating productive conflict, let’s explore each area in more detail.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Need for Conflict

As groups develop into teams, some naïve leaders think that a positive byproduct of this transformation will be a lack of conflict. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you're part of a group that is not experiencing conflict, chances are you're part of either a groupthink or a meeting think situation.

Groupthink

Groupthink is the tendency of highly cohesive groups to suspend critical thinking and make faulty decisions.

Causes of Groupthink.

For groupthink to occur, several conditions must exist. First, the group must be highly cohesive.

Conflict in Team Meetings

For
example

Causes of Groupthink.

groupthink is more likely to occur if the group functions in isolation, is very homogeneous, lacks norms for critically analyzing information, and/or is dealing with high stress threats. In addition, these groups are often headed by a charismatic, directive leader.

Because of the strong desire to maintain the cohesiveness with leader and group, group members begin to self-censor.

No one in the group wants to be the voice of dissent, so members remain silent even though they have doubts or concerns.

If a group member does voice disagreement, “mind guards” jump in and silence the dissent until the dissenting member begins self-censoring. (Just as bodyguards protect the group from physical harm, mind guards protect the group from conflict and dissent.)

Since these groups often function in isolation, they do not receive feedback from the outside. In the end, it appears as if everyone agrees, assumptions go unchallenged, and faulty decisions are made.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Avoid Groupthink.

The way to avoid groupthink is to introduce conflict systematically. Norms should be developed for seeking additional information, testing assumptions. Having the larger group divide into subgroups when brainstorming and/or having the leader withhold his or her thoughts are additional strategies used to reduce groupthink.

False Empowerment.

False empowerment occurs when a leader acts as if he or she plans to involve the group in the decision-making process when, in reality, the leader is going to make the decision regardless of the input received from the group. At first, group members believe they are empowered to make a decision, but in the end this proves to be false. Over time, group members learn that their opinions, ideas, and thoughts are not valued, so they remain silent during meetings. As a result, critical thinking is suspended.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Avoid Groupthink.

Overload

Overload occurs when group members have so much on their plates that they cannot truly concentrate on and engage in the meeting at hand.

While the meeting is occurring, group members are thinking about the 10 other items they have to do that day at work, as well as the list of things they must take care of when they leave work. Being overloaded may also cause members to come to meetings without preparing.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Avoid Groupthink.

Poorly Run Meetings

Poorly run meetings are a third contributor to the meetingthink problem. Poorly run meetings can be the result of some or all of the factors we discussed earlier:

The meeting may be disorganized due to a lack of an agenda. It may be too long and/or include too many topics.

Overtalkers may be dominating the meeting.

The leader may be doing all the talking and failing to do any facilitating.

Regardless of the reason, poorly run meetings result in group members disengaging, which results in poor decision making.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Productive Conflict

By now, you may be convinced that conflict is a necessary part of teams, but you still may not be excited about the idea of engaging in conflict, especially if you've experienced negative, counterproductive conflict in the past. Achieving professional excellence in teams involves the utilization of positive, productive conflict as a valuable resource.

Stages of Team Development

Conflict is present in three of the five stages that make up team development.

Forming

Storming

Norming

Performing

Adjourning

Conflict in Team Meetings

Productive Conflict

Stages of Team Development

Conflict is present in three of the five stages that make up team development.

Forming

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Adjourning

During the forming stage, group members tend to be polite and impersonal as they test the waters.

Conflict appears in the second stage, storming. During the storming stage, members engage in infighting and often clash with the leader.

In the norming stage, the group develops procedures for organizing, giving feedback, and confronting issues.

In the performing stage, the members carry out the duties of the group.

In the final stage, adjourning, the group completes its work, resolves issues, and comes to a close.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Productive Conflict

Stages of Team Development

Conflict is present in three of the five stages that make up team development.

Forming

Storming

Norming

Performing

Adjourning

This is not a linear process. Group members don't march neatly from stage to stage. It's normal for groups to revisit stages and circle through the process repeatedly. The point here is that groups encounter conflict in the storming, norming, and performing stages of development.

If a group is going to become a team, it will encounter conflict in the storming stage, develop productive ways to handle conflict in the norming stage, and utilize the kind of innovative thinking in the performing stage that can come only through productive discussion or conflict.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Handling Conflict

To achieve professional excellence, you must determine the best way to handle conflict so that it's both positive and productive. Every time you are faced with a conflict, you must select one of three modes of conflict resolution:

Flight

Flight occurs when you choose not to engage or deal with a conflict. There are times when this is the appropriate strategy. Some issues are not worth the time or the energy. However, if there is a problem that must be solved or a behavior that must be changed, flight is not the appropriate response and avoidance only makes the problem worse.

Fight

Fight is another alternative for handling conflict. Using the fight approach will require you to engage in some type of confrontation. This approach is also known as a win-lose approach to problem solving.

Unite

Conflict in Team Meetings

Handling Conflict

To achieve professional excellence, you must determine the best way to handle conflict so that it's both positive and productive. Every time you are faced with a conflict, you must select one of three modes of conflict resolution:

Fight

Both parties face off as opponents, and one party will come out the winner, while the other party will come out the loser. Clearly, this approach can have some negative consequences. In fact, the losing party often holds a grudge, which can damage relationships in the long run. However, there are times when an issue is important enough to warrant the fight approach. If handled properly, even conflicts that are solved using the fight approach can be positive.

Unite

Conflict in Team Meetings

Handling Conflict

To achieve professional excellence, you must determine the best way to handle conflict so that it's both positive and productive. Every time you are faced with a conflict, you must select one of three modes of conflict resolution:

Unite

The third mode for conflict resolution is the unite approach, which requires team members to move away from stating positions to exploring interests. The unite approach defines team members as joint problem solvers rather than as adversaries. Instead of approaching the conflict as team member against team member, it becomes the team united against the problem. A position is a demand that includes each person's solution to the problem. Under the unite approach, team members look beneath the surface of each position to see all the interests. Interests are the needs and concerns underlying each position.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Invite Cooperation

Once the problem is stated, invite cooperation.

For example, you might say, “How can we solve this problem together?” By listening, you and the other team members will gain a better understanding of everyone’s perceptions of the issue.

If your team is not familiar with this approach, you may need to guide team members through the process.

Prior to addressing any issues, talk to the team about the benefits of using the unite approach. Have the team imagine themselves on one side of the table, united against whatever issue or problem arises. Emphasize that the unite approach requires effective listening and participation from all team members.

To develop listening and participating as a norm, incorporate the round robin technique.

Conflict in Team Meetings

Invite Cooperation

Once the problem is stated, invite cooperation.

After you've raised the issue and invited cooperation, go around the circle and allow everyone to share his or her perceptions of the issue.

The round robin technique requires members to listen and not interrupt while other team members are speaking. Team members may ask one another clarification questions to improve understanding, but they can't argue for or against positions.

As the team discusses their perceptions of the issue, the underlying interests will become clearer. Only then can the team begin generating options and select the best solution(s).



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Thank You

