

# Preface

I AM VERY PLEASED that you have chosen to read this book! My first course in small groups was as an undergraduate student some years ago. I can honestly say that the subject has even more fascination for me now than it did then. I believe that if you learn more about teams and small groups, you will enrich your life and improve your chances of success in your chosen career. You can hardly read a newspaper or a magazine today without encountering an article about the increasing use of teams in our society. Whether in families, public schools, hospitals, universities, businesses, or government, it seems that everybody is discovering the value of small group activities. An increasing number of teams are now operating online as virtual teams. It certainly appears that the information contained in this book could be some of the most useful of any that you will encounter in your college career and for the rest of your life.

This book explores the myriad ways in which groups and teams can be used to help achieve successful results. Intended as a primary text for courses in group communication, this book is also used as a text in management, psychology, nursing, and education courses. This ninth edition represents a substantial and dramatic revision.

## *Distinctions of A Systems Approach to Small Group Interaction, Ninth Edition*

This book's format—text, with student experiential exercises and selected readings—is unique among the small group texts available. Each chapter begins with a brief chapter preview, followed by a glossary of terms used in that chapter. Next is an opening case study designed to stimulate student class discussions. The case study is followed by the chapter text material. Following each chapter are several experiential exercises designed to offer opportunities to practice the small group interactions discussed in the chapter. Each chapter ends with two reading selections chosen for their direct relevance to the subjects discussed in that chapter. The readings are intended to offer further depth or to illustrate applications of the chapter's concepts. Finally, each chapter now includes one or

more sections labeled “Practical Tips,” which are designed to help readers see the practical applications of the text material.

## Plan of the Book, Including New Features

Based on extensive feedback from students and professors who have used the book, we have made approximately one hundred changes in the book since the eighth edition. We have streamlined the exercises at the end of each chapter and placed some extra exercises on the book’s Web site.

Chapter 1 addresses the basic question, What is small group interaction? It presents key definitions and offers a “systems approach” conceptual model that serves as the organizing framework for the remainder of the book. New in Chapter 1 in this edition are:

- Information on virtual teams
- The systems approach
- The ouroboros effect in groups

Chapter 2, “Communication Processes,” deals with the unique aspects of communication in the small group setting. It covers language behavior, self-disclosure, and interaction roles. New in Chapter 2 in this edition are:

- Information on emotional intelligence
- Information on leadership
- Material on communication coaching
- Additional examples of nonverbal communication
- A new case study on “instant messaging”
- Information on “voice lifts” to change the sound of your voice
- Material on nonfluencies in speaking
- Material on supportive communication
- A new Practical Tips box on “power thinking,” which consists mostly of improved listening
- A new section on virtual small group communication

Chapter 3, “Relevant Background Factors,” discusses six characteristics of individual group members that will influence the group’s functioning. They are personality, gender, age, health, attitudes, and values. New in Chapter 3 in this edition are:

- Material on the role of nature and nurture in shaping people’s behaviors across different cultures
- Information on the increasing diversity of our population and in our workforce
- Material on rewards and their connection to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
- Information on the use of FIRO-B in assessing employees
- Information on the use of control by managers

- Material on the “digital divide” between genders in the workplace
- Suggestions on how to break gender stereotypes
- Material on attitudes and consistency theory
- A new Practical Tips box on promoting diversity in virtual space

Chapter 4, “Group Circumstances and Structure,” discusses the group’s physical environment, the group’s size and structure, and different types of groups. New in this edition are:

- A shortened and simplified opening case on Chempure Pharmaceutical Company
- Material on the environmental effects on behavior
- Material on poxemics as it relates to international students
- Information on the Internet generation
- Material on instant messaging and virtual meeting technologies
- Material on social facilitation theory
- Information on communication in family groups
- Online classes and threaded group discussions
- Material on collaboration in the workplace
- A new Practical Tips box on discussion group tips
- Material on leadership in virtual teams
- A new Practical Tips box for virtual success

Chapter 5, “Leadership and Social Influence Processes,” discusses status, power, leadership, group norms, and conformity pressures. New in this edition are:

- Information on gender and status in groups
- Power and conflict in groups
- International leadership
- SuperLeadership
- Additional information on followership
- Additional material on contingency theory
- Information on conformity pressure in virtual groups
- Additional information on conformity theory as well as on groupthink

Chapter 6, “Decision-Making Processes,” examines the various methods for organizing group problem solving. New in this edition are:

- Material on decision-making styles
- Information about the Kepner-Tregoe problem-solving approach
- Information on the lateral thinking process
- A new section on alternative brainstorming techniques
- A new section on virtual decision making

Chapter 7, “Conflict Management,” examines the sources, types, and desirability or undesirability of conflict. It also offers ideas on resolving conflict. New in this chapter are:

- The opening case study entitled, “Conflict in the Motion Picture Industry,” which discusses a true story about a disagreement in the Disney company over a potential contract with director Ron Howard and the movie *The Alamo*.
- Research findings about conflict levels and group performance
- Suggestions on how to more effectively manage conflict
- The role of a mediator
- Material on behaviors that usually trigger conflict and how to avoid those behaviors
- A new section entitled, “Verbal Judo”
- A new section on conflict in virtual groups

Chapter 8, “Consequences,” is devoted to the outcomes of group activity. It covers solutions to problems, changes in interpersonal relations, improving information flow, increased risk taking, interpersonal growth, and organizational change. New in this edition are:

- A new Practical Tips box on virtual competencies for quality solutions
- 12 tips for successful team building
- The “Apollo syndrome”
- A new section entitled, “Virtual Team Building”
- Information on organizational change

Chapter 9, “Small Group Presentations to an Audience,” offers suggestions for preparing an oral presentation and also discusses three typical formats for group presentations, the panel discussion, the symposium, and the forum discussion. New in this edition are:

- A new section entitled “Technology and Presentations”
- A Practical Tips box on what audiences want
- A new section entitled “The Adult Learner”

Chapter 10, “Observing Group Process,” is designed to help you get more out of your group experiences and to help you learn how to better understand group behavior. New in this edition is:

- A new section entitled “Analyzing Virtual Group Process—Emerging Research”

## Resources for Instructors and Students

*A Systems Approach to Small Group Interaction CD-ROM* that accompanies the text contains learning tools to help students comprehend course concepts. These tools are integrated with the text through the use of CD icons in the text margins:

*Chapter Self-Quizzes* allow students to assess their understanding of chapter concepts and get feedback on why an answer is right or wrong.

*Practical Tips* provide the practical applications of the chapter concepts in an audio format.

*Business Documents Templates* provide forms for resumes, cover letters, and memos.

*Animations* provide step-by-step explanations of communication models and exercises presented in the textbook.

*Videos* dramatize key group communication concepts.

*PowerPoint Tutorial* presents the basic steps to create and use PowerPoint effectively in a presentation.

*Instructor's Resource CD* contains the Instructor's Manual, the Test Bank, and PowerPoint slides.

*The Online Learning Center*, a text specific website at [www.mhhe.com/tubbs9](http://www.mhhe.com/tubbs9), provides instructors with PowerPoint slides, and downloadable supplements and provides students with additional learning tools. Icons in the text direct students to the website's self quizzes, animations, flashcards, and crossword puzzles.

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