

OBSERVATIONS ON EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE IN GROUP SETTINGS**Carl Zulauf and Bernard Erven**

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- **ATTEND ALL GROUP MEETINGS:** Failure to attend group meetings sends the message that my work is more important than the group's project and, therefore, I am more important than anyone else. Remember that everyone is strapped for time. If you cannot attend a meeting, make sure the other group members know that you will not be there and why you will not be there before the group meeting time. Also, you should volunteer to do more work. Email provides a wonderful tool for coordinating schedules and conveying scheduling problems.
- **PARTICIPATE IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS:** It is frustrating for other group members when someone says nothing. The first and often lasting conclusion is that the person is not prepared and/or does not care. Both perceptions leave negative feelings.
- **RESPECT GROUP MEMBERS AND THEIR OPINIONS:** In many respects this is the flip side of the previous point. People who overvalue their own opinions and/or put down others' opinions will be evaluated negatively as disrupting group harmony. To avoid this problem, it is often best to follow the old adage of "first listen, then speak."
- **SHARE IN GROUP MAINTENANCE:** A well-functioning group requires that its meeting become more than work. Social interaction during meetings is important. This helps group members become comfortable with each other, as well as enhances an understanding of where each group member is coming from. Of course, it is also important the group meeting does not become a social event only. Group maintenance on the work or professional side means that everyone shares equally in doing the "grunt" work, such as collecting information, word processing, and proofing the end product.
- **IMPORTANCE OF LEADING:** Well-functioning groups invariably have leaders that are willing to share and guide. Note that the word is leaders, not leader. Different people should step forward to provide leadership on different group tasks. One may lead information collection, another may lead analysis, and another may lead the presentation. Too often one group member is always the leader. This may get the assignment done, but it is not a group project.
- **SUMMARY:** Successful group work requires enthusiasm, a willingness to be flexible and compromise, a commitment to getting to know your colleagues, and a willingness to share in the grunt work. The world is a small place. You never know when one of your group members may be in position later in life to hire, fire, help, or hinder you. You will be moving through the work place over much the same working life. First impression matters and you may never know that it was a factor down the road. Group work is difficult, but, when it clicks, the result far exceeds the output of any single individual.