

Functional Roles Within Small Groups

ROLES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS

Knowing the following roles among a group will better help you to realize what each person has to offer. If you are in the middle of a discussion and you need somebody to clarify what was discussed, for example, you can seek out a person who is good at doing this. Having people in your meetings and discussions with these particular roles will help your conversation flow smoothly. If you realize you are usually an “Opinion Giver,” try another role at the next meeting such as “Listener.” Ask yourself who performs these roles in your organization as you review the functional roles.

- Information Seeker:** Asks for facts, clarification or information; suggests that information is needed and specifies what kind.
- Information Giver:** Offers facts, information, and personal experience.
- Opinion Seeker:** Draws out convictions and opinions of others, asks for clarification of position, values, etc., held by other group members.
- Clarifier:** Elaborates on ideas expressed by others, gives examples and illustrations.
- Opinion Giver:** States own beliefs and expresses own judgments.
- Orienter:** Clarifies purpose and goals of group, defines position, summarizes or suggests the direction discussion should go.
- Energizer:** Prods group to greater activity or to a decision; stimulates activity or warns of need to act while there is still time.
- Procedure Developer:** Offers suggestions for accomplishing ideas of others or handles such tasks as seating arrangements, what to tackle first, or how to use the group resources or the group’s time.
- Listener:** Listens attentively and actively.

ROLES THAT ASSIST OTHERS IN THE GROUP

- Supporter:** Praises, agrees, indicates warmth and solidarity with others or goes along with them.
- Harmonizer:** Mediates differences between others, reconciles

Adapted from Leadersheets, University of Alabama