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TITLE

Group Problem Solving, Goal-Setting and Decision-Making. Pre-Apprenticeship Phase 1 Training.

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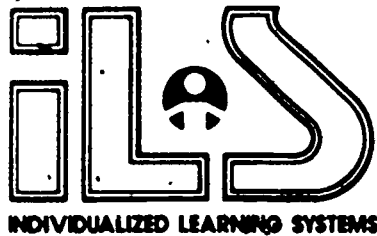
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IDENTIFIERS

ABSTRACT

One of a series of pre-apprenticeship training modules, this self-paced student training module deals with group problem solving, goal setting, and decision making. Included in the module are the following: cover sheet listing module title, goals, and performance indicators; introduction; cover sheet/study guide with directions for module completion; information sheet discussing the 10 steps of problem solving and decision making; self-assessment; assignment; and post assessment. Emphasis of the module is on group problem solving, goal setting, and decision making from the standpoint of their occurrence in the world of work. (Other related pre-apprenticeship phase 1 training modules are available separately--see note.) (MN)

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ED217262

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PHASE 1 TRAINING.

GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING, GOAL-SETTING AND
DECISION-MAKING

Goal:

The student will learn about the process of group problem solving, goal setting and the making and implementation of decisions. He or she will be able to put this learning into practice in the assignments suggested and relate it to the world of work.

Performance Indicators:

The student will read, discuss and answer questions on the 10 steps of problem solving, through to the implementing of decisions. He or she will participate in group assignments and practice the skills in small groups.

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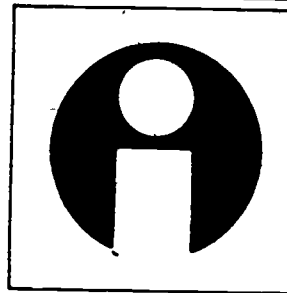
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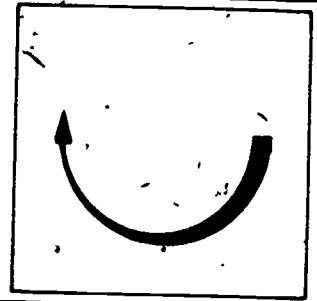
Study Guide



Please check these tasks off as you complete them.

1. Read and discuss, with the rest of your group, the information section.
2. Answer the Self Assessment and compare your answers with those of three other people.
3. Complete, in a group, the Assignments.
4. Complete the Post Assessment and compare your answer to the first question with the Information Section. Continue to the next module.

Information



This is written in the form of an extended example of problem-solving, goal setting and decision-making, within a group. The approach can be used in any situation, for any problem, involving a group of people who are working together.

Step 1 - Define the problem (All problems are problems because there is no immediate clear solution.)

"Even though people have met together several times, there is no strong evidence of group support. This is causing confusion, and some individuals do not know what to expect or what to aim for."

Step 2 - Look at the known facts

a. What is happening?

*There is a reluctance to speak out in the larger group.

*Sometimes individuals have felt criticized by other members in a non-supportive way.

*On two occasions, individuals were blamed by the instructor and other members for causing trouble.

*Sometimes only about six people dominate all the talk.

*The small groups sometimes turn into joke-trading sessions.

*Some people get bored when others are talking about their personal experiences.

b. Who is involved?

*All the members are responsible for the general achievements of the group.

*About two or three people occasionally seem to undermine, by their comments, what is being done.

*The instructor sometimes seems distant.

c. When does the problem occur?

*In all the group meetings.

d. Where does it occur?

*Inside the classroom. There seems to be a different atmosphere at break time.

e. Why has it become a problem?

*Because it conflicts with the aim of the class--to build up group support.

Step 3 - Agree on your goals

- a. To build up group support where individuals can communicate freely and openly without fearing being judged by anyone else.
- b. To use the group to find out about the difficulties and satisfactions of working on a team.
- c. To relate what is being discussed and practiced, to the world of work.

Step 4 - Pool ideas for achieving your main goal without evaluating them

(Either in small groups, or in the main group, contribute and record on newsprint or a chalkboard, ideas as they come in, for solving the problem. It does not matter how different or unusual the ideas are. At this stage, do not evaluate the ideas.)

The problem restated is: how do we build up group support?

1. Make sure everyone speaks each time the group meets.
2. Enforce the rule, one person speaking at a time.
3. People should speak for themselves and not for others and they should say "I" rather than "We."
4. Arrange more social gatherings together.
5. Do away with any evaluations by the instructor.
6. Make people promise they won't repeat personal experiences.
7. Say positive things to people.
8. Give presents to everyone.
9. Sing songs together.
10. Go on a picnic.
11. Plant a garden.

12. Go rafting
13. Take ten minutes in each session to go around the group inviting members to say something starting with, "I like....."
14. Smile and greet people when they first come in.
15. Sit next to someone different each time.
16. Go for your break with different people.
17. Tell the instructor what you think of him or her.
18. Make a film together.
19. Elect a chairperson.
20. Refuse to be bored.
21. Do some manual work together.
22. Construct a house.
23. etc. (Keep going for a least twenty ideas. When you have collected about fifteen suggestions, set a time limit. Keep up the enthusiasm and challenge.)

Step 5 - Look more closely at some of the more interesting and unusual ideas

(The examples given here prove that with almost any ideas there can be valuable leads that guide you towards a solution of the problem.)

a. Tell the instructor what you think of him or her.

*It is important to practice giving positive and negative feedback to people of all ages and races.

*This could help members feel more relaxed, if the instructor participated in everything.

*Either make evaluations open, like in 'giving and receiving praise and blame' or do away with all judgements.

*For group support to happen, there must be a sharing by everyone, including the instructor.

*It is of no use for the instructor to tell the group what to do if she or he does not also demonstrate it.

b. Go rafting together.

*Maybe this is not immediately practical unless someone really wants to arrange it, however, there are plenty of things to be gained from this idea.

*Building up group support involves taking risks, and sometimes that can be uncomfortable.

*It can also be exciting; communicating that excitement to each other could

..help the motivation of the group.

*Everyone has a responsibility to help guide us where we are going and to avoid the worst obstacles.

*If anyone is in trouble, the rest of us will help, throw a line or even dive in. Similarly in the group it is important that we become aware when anyone needs support.

c. Plant a garden

*Again, this might not be the most realistic thing to do but the idea has plenty in it we can learn from.

*A garden takes a long time to flower; we need to be patient in the group.

*A garden needs a lot of preparation and, when it is just planted, it requires extra care; in building group support; it is important that we are sensitive to each others weaknesses and problem areas, especially in the early stages.

*Doing some work together; sharing tools and having a common goal is important; it is the same as building up group support.

Step 6 - Include any other ideas that you think might be helpful

For example #s 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16, 22.

(Decide whether you would have included any others.)

Step 7 - Agree on some guidelines for achieving your goal (Give examples of specific behavior; these are the minimum expected and, of course, members are encouraged to do much more.)

a. It is the responsibility of each person to contribute to the group in the form of ideas, experiences, giving and receiving positive and negative feedback, practicing communication skills and solving any interpersonal conflicts.

Minimum behavior - Each person will speak in the larger group for ten continuous seconds at least once during each discussion.

b. It is the responsibility of each person to attempt to improve the amount and quality of interaction between members and not stick only with his or her close friends.

Minimum behavior - Each person will greet with a smile or words members of the group as they arrive. She or he will speak with at least six different people during each session.

- c. It is the responsibility of each member to speak honestly and directly.
Minimum behavior - Each person will ask follow-up questions of an individual if she or he suspects that member is not communicating honest feelings.
- d. It is important that the build-up is steady and not forced and that each member agrees to watch for anyone who might need extra encouragement or support.
Minimum behavior - If you suspect that another member is upset, ask how he or she feels at the moment in time.
- e. It is the responsibility of each member to help, support and provide a back up for any other person who is trying new things or attempting to change.
Minimum behavior - Give positive feedback if a person genuinely wants to change and is making an effort.
- f. It is important that all people contribute and share (including the instructor and any visitors) to the aims of the group.
Minimum behavior - Check that everyone is in agreement with the aims and be prepared to discuss any dissatisfaction. Also, invite any visitors or non-participants to sit in the circle and join in.
- g. It is the responsibility of each member to try to progress, and to take risks within the protection of the group.
Minimum behavior - Each member will be prepared to share, at the end of each session, what she or he tried new that time. Also he or she will share what she or he wants to achieve in the next session..

Step 8 - Decide how, and, if relevant, in what order you are going to implement your proposed solutions.

The minimum behaviors outlined above will be written and duplicated and at the end of each session members will check whether they witnessed those minimum requirements. There will also be a space for writing any other helpful comments. These will be collected each week by the instructor or an elected member and will be available for anyone in the group to inspect.

Step 9 - How likely do you think the solutions are to succeed?

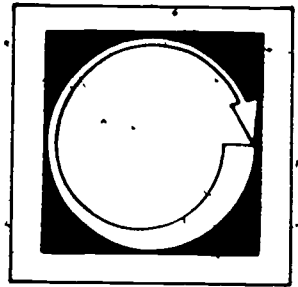
*An excellent chance of overall success.

*It is important that the minimum behaviors are not demanded in too rigid a manner; there should be some flexibility.

Step 10 - Evaluate how successful your decisions were, after putting them into practice.

This is very important; on going evaluations of your attempts to reach your goal should be made at least once a week, probably for only about five minutes at a time. Zero in on any decisions that are causing problems and modify them if necessary.

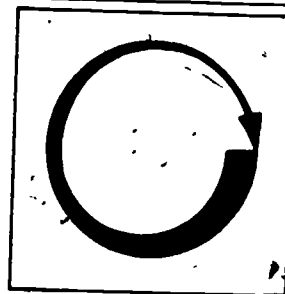
Self Assessment



Read each statement and write a T if the statement is true or an F if the statement is false in the blank to the left of each statement.

1. It is possible to learn how to be good problem solvers.
2. In thinking up solutions, any ideas, however unusual, should be written down.
3. Before you think up solutions it is essential to collect all the relevant known facts about the problem.
4. If you keep asking questions you are likely to arrive at a clear description of the problem.
5. If you are looking for a new answer to a problem, it might be necessary to question the existing rules and guidelines.
6. Decision-making is not complete until you have a plan for implementing the decisions.
7. There could be several situations to the same problems.
8. Problems exist because people do not know clearly what to do.
9. When you have described the problem, it is important to set a goal that people in the group can accept.
10. The final stage of problem solving is the evaluation of the solutions you have tried.

Assignment



All of this work will take place in small groups of up to eight people.

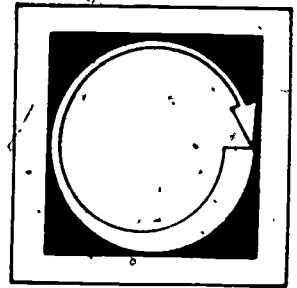
1. One member of the group will record the ideas on a large sheet of newsprint. He or she will write one of the following problems in the center of the paper.
 - a. How do you get hired in a job you really want?
 - b. How do you make a million?
 - c. How do you avoid being bored?
 - d. What would encourage everyone in the group to contribute equally?

Then the recorder will write down as many as possible suggested solutions to the problem. Do not evaluate the ideas. See how many you can collect in ten minutes. Compare your results with those of the other small groups.

2. Think up as many different uses as possible for any of the following:
 - a. a comb
 - b. a shoe
 - c. a dime
3. The instructor will supply some unusual tools or materials and hand them to each group. It is the task of the group to suggest:
 - a. as many possible uses for the objects
 - b. narrow them down to the three most realistic functions
4. Your group is a quality circle in a factory which is in production twenty-four hours every day. There are two problems:
 - a. an increasing number of finished products are being rejected because of poor quality
 - b. there is discontent among employees that they have little choice over which shift they work.

Define the problems. Collect any facts that you think could exist. Go through all the ten steps in implementing your decisions.

● Post Assessment



1. Write out the ten steps in group problem sharing, goal-setting and making and implementing decisions.
2. Write down in one paragraph what you think you have gained from this module.