

There are a number of individual checks that you can use to decide whether you are contributing effectively to group processes: (1) personal effectiveness in groups and (2) personal attitudes in groups.

1 Personal effectiveness in groups

Almost all large companies and organisations have extensive training programmes in which company teams are formed to help develop individual management skills. The British chemicals company ICI, which was recently taken over by Dutch chemicals giant AKZO Nobel, has an interesting ‘Core Development Programme’. ICI’s skill development programme contains four areas that specify the various ways and levels at which you can evaluate the effectiveness of your own functioning in an organisation and in groups:

- **Personal effectiveness:** how do you manage yourself, and how do you interact with others? An effective *self-manager* takes responsibility for his/her own performance and development in relation to work, career and life goals (⊕G series).
- **Business/organisational effectiveness:** how well do you understand the company, the organisation, the business, region, or the function you are in? How well do you understand the functioning of business and organisations generally?
- **Management effectiveness:** how well do you lead and manage both people and work on a formal and informal basis?
- **Professional effectiveness:** how well do you apply professional skills related to the particular functional area (for example, personnel, marketing, R&D, research, strategy) to which you as an individual belong?

These four dimensions of effectiveness can be specified further in checklists. ICI’s development programme has many such checklists. Table F.6a shows the most relevant checklist for problem-solving skills with special attention given to the third category (management effectiveness). You can apply this checklist in particular when you start a group project, but also when you are writing a thesis, an essay or when you are preparing a presentation. Go through the specific indicators and decide whether you are operating effectively in all four performance categories.

Table G.7a Problem-solving skills: a personal checklist from ICI

Performance outcomes	Specific indicators: do you ...
1 Personal: Identify problems at an early stage	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <i>allow</i> problems to become significant before tackling them?
2 Business/organisation: assemble all relevant information to define the problem	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider <i>all</i> important and relevant facts, data and opinions?
3 Management: generate options creatively, evaluate options rigorously, decide on course of action, and ensure chosen option is implemented	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Select</i> an appropriate problem-solving approach from the range of available techniques and methods? <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Generate</i> a range of possible options? <input type="checkbox"/> Use <i>other people</i> to provide problem-solving skills, information and ideas? <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid ignoring possibilities through <i>personal bias</i> ? <input type="checkbox"/> Take due account of <i>cost benefits and risks</i> ? <input type="checkbox"/> Take <i>broader issues</i> into account in reaching a decision? <input type="checkbox"/> Actively try to gain <i>commitment</i> during the problem solving process? <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Monitor</i> subsequent progress to ensure effective implementation?

Performance outcomes Specific indicators: do you ...

4 Professional: evaluate outcomes to ensure the problem is satisfactorily resolved and to learn from that experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Select timely and relevant performance measures? <input type="checkbox"/> Take any further action necessary to ensure the problem remains solved? <input type="checkbox"/> Identify learning gained from solving the problem? <input type="checkbox"/> Gain improved skill during the problem solving process?
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2 Personal attitude in groups

Table F.6b shows a checklist used by the University of Warwick to help people to decide on the kind of attitude that they can adopt when participating in seminars. At Warwick, the seminars are supported by tutors. But these rules for individual participation also apply to 'self-managed' groups of peers (⊕F1, G2).

Table G.7b Seminar groups

What you can do to ...	
... make the group work well together ensure that the group will not work! ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ get to know each other ■ do something risky together ■ do something social together ■ carry out a task together ■ do something physical together ■ disclose personal information ■ express feelings about being in a group ■ identify your strengths and potential pitfalls as a group ■ build, make, construct, draw something together ■ do something creative together: sing a song, write a play, play a game ■ be 'better' than the other groups ■ have fun together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ do not join in ■ have an aimless chat ■ allow an individual to dominate ■ allow members not to join in ■ keep it formal, neutral and abstract ■ avoid any expression of feelings ■ refuse to set yourself any tasks or goals ■ do not find out about each other ■ do not disclose anything about yourself ■ express criticism and hostility towards others ■ do not listen to each other ■ show no interest in the group

Source: University of Warwick (1995) Study Guide, p. 11-12

In seminar or research groups, try to make sure that everyone makes a contribution, and receives a fair amount of attention at regular intervals. You should be able to expect that participants have prepared adequately for the session. If this is not the case, consider stopping the session, and organise another one for which everyone should prepare. This may create a shock effect in the first session, but will lead to a much better functioning of the group in later phases (®F5). If there are recurring problems with particular group members, discuss this openly and promptly (®F4). Do not allow unreliable behaviour to become the rule of the group. It will often be self-defeating.