Team Member Roles

To better understand how groups work, you must understand the kinds of contributions that individuals make to the group. Group members play different “roles” or functions that affect the dynamics and thus the success of the group. In most problem solving groups, these roles can be identified by other group members or themselves. The importance of learning to recognize these roles lies in being able to evaluate contributions to the group and its progress. Members need not take the same role in every meeting or throughout the same meeting; in fact, the more roles a member can play appropriately, the more valuable he/she is as a group member. Following are some of the roles played by group members.

Group Task Roles

- **Clarifier** – Constantly seeks clarification of directions or thoughts expressed by other group members. May help all members have a better understanding of what is being discussed.
- **Elaborator** – Spells out suggestions, provides examples and a rationale for these suggestions.
- **Information/Opinion Giver** – Offers facts, gives opinions or ideas, provides suggestions or information to help group discussion.
- **Initiator** – Suggests or proposes new ideas for solving problems or improving the process of the group discussion.
- **Initiator** – Suggests or proposes new ideas for solving the problems or improving the process of the group.
- **Orienter** – Defines the position of the group with respect to its goals so the group remains on track.
- **Reality Tester** – Examines how practical and workable the ideas are.
- **Summarizer** – Pulls the group’s ideas together and summarizes the major points expressed by the group.

Group Maintenance Roles

- **Compromiser** – Always yielding his/her decisions.
- **Encourager** – Praises and recognizes group members for their contributions; friendly and responsive.
- **Follower** – Goes along with the group; offers few suggestions.
- **Gatekeeper** – Opens channels of communication; keeps discussion of certain topics off the table to prevent distractions from interfering in achieving the goal.
- **Harmonizer** – Mediates differences between group members.
Individual Roles

- **Dominator** – asserts their authority or superiority; works at manipulation of group members.
- **Blocker** – Has negative reactions and is stubbornly resistant to ideas.
- **Anecdoter** – elaborates with great detail about personal experiences.
- **Recognition Seeker** – Work in various ways to draw attention to themselves.
- **Special Interest Pleader** – Speaks for the “small man or business,” the “community or grassroots;” Often cloaking their own bias or agendas.
- **Socialite** – Uses group meetings for socializing.