

Activity 5-3: Who Gets the Overtime?

Objectives:

- a. To examine group decision making as a process.
- b. To identify some issues concerning participation of employees in decision making.
- c. To explore the role of the leader in group decision making.
- d. To use role playing as a learning method.

(Note: This activity's objective is neither to advocate the use of group decision making nor to demonstrate how it should be done. Rather, we are exploring the issue of group decision making based on your experience in the exercise.)

Task 1:

- a. The instructor will briefly discuss role playing. There are a number of ways to role-play, and it is used for a variety of purposes. In this case each member of your team will be given a role in a group decision-making problem. You will be comfortable if you remember that you are not participating in a theatrical production. You are not being asked to take the lead in the school play. All you are asked to do is play yourself as you would feel if you were in the situation described in the role you will be given. For instance, pretend you are taking a final examination and the professor comes up to your desk, picks up your exam paper, tears it up, and says, "You fail the course. You have notes and books on the floor beside you and under your desk, and I've seen you looking down there. Also, you were glancing at the examination paper of the student next to you." You decide to appeal your failure grade to the dean. What are all the possible arguments you could use to defend yourself? (Take 2 minutes now and discuss this situation with two of your fellow students.) This situation could be role-played by you, with someone else playing the role of the dean, whose viewpoint would probably be different from yours. The roles of our exercise are similar in that you will have some idea of how you would behave if you were in the situation described. One more point about role playing: you are role-playing not only for what you can learn from it but also to give the other role player the opportunity to see what it is like to interact with, and learn from, you in this situation. That is, in this course you are responsible for the learning of others.
- b. Tear out the instruction sheet "Who Gets the Overtime?" that can be found at the end of the instructions, but be careful not to look at any of the individual role sheets while doing so. The instructor will read this instruction sheet aloud while the class follows it. Participants can refer to this sheet at any time during the role playing.
- c. Each team is to arrange itself in a circle and elect the supervisor (Kim) for this specific exercise. (Note: If the class is not working in permanent teams, participants are to form groups of six and elect a supervisor for this exercise.) Starting clockwise from the supervisor, the role assignments are as follows:

A woman in the group should assume the role of Sara. (If there is no woman in the group, of course, she has to be played by a man.) If only five members are present, eliminate the role of Fran. If only four are present in the team, a member of a six-person team should be borrowed temporarily for this exercise.

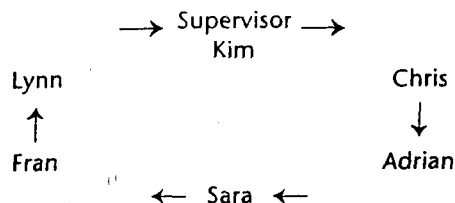
Turn to your own role assignment sheet and tear it from the book. After you have read the role description and understand it, turn it face down and use it as a name card so your team members can identify your role name during the exercise. Do not tell others what your role instructions are. When the exercise begins, play your role naturally, without referring to your sheet. When facts or events arise that are not covered by the roles, make up things that are consistent with the way it might be in a real-life situation.

When Kim has studied and understands the supervisor's role, she will stand. When the supervisors for all groups are standing, the instructor will give the signal to begin the exercise. When Kim sits down, assume Kim has just entered the office and greet Kim with a hearty "Good morning!" Kim will tell you what to do from this point on.

(Note for Kim: If you have only five on the team, including yourself, announce to your group that Fran called in sick and read them Fran's role. Fran is to be taken into consideration in arriving at the solution.)

Observers, if there are any, are to be assigned one to a group for the purpose of observing and, possibly, reporting to the class at the end of the session how the decision was made. Observers are not to enter into the process. (Time: for introduction, 10 minutes; for role playing, 20 to 25 minutes; for discussion, 20 minutes or longer. This exercise generates a range of rich data, and it is well to reserve discussion time to extend into the second hour.)

(Note: Teams completing role playing before the time has run out should proceed with task 2. Skip task 2 and go directly to task 3 if teams all finish at about the same time.)



Task 2 (Only for Teams Finishing Task 1 Early):

After deciding who gets the overtime, the team should assume it is reconvening as a committee of supervisors to deliberate and decide the same case. To whom would this committee give the overtime? Why?

Task 3:

- a. When the role playing is complete, the instructor will ask each supervisor to give the name of the person in the role play who got the overtime. The names are to be listed on the blackboard for all groups (using the chart form below), but no discussion is to take place at this time. The listing provides the class with information as to which groups agree and disagree with their choice.

Group	Who Got the Overtime?	How Was Decision Made?
#1		
#2		
#3		

- b. The instructor will now interview each group on the following:
 - a. How was the decision made? (List the elements of these decision processes on the board for each team.) What are the similarities and differences among the decision processes? What criteria were used? (List on the board.) What procedures could be used to bring more objectivity into the process if the group were to start over again—assuming the leader left the problem entirely up to employees to solve?
 - b. Was this a good way to make the decision for this particular problem? Why?
 - c. What issues (points of controversy) were raised by the group decision making?
 - d. How did the supervisor feel about the role she or he was given? How did the employees feel about the role played by the supervisor? How could the supervisor have actively guided and facilitated the process and still let the employees make the decision?
 - e. If the supervisor had decided not to let the employees make the decision, what other methods could he or she have used to arrive at the decision? Which of the alternatives, including group decision, would you have preferred?

Who Gets the Overtime? (For Activity 5-3)

Five of you are employees of the Customers' Division of the Mountain Power Company's District Headquarters in Green Valley, Virginia. Your job requires monitoring customer accounts for records, billing, payments, and collection purposes. Answering customer inquiries and opening and closing accounts are a major part of your job. All five of you are considered excellent employees, and the atmosphere in the office is one of congeniality and good morale. One reason for this is that Green Valley is a small town in a beautiful area where few good jobs exist. The small local college is the main activity in the town, and Mountain Power's district office offers one of the few good places to work, even though salaries are modest. Students graduating from the local high schools and colleges move out of the area to find permanent jobs.

All five of you are feeling the squeeze for money. Inflation is a problem, and many of the products sold in Green Valley are higher priced than in big cities because of transportation costs and the limited market. All of you moonlight when you can, but the opportunities are scarce. When overtime work is required, Mountain Power's policy is to rotate employee assignments so all have an equal share on an annual basis; however, overtime needs are very low.

Here are some general facts about the employees in your section.

Chris is 22 years of age, has been with the company four years, and has three young children.

Adrian is 27 years of age, has been with the company 10 years, and is the senior person in the office.

Sara is 21 years of age. It is the company's policy to employ two deserving college students half-time and to let them study at the office during times when customer inquiries are low; she is one of these students.

Fran, 25 years of age, is the second half-time student. Fran started work at the same time as Sara two years ago and plans to graduate in one year.

Lynn, 20 years of age, is the newest employee, having decided to make Mountain Power a career after graduating from a two-year college.

Kim is your supervisor. When the instructor gives you the signal to start role playing, the scene is as follows: You have just been called into Kim's office for a discussion. The supervisor will tell you what you are to do. Play your role as if you were in the position described on your role sheet. When facts arise that are not covered by the roles, be creative; make up things that are consistent with the way it might be in a real-life situation.

Note: Return to the instructions of Task 1c, Activity 9-5, before proceeding with the role playing.