

## **Group rules and norms**

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Explicit roles and norms are those that are specifically stated, and typically understood by all involved (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2009). On the contrary, implicit roles and norms are not clearly stated and are often perceived as different by others in the group; even if the other members think the roles and norms should be clearly understood by all (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2009). The explicit and implicit roles and norms of a group depend on the nature of the group. The roles and norms of a classroom group will be different from the roles and norms of a business group; while some probably should overlap. The norms for one cultural group will be different from another cultural group, which may cause some confusion.

I have participated in several groups that have produced and developed science exhibit ideas. Typically a person would be the main facilitator of the group; this is the implicit role of the boss, or the main organization developing the exhibit. The implicit, and sometimes explicit, role of the rest of the group is to contribute thoughts and ideas to the exhibit and process. A typical American implicit norm is that everyone does not talk at the same time, and especially while the facilitator is talking. If a few of the members in the group have a side conversation while the facilitator or someone else is talking, then most often several other members of the group will look at them with a look of “stop talking”. However, all cultures do not have this same implicit norm, and misunderstandings may result in reduced productivity. Another implicit norm that is understood by most is not to highjack the discussion; however, a facilitator might possibly make this an explicit norm at the beginning of the discussion.

Productivity of the group can be motivated through reward, instead of the utilization of sanctions (punishment) to reduce behavior which deviates from the group norm and expectations (Shepperd, 1993). Within our performance group, the facilitators would explicitly explain our goals for the day and what would happen if we meet those goals early. The meetings were held in Sarasota Florida and some of the rewards were to have some free time to be able to spend at the beach. Performance groups would be more productive if the facilitator made the implicit roles and expectations explicit at the beginning of the sessions with a positive focus on productivity rather than sanctioning the negative behavior (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2009; Shepperd, 1993).

This can also be observed within educational classrooms. The implicit norms from the perspective of the teacher and students can vary. The teacher would consider the class to remain quiet while on the phone or talking with another teacher; in contrast the students consider the implicit norm is the liberty talk at these times. When utilizing collaborative groups within educational settings, the roles and expectations of each member, as well as the group as a whole, should be explicitly stated. If the students understand the group is required to utilize understanding, respect, and cooperation within the group, and those who do not follow these expectations can be removed from the group, will allow the students to feel free to share.

Transforming implicit norms and roles into explicit collective understanding will avoid misunderstanding of implicit norm ideas; especially when working with groups of diverse backgrounds.

## **References**

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- Shepperd, J. A. (1993). Productivity loss in performance groups: A motivation analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 113(1), 67-81. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.113.1.67