

INSTRUCTIONS—GROUP DISCUSSION

Purpose: Communicating well is not only giving effective presentations. Though effective presentations are important, even more important is communicating well in group settings because that is where most work is completed. In this exercise, you'll work in a group of 5-6 individuals to resolve several realistic work problems taken from an actual Assessment Center.

Before your group discussion

- Take one copy of the ivory instruction packet. For the practice session, you will have until next class to prepare. For the graded session, you will have 20 minutes to prepare. Read through this information carefully.
- At the top of the hour, Tim will lead you to the meeting room where the group discussion will take place.

There is to be absolutely no discussion before or after the group discussion. Any discussion before this exercise will be considered cheating.

After the group discussion

- Take 6 copies of the green peer evaluation sheet. Fill out one of these sheets for each group member (do not evaluate yourself). Your individual responses are completely confidential.
- Place your buff instruction packet, along with your green peer evaluation sheets, in one of the envelopes on the table. Write your name on the envelope. Place the envelope in the box.
- Take a blue self-evaluation packet to be completed on your own. **It is strongly recommended that you complete this after the practice session so as to maximize your chances of doing well in the graded session.**

KROSS PHARMACEUTICALS
Management Problems Group Discussion—PRACTICE

--INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANT--

For this exercise, you will assume the role of a member of a special committee of district managers at Kross Pharmaceuticals, a large pharmaceutical company. This committee was formed by upper management to respond to complex problems that are either not directly covered by policy or seem to possibly merit a policy exception. Although the committee functions only in an advisory or consulting role, the company tries to implement its ideas and abide by its suggestions.

When upper management refers problems to the committee, they want the committee to give them operational suggestions. They have already considered getting advice from the various staff functions and do not want responses such as “Seek guidance from Human Relations” or “Get an opinion from the legal department.”

The composition of the committee changes every other month. Next class, you will meet with the other new committee members to discuss some problems. The process set up by the company is as follows:

1. Each committee member first reviews the problems privately and makes independent and individual recommendations for the solution of each.
2. During the meeting the committee must reach a consensus on both the best solution and supporting rationale to each problem. How this is done is entirely up to the committee members, but management is interested in a consensus decision and not a majority opinion achieved by voting.
3. At the start of the meeting you will be asked to spend one minute (you will be evaluated on conciseness, so spend **no more** than one minute!) addressing the group. During your preparation, you need to consider what you wish to say to the group.

You will have until next class to review the problems, and to develop your own solutions with supporting rationale. Do not discuss this exercise, or prepare, with anyone else—that would defeat the purpose of the practice session.

You will then participate in a 45-minute committee meeting, the primary purpose of which is to develop the best possible solutions to the problems.

Following the meeting you will complete a brief peer evaluation form (green form) for each of your committee members. There is also a self-evaluation form (blue form), that you will complete on your own time.

When you are finished, please place problems #1-#2, your solutions and supporting rationale, and the green peer evaluations back into this envelope. Place this envelope in the box marked with a blue ‘X’ on the table at the front of the room before you leave. Take the blue self-evaluation form with you and complete it at your leisure. You may find it helpful in understanding your performance during the group discussion, and how your performance potential in such situations might be further developed.

Problem #1

The company has no specific policy regarding facial hair. Tom, a rep with a little more than a year's experience and an average sales record, has grown a very long and ragged beard that detracts significantly from his appearance. His hobby is playing bass in an amateur bluegrass band, and he feels that a ragged beard is an important part of the act. Tom says his beard is a personal fashion statement that has to do with his individual freedom.

There have been numerous complaints about Tom's appearance from both doctors and pharmacists. The manager has talked to him on numerous occasions about the impact his appearance could have on his sales, but he refuses to shave the beard. The manager has also contacted the legal department about the issue, but they refuse to become involved. They say the company cannot create a policy for one person and further state that the situation is too touchy for legal action.

The manager is concerned about Tom's decreasing sales as well as the professional image and credibility of the sales force. Tom says his sales decrease is the result of an HMO formulary situation and has nothing to do with his beard. However, sales in the other territories in the district are significantly better than they were last year.

How should this situation be handled?

Problem #2

Martha is a region account manager (RAM) who is responsible for a number of major HMO's. She has just informed her manager that she will no longer call on one of her most important accounts. She indicated that the chief pharmacist has always made comments with sexual innuendoes, but up to this point she has been able to ignore them or brush them off in a joking manner. Lately however, he has become more aggressive and has stated that unless he receives "more personalized attention" he will have two products removed from the HMO formulary and make sure that another loses its "preferred" status. He also stated that any mention of this situation would have the same result. Martha realizes that he could do this without raising suspicions. Competitors are constantly making proposals that he could legitimately accept. In fact it probably seems strange that all three of Martha's products have "preferred" status.

Although the HMO is very critical to the company's success in the district, Martha says she has no intention of protecting her business in this manner and has made it clear that she is not going back to the HMO. When she was a rep, there were three important physicians in her territory that she would not call on for similar reasons.

The manager has never observed this type of activity and the pharmacist is highly respected among his peers. The competitor's RAM's are almost exclusively male, and the HMO is too far from another male RAM to transfer the account to him.

How should the situation be handled?

Group Discussion Feedback Form (Evaluator)

Participant (person you are evaluating) _____

Evaluator (your name) _____

Note: Complete this form for each person in your discussion. The comments will be fed back to the participant, but the source of them will not (your individual comments will not be identified). Try very hard to complete this form honestly and thoroughly.

List two things that were most impressive about how this person handled the group discussion.

1. _____

2. _____

List two areas where this person could have been more effective in this simulation.

1. _____

2. _____

Rating of student's performance in the group discussion, including introductory remarks:

4=Excellent—no immediate need for development

3=Good—some (minimal) need for development

2=Fair—considerable need for development

1=Poor—critical need for significant development

_____ **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Was the communication style engaging? Did the person communicate in a positive, optimistic manner? Did the remarks suggest mindfulness of the “big picture”? Were the remarks concise?

_____ **LEADERSHIP**

How did the student contribute to the group's ability to solve the problems? Did the student influence or assist others and assume personal responsibility for a group's actions? (Note—you are rating leadership, not whether the student was a good “team player,” here.)

_____ **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

Did the student interact well with others? Did the student respond well to the ideas of others? Did the student respond effectively to disagreement in the group?

_____ **OVERALL PERFORMANCE**

Overall, how did the student perform during this exercise? Was the discussion different as a result of the person's participation? Would you say that the person made an important and constructive contribution to the group?