Working in Groups

Objectives
✓ Analyze what it takes to be a team member
✓ Identify various ways group members contribute
✓ Evaluate different forms of groups or teams

Advance preparation
✓ Review the materials and PowerPoint presentation
✓ Prepare the Zero Sum? activity

Materials needed
✓ Computer and projector
✓ Copies of the Zero Sum? Activity (Attachment 1)
✓ Flip chart
✓ Markers
✓ CD with PowerPoint presentation

Time needed
✓ 1½ hours

Background
This session may be used in conjunction with the lesson on Leading Teams, as it addresses a complementary component of teamwork.

Teams are becoming a popular way to manage business, and in most of the responsibilities we have we are working in teams or groups to accomplish tasks. Families, civic groups, and schools all depend on groups of people to work together. Rarely are organizational goals achieved by individuals working alone.

Being a good team member is just as important as being a good team leader. One must know his or her own strengths, and recognize those of others, to work efficiently and effectively in teams. There are certain elements that make us successful, but there are also natural roles that we fit into. Everyone can learn to be a better team member by developing certain technical skills and personal characteristics.

Interest approach (15 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to come to a consensus on what makes a good team member. This activity works best with small groups of four or five, but it can also work with larger groups.

Steps for activity
1. Give each group a set of markers and two pieces of Post-It flip chart paper.
2. Give each group 5 minutes to come to consensus on a list of characteristics that describe a good team member and write them on a sheet of paper.
3. On the second sheet of paper, have each group draw a picture of what this “super team member” might look like. This should be a fun, light-hearted activity. Allow 5 minutes for the drawing.
Lesson

1. Read John Maxwell’s quote on working together. Have the group discuss what makes it easy and difficult to work in a group. What are the pros and cons? (slide 2)

2. Review objectives for the lesson (slide 3).

3. Use the interest approach activity to engage participants in thinking about what they want in a “good” team member. Follow the steps outlined above (slide 4).

4. After the activity, use the discussion questions to talk with participants about whether their characteristics are realistic (slide 5).

5. The two types of competencies that should guide the selection of group or team members are technical and personal. Ask participants to tell about people they know who would fit into either category (slide 6).

6. There are seven predictors of a team member’s success. Ask if any of these align with the five characteristics the group came up with during the interest approach activity. Have them discuss why these predictors might be important (slide 7).

7. These are some typical roles individuals might naturally fall into (slide 8-16).

8. Discuss the benefits of using the role assignment with participants (slide 9).

9. Discuss the three main roles (slide 10).

10. Allow participants to discuss what they believe “task roles” are and give examples of when a task role member would be helpful, or not (slides 11-12).

11. Use the same question to discuss “maintenance roles” (slides 13-14).

12. The “individual role” tends to be perceived negatively. Have participants discuss what they see as positives about this type of role (slides 15-16).

13. Some group members do not have a positive effect on the work of the group. These are the problem members. Ask participants what they think are effective ways of dealing with problem members (slide 17).

14. There are three basic types of teams (slide 18).

15. Problem resolution teams are usually set up to solve a problem, address a concern, or identify an issue. They are usually on-going teams. An example is the Centers for Disease Control (slide 19).

16. Creative teams are designed to devise plans, be innovative, and be on the cutting edge. They explore possibilities and alternatives. An example is the HBO programming team (slide 20).

17. A tactical team knows the plan inside out and its goal is to execute the plan. An example is a sports team or military team (slide 21).
18. Teams are often combinations of these three types, either because there is a shortage of individuals to serve on teams or because the main issue is specific. An example is a task force developed to work on a specific issue that might also need to devise and adhere to a plan while creatively working with limited resources (slide 22).

19. What does it take to be successful? There are four main criteria beyond simply completing goals. Review them with participants; discuss whether teams can still be successful even if their goal or objective was not completed (slides 23-24).

20. Review the lesson (slide 25).

21. Prepare participants for their closing activity—Zero Sum? Specific directions are found on Attachments 1 and 2. This activity will allow participants to experience team member roles and working together.

**Application**

Participants will apply what they have learned by seeking opportunities to be on teams or work in groups. Understanding the importance of team member competence, but also recognizing the roles individuals may naturally fit into, will help them be better team members. After this session, participants should feel better prepared to work in teams and let go of the “I like to work alone” mentality.

**Reference**