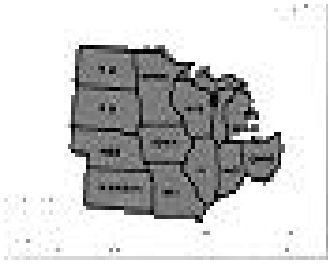
Capacity-Building Skills
For Public Officials



North Central Regional
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BUILDING
A LOCAL TEAM

Developed by
Donna Sweeny Extension Specialist
Dept. of Resource Development
Michigan State University

CAPACITY-BUILDING SKILLS
FOR
PUBLIC OFFICIALS

BUILDING
A LOCAL TEAM

Objectives of this bulletin:

1. To present differing styles of organizations.
2. To discuss methods of decision making.
3. To list the roles and duties of members and Officers on boards and councils.
4. To discuss various principles and qualities Needed in developing effective teams.

While the focus of these bulletins is the public official, the material covered is appropriate for all Extension audiences.

Contents

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1. Introduction

The development of the elected board or commission offers real challenge to those in leadership roles. The frequent changing of members through the election process may have its frustrating side in terms of brief tenures, but it also allows great opportunity. If you didn't like the way your working processes were established the last round, a new election-and, presumably, new faces-allows you to start over in a way that may work more satisfactorily.

The leader with vision can use change as an advantage and restructure the team processes. The first element for making change is an understanding of the possibilities available in working systems. Many boards are structured to function as they do for no other reason than tradition: "We've always done it this way." Successive leaders have not been aware that structural options exist that may offer more advantages than their present style does. Such choices are available in the roles the leader chooses to play in relation to board members, in the kind of philosophy the whole group may hold in relation to the ways in which the board accomplishes its goals, and in the process the board uses to make decisions.

There is also challenge and opportunity in developing a clear understanding of the purposes and duties of the various roles on an elected board. Trouble often comes about among board members when someone steps on another's toes or invades what one sees as his/her territory. Trouble may also develop when a leader or board member fails to do what some others may view, whether correctly or incorrectly, as his/her responsibility. If every member clearly understands the others' roles and responsibilities, many of these problems disappear.

Unfortunately, it is not unusual to observe presumably well-intentioned local officials using organizational methods that are unable to bring about either good results or good feelings from the group. This often happens simply because members lack knowledge of other methods. As a result, these ineffective patterns are repeated term after term. A result often seen in some local communities is that few citizens are willing to run for office because serving on the board is known to be frustrating or unsatisfying.

This final bulletin in the series developed to assist local decision makers will illustrate that there are choices in organizational team styles and in decision making methods. It will present guidelines for effective roles of officers and members, as well as their general responsibilities. It will outline the types of behavior that develop productive, satisfying local teamwork, as well as basic principles necessary to the development and maintenance of effective local organizations.

II. Choosing An Effective Team Style

The choice in team styles for local boards ranges from an extremely autocratic to an extremely democratic style, as well as one in which members have examined the extremes of style and have chosen those qualities best suited to their purposes and goals. Each of these organizational patterns has advantages and disadvantages. There is no right or wrong style for any local board, as long as the style chosen meets its needs in accomplishing the board's goals and purposes. In establishing or adjusting its style, each board or council must consider both its members' human needs-comfortable, personally satisfying opportunities for group interaction and personal goal accomplishment-as well as the more external, formally stated goals of the group-conducting the business of that particular unit of government.

Organizational patterns that are used only because “we've always done it this way" do not necessarily meet human and formal needs in the most productive way. Much of the atmosphere of a board is set by the choice of organizational style. Repeatedly, management studies have shown that when group members are satisfied with the style used in conducting business, their output is higher, the absentee rate lower and attendance more consistent. Clearly, these are benefits that leaders cannot discount when building a local team.

The choice of style for local boards will be strongly influenced by the personal style of their leaders. If your board seems more interested in sticking to the rules, no matter how the members feel, you probably have a highly structured, factually oriented leader. If your meetings generally involve a great deal of productive, free-flowing interaction among members, you probably have a leader who is particularly people oriented. When looking at how things happen on a board, it is almost impossible to separate organizational style from leadership style. With that in mind, let us examine the differences in organizational styles.

1. Autocratic Style

This is the most traditional style of management and is probably the best known. When the organizational style is autocratic, activities are highly formalized. Leaders are accorded great authority, and members have specific and clearly defined contributing but secondary roles in the structure. Tradition generally includes extensive use of standing committees. Strictly interpreted parliamentary procedure,

using Robert's Rules of Order, is commonly employed in meetings. In its most traditional form, the autocratic style is rigidly defined and not easily flexible. Local boards that use this style will find it somewhat difficult to meet emergencies that require flexibility from the usual routine. They can often accomplish a large volume of business with relative efficiency, however.

Conflict between leaders and members is not encouraged or much approved of by leaders who are comfortable with the autocratic organizational style. Because leaders maintain tight rein on the group, they tend to see any potential for conflict as a threat to their authority. There is often a certain attitude of "father/mother knows best" in an autocratic style, so when members accept this behavior, their leaders are allowed extensive latitude to tell members and are not expected to ask much of the time. One negative result of this behavior is that it discourages conflict from coming to the surface. When members care enough to surface conflictive feelings, in spite of the leader's dominating attitude, the resulting pressures often push the conflict into a negative, harmful course.

If you are analyzing your board's style, consider the following positives and negatives in the use of the autocratic style.

Positives:

- It gets business done quickly.
- It can accomplish a lot in a short time.
- Committees run efficiently.
- Each member tends to know his/her role in the group.
- It provides security to members who need authority and structure.
- It allows strong leadership.

Negatives

- It tends to be task oriented at the expense of people considerations.

- It doesn't consider the "why" or the "what if" but only the "how."
- Committee leadership often becomes a selfishly oriented power base, with committee heads striving for leadership in a way that can have negative effects on the best interests of the total group.
- Members may become trapped in certain roles when they are not allowed freedom to change or advance.
- It provides security for those who use it for reinforcement but never challenges them to grow through risk-taking behaviors.
- Strong leadership can, over successive terms., become a dictatorship.
- Conflict tends to be repressed and is often destructive when it does emerge.
- The democratic style of organizational management looks very different.

Democratic style

This style evolved in recent centuries, primarily in what is now called the Western world, as people gradually freed themselves from the domination of kingships in their political structure. They began to realize that they could learn to govern themselves, both nationally and locally. Because the democratic pattern in groups is a far younger style than the autocratic, it has experienced less stability in behavior at times. The process of learning new methods of meeting together to carry out business and accomplish goals has proved not to be simple. On the whole, however, the democratic style is clearly definable and as effective as the autocratic style.

The democratic style, first of all, is people oriented more than task oriented. As Robinson and Clifford say, the organization is formed to meet the needs of its members. (They further state that in the first style described above, the members are there to support the organization, which is amply clear to the perceptive observer.) Realizing this to be true, it follows that the leaders using the democratic style are particularly concerned about the interactions among members and the general satisfaction members gain through their participation. Communication at all levels of the group is encouraged, with broad freedom of expression accorded members. Leaders tend to find little threat in receiving suggestions and even criticism from

members. Conflict is often found in these groups in the form of healthy disagreement, but seldom involves negative personality attacks that are harmful to the groups. This is true because the low threat level , which is typical in the democratic group, allows minor disagreements to surface and be ironed out at an early stage. If your board is using the democratic style, you will observe extensive member involvement and few executive decisions that have been made without input from the whole group. Effective leaders of this style of organization are no less able to decide for the group than autocratic leaders. Because of the philosophy they hold, however, they realize the advantages of involving everyone and do so whenever possible.

Though the democratic group pattern includes use of formal standing committees where they serve valid purposes, it often employs ad hoc, one task committees. They allow freedom of choice, take advantage of particular interests or skills of members, and tend to be a more satisfying experience for a greater number of members.'

It is typical of democratically styled groups to use a consensus process for their meeting structure and decision making. They may employ some parts of parliamentary procedure as a method of structuring their meetings. However, it is more common to use open and general discussions in proceedings. The leader functions as a facilitator rather than a director and helps the group keep on target and within the established time frame quite easily, despite the freedom of interaction that is allowed.

The democratic style of organizational structure is particularly successful with groups that possess a certain level of maturity in their interactions; that is, groups with members who use team skills, who demonstrate that they are not easily threatened and who are secure in their sense of themselves as individuals. With these attributes, teams can use their initiative and creativity to a satisfying extent. If you are analyzing your board's style, consider the following positives and negatives in the use of the democratic style:

Positives

- It is sensitive to needs of members.

- It develops an open, trusting atmosphere.
- It allows development of creativity.
- It provides flexibility of roles.
- It establishes opportunity for real problem solving among all.
- It encourages commitment from members.
- It allows conflicts to surface at low level.
- It develops creative leadership at all levels.

Negatives

- It can be too loose to accomplish purposes.
- Ill-defined or constantly changing roles frustrate insecure members.
- Can be over-influenced by the most verbal or persuasive members.
- Insecure members may get lost in the general interaction.
- Leaders could avoid responsibility.
- The group itself can talk to death and never accomplish goals.

How can your local board find its way to a choice through all these characteristics? It is necessary to think of:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- How do you want to do it?
- Why is it important to engage in this activity?
- What if you tried it differently than you have done it?

Beyond that, it is important to consider such factors as:

- Do you generally have ample time for actions and decisions, or are you "under the gun" a majority of the time?

- Does your board or council have a history of good relations and cooperation, or are you generally conflict-prone in the negative sense?

- Is your leadership typically task or people oriented?

- Can the majority of your members be assertive and verbal, or do they typically need to be drawn out to interact?

When you consider the positives and negatives of each style, it will be relatively simple for you to develop a team style that will be most advantageous to your particular needs. Every group needs to find a balance in style that will allow growth in its members, yet ensure that organizational goals can be accomplished. Certain controls must be established but not to the extent that they inhibit open interactions. Though every board has a need for firm structure in meeting legal and fiscal responsibilities, it can allow more freedom and take more time at the human level of programs and problems. "We've always done it this way" doesn't mean you always have to continue this way!

III. It's Time To Make Decisions

The tendency of local boards to continue established practices-whether they give the most benefit possible to the group or not-is a very frustrating and limiting characteristic. Just as this tendency holds true for organizational style, as discussed above, it also affects the process of making decisions.

Every local board that wants to build a team needs to analyze its methods of coming to decisions. First of all, does your board have a particular method of decision making, or do decisions just happen at some point? Do they occur after long harangues by dominant members or as the result of an orderly process? Are decisions made by a power clique or as a result of respected, valid input by the majority?

In general, the local board that functions as a team will use guidelines that take the

following into consideration:

- Getting all issues on the floor for open discussion.
- Encouraging all points of view to be stated.
- Providing an open, inclusive atmosphere for all participants.
- Accepting disagreement as a way of learning others' ideas.
- Checking on members' perceptions, as well as established facts.
- Showing respect for all well-meant ideas or suggestions.
- Using as a ground rule: everyone participates, no one dominates.
- Using a consensus process whenever circumstances allow it.

Guidelines such as these will maximize the sense of worth of every member. Through a positive sense of worth comes commitment to the board. If you know you will be shown respect and your ideas given a fair hearing, you are far less likely to feel a need for hostile self defense if someone disagrees with you, or to need to dominate to show your importance. When the majority of board members feel this comfortable on the team, there is less acrimony and more harmony. There is less use of "You" messages and more "We" messages. There is less sense of threat and more cooperation. Members can use assertive self-expression and effective listening behaviors and come to more realistic conclusions.

In such an atmosphere, the "rule of few" can give way to genuine group involvement and development of a team in the best sense. It can reduce examples of individuals simply sitting at the same table with their walls around them. Many local boards that are clearly not functioning as teams appear to get their work done in spite of their methods and not because of them!

It is no wonder that people have difficulty finding candidates for office in some situations. The experience of board membership is sometimes either one of extreme antagonistic friction or of boredom while the few make decisions for the many! It doesn't have to be that way. Beyond the general guidelines for team development

given above, local boards may choose specific strategies for making their decisions. These strategies can be called "win-lose," "lose-lose" and "win-win."

"Win-lose" is commonly used in organizations. It often occurs when effective communication is lacking in the group. This is the result of the traditional voting method when a few can override the less aggressive many and can push through decisions that are often to their advantage. Traditional voting methods can be fair and inclusive of everyone, when carefully used. Too often, though, they are ill-used as just described. Even when properly used, some participants clearly win and some clearly lose. No one feels good if they are on the losing end very often, and that is reason enough to adopt a more favorable method of decision making.

"Lose-lose" decision making develops when communication is virtually non-existent on a local board. In these situations, either members get involved in negative conflict over the issues or they simply give up and sit in apathy. In the latter case, they usually wait for the leader or a dominant member to tell them what to think. In either case, the group, as such, doesn't arrive at a thought-out decision, and so everyone loses. Some members become dependent on the strong voices in the group and are increasingly conflictive or apathetic as individuals. It is a "no-win" situation all around.

The most positive strategy for team development is that of "win-win" decision making. This occurs when there is a genuine team spirit. "Win-win" decision making illustrates the positive results of effective communication- members truly attend to each other, and they show respect for each other as individuals, regardless of whether they agree or disagree. When such respect is shown, members can dare to disagree without fear of retaliation or exclusion. Such a group uses a consensus process, with each member accepting responsibility for his/her sharing of views or ideas. The ideal process of "everyone participates and no one dominates" can be exemplified in this atmosphere. With these conditions established, the team can bring out all possible information on the issues at hand. Each team member listens, respecting the others' right to expression and/or disagreement. Finally, they can compromise in ways that do not threaten the individual but do ensure that the group can reach a decision that will represent the best thinking of the group. Rather than having to vote-which is win-lose -the team will reach a point in the process where each member can honestly say, "This may not be exactly what I feel/want, but it is close enough that I can support the group's decision." When your views have been listened to with respect, when you have been able to challenge the ideas of others-to test the knowledge-it is not threatening to accept something a bit different from the

original position you held, as long as it does not violate your ethics. When this acceptance occurs with the majority of the members, they have reached a consensus decision.

Sometimes a group using a consensus process accomplishes a phenomenon referred to as "synergism." This is when the decision of the group turns out to be of a higher level of value or accuracy than the decision of any member of the group. It is a demonstration of a basic tenet of geometry, that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When actual consensus processes are employed, many groups have been known to reach synergism a great majority of the time! Think of the benefits to the quality of decisions that can accrue to the local team that uses these processes of decision making. This represents one of the highest levels of effectiveness in human interaction.

IV. What Is My Role?

Generally, the only way newly elected officials perceive their role comes about through observation of others or advice given by fellow officials. Sometimes these extremely casual guides-to what are, in fact, very important roles in serving the needs of people are on target and are all that the new official needs to carry out the job effectively. Sadly, however, such a casual approach can sometimes perpetuate inefficient, ineffective and/or even illegal actions by the innocent new office holders. If tradition hasn't really worked to the maximum potential in a particular role or if incorrect information is passed on, the receiver carries on a tradition of ineffectiveness, all unknowingly. Though this bulletin does not attempt to deal with legal matters, it can outline acceptable methods of carrying out common roles on elected boards.

The general roles of the leader involve being responsible for planning and conducting meetings and ensuring that all decisions made are carried out in the manner decided upon by the board. The leader is expected to see the broad picture of concerns and activities at all times. More specifically;

Chairperson:

- Ensures that necessary actions that board members have not initiated are taken.

- Appoints individuals or committees to undertake specific tasks and/or carry out routine business.
- Coordinates all business and activities of individuals and committees on the board.
- Represents the board to the public.
- Is available to hear the needs of the citizens, as much as possible.
- Presides at all official meetings of the board or of the executive committee of the board.
- Develops and maintains current knowledge of ordinances, statutes, etc., pertinent to that unit of government.
- Accepts that "the buck stops here" concerning all responsibility, and acts accordingly.

Vice Chairperson (when appropriate):

- Represents the chairperson at meetings when he/she is unable to preside.
- Is prepared to serve out the term of the chairperson, if needed.
- Helps plan and arrange programs and meetings.
- Works with committees as they carry out duties assigned by the chairperson.
- Acts as host to guests when appropriate.

Secretary (or Clerk):

- Keeps all official records.
- Receives all reports.
- Takes and prepares minutes of meetings.

- Prepares and mails all official notices.
- Works with news media when appropriate.

Treasurer:

- Is responsible to chairperson and board for all financial matters.
- Receives and pays out all money.
- Keeps all financial records.
- Reports regularly on the financial situation.
- Facilitates all financial audits.

Board Members/Trustees:

- Make decisions with officers.
- Serve on committees.
- Carry out special tasks assigned by the chairperson.

Other, more specific roles and responsibilities may be dictated by the structure of particular boards or councils. When this is so, they need to be clearly spelled out to present members, as well as to new members, at the beginning of each term. To assume that people know what is expected of them in particular roles is most unwise. All too often, assumptions are invalid and perpetuate behavior that is unrewarding to the individual and/or the board. Regardless of the particular role, every person on an elected board or council can add significantly to the well-being of the organization. However, if he/she is ill advised or simply not informed, his/her potential value is never fulfilled. Discussion of role expectations should be a regular part of each first meeting of the new board in each term.

V. Principles and Qualities Needed for Effective Teams

A. General

A presentation of qualities needed for developing effective local teams could easily be a summary of the five bulletins that constitute this series. Certainly effective teams need individual members with

- The confidence to give full participation.
- Strong but flexible assertive behaviors.
- Good listening skills.
- Communication skills.
- A knowledge of team role behavior.
- Conflict management techniques.
- Decision-making abilities.
- A knowledge of appropriate roles and responsibilities to carry out their particular duties.

Those are all areas that have been discussed in this series. Beyond that summary, however, are other elements to consider in determining what constitutes an effective team on a board or council.

Any kind of team-be it on a board, a council or whatever-can be viewed representing a healthy or unhealthy organization. There are signs and symptoms that can, and should, be regularly examined by team members in order to keep the group healthy. Board teams that are willing to set time aside from the routine agenda items at least once a year to do some self examination will, in the long run, find it time well spent.

Three areas in particular need this analysis to keep the group, as a team, in good health. One area is goals and objectives. This may involve restating or reevaluating the goals to make any necessary changes or to update them. A second area for yearly analysis is that of roles and responsibilities. Analysis should include roles of individuals and committees in terms of their effectiveness. The third area for analysis centers on principles inherent to all successful organizations, including qualities needed in team members and their officers. Let us consider the last area

here as goals and objectives, roles and responsibilities have been covered in previous bulletins.

B. Principles of Organizations

The following are sound underlying principles that govern successful boards and councils:

- In every kind of organization you will find two levels of interaction- the formal organization and the informal. The formal includes the official statement of purpose and statement of goals and policies. In healthy organizations the informal includes what really happens at the human level. It is "where the action is"the interactions among people, the known but generally unspoken values of the group. For instance, you might have an official policy that necessitates unanimous decisions for a board vote to be legal. This is "on the books" and members know it. In practice, however, it might be very rare for your board actually to come to a decision unanimously. Yet no one remarks on it in any way. Another example might be those boards on which, officially, every member is invited to participate fully. In practice, however, new members soon realize they had better do a lot more listening than talking, until longer-tenured members indicate that they have earned some credibility. Again, these kinds of things aren't discussed, but anyone who violates the informal norm is quickly made aware of it, generally by a certain amount of exclusion.

- Organizations are made up of people who hold definite ideas about how others should behave in various roles in the group. These could be called "behavioral prescriptions." Many times, however, incumbents in the roles may have differing ideas about how they should behave. On healthy boards, this is openly discussed on a regular basis. If this discussion is omitted, these differences can become a source of conflict on the board or council.

- An indication of a healthy organization is the amount of time its members spend on organizational goal fulfilling activities. Unhealthy groups concentrate on attainment of selfish individual goals or spend inordinate amounts of time on "household chores," such as crossing "t's" and dotting "is" in the minutes, off-track discussions, socializing, etc.

- Healthy groups maintain a delicate balance between power over and power

with people. This balance exists in the relationships between officers and members, individually and/or in sub-groupings.

- Healthy groups tend to reach consensus fairly often concerning their roles, goals and norms, and they follow through with the appropriate commitment to action.

- Consideration of updating and revising-of goals, policies, activities, etc.-is an accepted and continuing activity in healthy groups. On sensitive issues, however, bringing in a qualified outside person to suggest changes will be less of a threat to the group than relying on members. (Change suggestions nearly always challenge the opinions or practices of particular individuals or subgroups.)

Evaluating your board or council against these principles can be a valuable first step in an attempt to ensure that it functions with maximum capacity and value in attaining goals, as well as in providing satisfaction to its members.

C. Particular Qualities Necessary to Healthy Boards and Councils

Healthy (effective) elected boards have

- Clear goals, set by members and officers in a consensus process.

- Opportunities for many to be involved in leadership roles, at different levels and different times.

- Flexible methods of group decision making.

- Conflict management processes that allow for positive change.

- A system of conducting meetings that meets organizational needs and gives members satisfaction.

- Opportunities for personal as well as organizational goal achievement for members and officers.

- A tradition and an expectation of positive and committed working

relationships at all levels of the group.

- Dedication to the organization in all members, shown by a willingness to go beyond the requirements of the job for the board and the constituents.

You can evaluate your local elected team, using the various criteria presented above. When you find it meets a majority of them, you can call yourselves a healthy team. At that point, a team discussion could profitably center around members' answers to the question, "Considering how we evaluate ourselves now, will we be as healthy in five years? Why or why not?" Responses may bring out both strengths and weaknesses to bear in mind as you continue working together. As was suggested earlier, the beginning of each new term is the ideal time to initiate self-analysis. Then, after new members have had time to gain an understanding of the team and its method of functioning, it would be useful to check signals with them on the same areas again.

Local boards can function as teams, in the best sense of group spirit and interaction. Sometimes, however, they never represent a higher level of interaction than that of individuals with their walls around them. Each member, regardless of role, tenure or prestige (or the lack of it), has the responsibility to help to create a real team. Members do this by their willingness to cooperate, to learn, to win sometimes and to lose sometimes and to care enough to go the extra mile. Overall, members demonstrate commitment and dedication by putting the needs of the team above their own personal needs. They then find that, in assisting the team to accomplish its goals, they also accomplish their own goals.

VI. Summary

Like all individuals who come together to attempt to work for the common good, local boards must fulfill a variety of criteria to find success. If a board truly wants to develop itself into a team, not just a board, even more skill and commitment are required. The choice of team or organizational style sets the basis for and the quality of the interaction of subsequent team action. If an extremely autocratic style is chosen, the group will not work as a real team. It is most important that local board members understand that they do have choices about the methods used to structure their board. Many boards do not realize this and continue to use a structure and methods passed on from year to year, whether they actually are the best systems to meet the needs of the group and its constituents or not.

Much the same could be said about making decisions on local boards. Boards do indeed have choices to make in methods of decision making. Those choices will bear significantly on the extent to which an elected board functions as a team. If a win-lose method is chosen, it will be very difficult to develop a team attitude on the board. If a win-win consensus decision making strategy is chosen, a climate is established that can easily develop a cooperative, open, sharing team structure and attitude.

Most of us feel more comfortable and able to participate in a group when we know what our role is and how we are expected to carry it out. It is highly unlikely that a team arrangement will develop among a group of board members without open discussion of roles, responsibilities and mutual expectations concerning them. As new members are elected to the board, these perceptions and expectations must be brought out anew for open discussion. Experienced public officials know that leaving important elements to assumption is dangerous indeed. Open discussion and clarification without threat are the only way everyone is brought up to date on expectations and others' perceptions.

When a board has established an organizational style that will allow development of teamwork, when an inclusive (consensus) decision-making strategy is utilized, and when roles and responsibilities are established in open discussion, then the local team needs to under stand the general and particular qualities and principles that further develop healthy, effective working teams.

As a final summary of the information in this bulletin, work through the evaluation tool below, thinking of your board. Answer as you see it, not how it should be or how someone else might evaluate it. You would gain valuable insights if each of your board members were to use this tool and then compare the responses as a group.

As you read each statement, mark an "X" on the line in the place you feel is appropriate.

On our board we have:

1. An understanding of our goals as a board.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

2. An organizational style that encourages development of a team effort.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

3. Leaders who involve members in all important decisions and plans affecting the board.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

4. Methods of coming to decisions that allow everyone to feel respected and included, whether or not others agree with him/her.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

5. Open discussions of our various roles and responsibilities as board members.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

6. An acceptance of conflict as necessary at times in order to air grievances and learn more of each other's feelings or ideas.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

7. The ability to disagree, with little threat produced by the disagreement.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

8. Major time spent on main issues, rather than “housekeeping chores.”

_____

0 5 10
Low High

9. Flexibility in methods of working together.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

10. An ability to satisfy our personal goals as members while accomplishing team goals.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

11. Enthusiasm shown by officers and members in carrying out board responsibilities.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

12. Clear pride in belonging shown by all members of the board.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

13. High trust level at all points of the team.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

14. Willingness to give voluntary time to meetings and/or constituents.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

15. Clear sense of purpose, dedication and commitment shown by all.

_____

0 5 10
Low High

Look back over your evaluation. Is yours a healthy board? If not, what responsibility will you take to help it to become healthy? Developing a healthy organization with a team approach is the responsibility of every member of the board.

Organizations are successful in relation to the commitment and hard work put into them by their members.

For Further Readings In This Area

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

CHANGING TEAM STYLE

Review the information presented in the text on team styles and consider the following:

1. You are the new chairperson of a local board which has a tradition of highly autocratic leadership. You feel this should be changed to something that would bring about more general participation by members and lessen the domination of what you perceive to be a "power clique."

a. Where would you begin

- Explaining your views?

- Acting on your views?

b. What would you actually say or do?

c. What considerations would time be given in your plans?

- Would you make change immediately (the sooner the better!)?

- Would you feel success would be surer by reinforcement along the way? If so, how would you do it?

2. Which change of team style would be more difficult for board members, in general, to accept?

a. From autocratic to democratic? Why?

b. From democratic to autocratic? Why?

In answering this, think beyond getting the business done to the way people feel-about themselves (using each style) and about others on the board (in the influence of each style).

Can you see that time itself is one of the most important factors to consider in changing a basic organizational style? People need the time it takes for reassurance that the change will benefit them. Otherwise their sense of threat will tend to make them resist change, sometimes to the point of definitely hostile actions.

Appendix B

CRISIS ON THE BOARD

Hannah is the first woman supervisor of her township board. She is an extremely capable woman but doesn't know when to quit! Hannah feels that because she is the first woman in this role, many people are watching closely to see if she can succeed. Though her perception is probably true, she is driving the rest of the group to distraction by overdoing herself. She has her hand in everything, barely allowing the members to think for themselves.

The board had a tradition of meeting as a "committee of the whole" to discuss issues of general interest from time to time. Hannah decided that took too much valuable time, so she told the group that they would no longer meet that way. She could make such decisions quicker and easier, she said.

The board members had always had a good relationship with the local media and would meet freely with them for interviews, on an individual basis, when asked. Hannah recently told them she thought she might better speak for them, so they would not "be misquoted so much," and that would "make the commission look better. "

These actions, plus Hannah's interference in everything going on with routine business, have been very annoying to everyone. Though they believe her intentions to be positive, they are becoming increasingly frustrated. Last week, however, Hannah "delivered the final blow," as one board member stated it. At the regular meeting, she informed them that a consulting firm had approached her with a proposal to do a study of their future needs in zoning. She had decided they didn't have any need of that, so she refused the proposal. In effect, this closed the door to future interaction with that firm. The board members are furious that she would presume to make such a decision, and because many of them have felt for some time that their township has a real possibility of serious problems.

At this point, the board members are muttering about "dictators" and Hannah is totally puzzled and frustrated at their failure to see how capably she has cut down on wasted time for everyone since she has been in this off ice.

Consider the information given in the section "Choosing A Team Style." Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What style has Hannah chosen?

2. Which characteristics of that style, as described in the materials, apply to this case?

3. Knowing that Hannah is trying to prove herself capable and doesn't intend dictatorial behavior, what positive actions could the other commissioners use to get her back on track? Be specific.

4. Have you experienced something similar as a public official when, even

though good intentions were involved, the end result inhibited or frustrated a local board to the point of revolt? What course of action did you take?

Appendix C

DECISION-MAKING MODEL

Local governmental boards can use the following two-part model to aid in making effective decisions. Until members become familiar with the process, all members can benefit by having their own copies to help them learn and use the process.

Content Tasks (Factual) Process Tasks (People)

Discuss and arrive at the process to be used by the group to solve the problem.

Decide on the basic objectives or goals to be accomplished.

Break the problem down to specifics.

Follow the agreed-upon process in discussing all available information.

Gather all information from group members.

Organize the facts and reactions into coherent groups.

Summarize discussion frequently.

Pay active attention to What others are saying

Use differing opinions as a means to learn more on the subject.

Consider the varying opinions and knowledge of all members.

Carefully examine each person's input. Test the knowledge by asking Probing questions.

Keep within established Time limitations.

Help the group stay on The subject without getting Into irrelevant side issues.

Ask for and give feedback frequently.

Content Analysis plus Process Methods

Equals

Consensus Decision Making,
which leads to a course of action

Appendix D

THE DRIFTING LOCAL BOARD

Jerry is a member of a township board. After a recent meeting she asked two other members to have coffee and talk about something that was bothering her. It seems to Jerry that the board is just drifting and has no particular sense of direction. She feels they do a lot of "putting out brushfires" rather than developing far-sighted, proactive plans for the township.

As they discussed her concerns, the others realized they had felt similarly but hadn't quite been aware of it. One felt it was the board's fault because they weren't supporting the supervisor. The other member said the supervisor was at fault, because "he is just a poor leader!" The others agreed that this was at least part of the problem.

Jerry suggested they bring up the need for a general discussion at the next meeting and try to steer it toward defining basic roles and responsibilities of everyone. She felt this wouldn't put undue pressure on the supervisor.

a. If you were Jerry, how would you help structure the open discussion you will ask for at the next meeting?

b. How can "people skills," plus knowledge of roles and responsibilities, be used in a way that will be effective in unifying this board to greater productivity and sense of direction?

c. Have you been involved in similar "drifting" boards? If so, were effective changes made? How?

Appendix E

JOHN'S DILEMMA

Think about the case described below. Refer to the discussion on organization principles in the text and do the following:

1 . Identify all principles that are misused or violated on this township board.

2. Develop advice you would give John about his further membership on the

board.

John was elected trustee on his township board a few months ago. He began serving with great enthusiasm and a willingness to work hard for the township. Soon after joining, he began to realize that his commitment was not shared by the other board members. In fact, others viewed him as "rather strange" for his willingness to work hard. Clearly, few of them felt as he did. Soon he realized that the supervisor seldom asked for input or assistance from the board. He seemed threatened if members offered ideas or suggestions, and so they seldom did.

As time went on, John began to see that criticisms or objections of the supervisor resulted in conflict involving anger, defensiveness and hurt feelings from the supervisor, and frustration from the members. The supervisor, who was in his fourth 4-year term, took advice and counsel from only a few chosen members and seemed unable to try any different working methods.

Awareness of the low morale of the board, as well as the inflexibility shown by the supervisor, is causing John increasing frustration. Although he is still committed to the goals of the board as he perceives them, the unhealthy atmosphere in the group makes achievement of either his own goals or those of the board impossible for him.

After months of increasing dissatisfaction, John is faced with a dilemma- Should he continue to try to help the board achieve its goals, or should he just give up and quit the board?

Appendix F

LOOKING AT YOUR BOARD

Read each of the following statements while thinking of your board. Circle the answer you feel best describes it.

1. The goals of my board are

    a. Clearly stated and everybody understands

them.
b. Clearly stated and somewhat understood.
c. Unclear and only a few seem to understand them.
d. We don't seem to have any.

2. We evaluate our goals:

a. Every year. b. Every 3 to 5 years. c. Never evaluate them.

3. The terms we run for are

a. 4 years. b. 3 years. c. 2 years.

4. We support our leaders:

a. Usually. b. Some of the time. c. Seldom, if ever.

5. We have a system (formal or informal) to rid ourselves of poor leaders

a. Quickly and easily.
b. Quickly but painfully.
c. They must complete their term.
d. Depends on how many friends they have

6. Conflict on our board is usually over-

a. Issues. b. Personalities. c. Both issues and personalities.

7. We manage conflict by:

a. Squarely facing it. b. Avoiding the whole thing. c. The leaders stop it!

8. We see conflict as:

a. Positive, to learn from. b. Negative, to be avoided. c. We never have any.

9. We use an informal "job description" for roles of leaders and members:

a. Nearly always. b. For some roles. c. Seldom or never.

10. We clearly understand our responsibilities as board members and/or leaders

    a. Most of the time. b. Sometimes. c. Rarely.

11. We are held accountable for our responsibilities:

    a. Most of the time. b. Sometimes. c. We never are.

12. On our board, both leaders and members generally are:

    a. Very committed to what's best for the board.
    b. Sometimes committed to what's best for the board.
    c . Committed to the purposes of subgroups on the board.
    d . Each one looks out for him/herself.

13. When it comes to decision making, our leaders

    a. Involve the members in major decisions, such as on goals and major issues.
    b. Involve the members in all decisions, major or minor.
    c. Make all the decisions themselves.

14. Most of our meeting time is spent on

    a. Working together on the business at hand.
    b. Side discussions and/or conflict.
    c. Routine housekeeping tasks.
    d. Listening to the leaders talk.

15. The majority of our members attend each meeting

    a. Most of the time.
    b. Half the time.
    c. Hardly ever.

16. During board meetings, most of our members:

a. Feel comfortable participating in discussions.
b. Hesitate to participate too much.
c. Feel very uncomfortable participating and usually don't.

17. Overall, we feel good about our board

a. Most of the time.
b. Sometimes.
c. Rarely.

18. We think our board accomplishes what it sets out to do-.

a. Nearly always. b. Most of the time. c. Now and then. d. Almost never.

Scoring:

Look back over your answers. Add your score thus;

a. = 6 points b. = 4 points c. = 2 points d. = 0 points

Your score - points (108 is a perfect score)

Interpreting Your Score

0 to 55 - Your board is unhealthy and needs lots of help.

56 to 70 - Your board is OK in some areas, poor in others.

71 to 90 - Your board is doing a good job but could improve in some areas.

91 to 108 -You have an excellent board congratulations!

Everyone except the 91 to 108 scorers should review the questions with the lowest scores to discover the weakest areas and then begin to strategize ways to improve the board.

Appendix G

AN ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH CHECKLIST

Rate your board as
Excellent, Above Average, Good, Fair or Poor

A healthy organization

___1. Has a clear understanding of its purposes or goals.

___2. Makes progress toward its goals without unnecessary waste of time,

___3. Is able to look ahead and plan ahead as a board.

___4. Has developed an effective degree of communication among members.

___5. Is able to carry on a logical process of problem solving.

___6. Is able to work together in established patterns, but also can change working patterns when necessary.

___7. Can take a clear look at itself and make changes in procedure when necessary.

___8. Is able to get results in group activities and still give individuals the opportunity to be successful on their own.

___9. Provides for the sharing and revolving of leadership tasks.

___10. Loyally sticks together as a unit, yet easily includes new members when they are elected.

___11. Makes good use of the different ideas and abilities of its members.

___12. Provides freedom for the expression of all feelings and points of view.

___13. Works on a basis of what is possible to accomplish, not what is unreal or impossible.

___14. Is not over-dominated by its leader or by any of its members.

___15. Allows for healthy kinds of competitive behavior among members without sacrificing group cooperation.

___16. Strikes a style balance between being too autocratic and too democratic.

___17. Can easily change and adapt itself to the needs of differing situations

and problems.

___18. Recognizes that a clear understanding of goals, roles and responsibilities makes the tasks clearer and easier for all members.

Do you have more "E's"and "A's" than "G's," "F's" and 'T's"? Which areas need the most improvement?

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Umberger Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506
913-532-5830

*Michigan State University
P.O. Box 6640
East Lansing, MI 48826-6640
517-355-0240

University of Minnesota
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St. Paul, MN 55108
612-625-8173

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314-882-7216

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2120 Fyffe Road
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614-292-1607

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Ag. Bulletin, Rm. 245
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