

ROLE PLAY

PARTICIPATING IN MEETINGS

The Situation

You work as a mid-level manager for Northridge, Inc., a company that specializes in software for the financial services industry. Northridge has approximately 100 employees; about 40% of are women and about 15% are minorities. Northridge is a privately held company.

You have been asked to become a member of a committee that is exploring the possibility of instituting a flex-time policy in your company. (Flex time allows company employees to design their own work time, including which days of the week they will work and starting and ending times.) The committee is composed of six people, three men and three women. Mid-level management, supervisors, and support personnel all have representation on the committee; one committee member is from a minority group.

Although one person had been asked to coordinate an initial meeting, that person is not necessarily the committee chairperson, and the group may handle the choice of facilitator/leader in any way it chooses.

This is the first meeting of the committee. Among the issues the committee has been asked to explore are:

- The advantages and disadvantages of a flex-time policy
- Who would be eligible to participate in the program
- What some of the significant features of the program would be
- How flex time requests that are in conflict with one another would be handled
- The time frame for implementing flex time should the committee decide to recommend it

The committee has been asked to submit a report to the vice president for human resources, Marjorie Greene, within a month.

Your Tasks

Task #1

Hold your first committee meeting (for 15-20 minutes) to discuss the committee's assignment as it is described above. At this meeting, focus on the *process* of getting the assignment accomplished rather than on flex time itself. At the end of the discussion period, reach consensus about how the committee will proceed with its work. Specifically, you should decide three things:

- (1) How the committee will be lead
- (2) What tasks need to be done and how those tasks will be divided
- (3) How often the committee will meet

Task #2

Observe your communication behavior and the communication behavior of other group members. Among the things you should pay attention to include:

- Who are the most frequent participators?
- Who are the least frequent participators?
- How is turn taking negotiated?
- Who talks to whom? Who responds to whom?
- How are interruptions handled?
- Is simultaneous speech tolerated?
- How are topics shifted?
- Is silence tolerated?
- What were the most productive contributions to the group?
What made them so?
- What was your most production contribution? What made it so?
- For the most part, were your contributions used well by the group?
- Would you have liked to participate more? If so, what made it difficult for you to do so?

Task #3

Fill out a Group Behavior Analysis form.

Task #4

Write a memo (no more than one page) to Marjorie Greene informing her of what went on at your meeting, highlighting what you accomplished.

Please be ready to discuss what happened in your meetings when we get back together as a group.