



JUNGLE ESCAPE

VERSION FIVE

Theory Background

HRDQ[®]

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Background Information

Three Types of Groups

One important element of teamwork is how a team balances planning time and implementation time for its task work. In general, the amount of time that a group allots to the planning and implementation phases of a project determines, in part, how effectively it will operate as a team. Three types of groups are broadly identified in this activity: Fragmented, Divergent, and Cohesive.

Fragmented Group

A Fragmented Group is characterized by autocratic leadership and/or cliques that press the group into making quick decisions. This situation results in insufficient time and effort allocated to considering alternative strategies for accomplishing the project. Extremely fragmented groups may spend less than a minute planning and may not complete the project in the allotted time. Fragmented Groups may display the following characteristics:

- Lack of involvement and participation by all group members. One person or a minority of the group makes the vital decisions.
- Conflict is suppressed or ignored. If the project gets bogged down, frustration or “if you had asked me” reactions become evident.
- Some group members feel good about the project; others do not.

Divergent Group

A Divergent Group is characterized by passive leadership. Group members tend to be overly cautious in problem solving and decision making. Too many alternatives are considered during the planning phase, resulting in a logjam in planning and little time left for implementation. Divergent Teams may also display the following characteristics.

- They are often unable to reach consensus and try to resolve their issues through voting procedures.
- Although group members may go along with the majority, there is little commitment to the plan or the final product.
- Most group members are dissatisfied with the group’s effort.



Cohesive Team

A Cohesive Team balances the planning and implementation phases to achieve its goals. A cooperative atmosphere develops rapidly and everyone on the team is involved in structuring the work. In general, assembly time is only $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{3}$ of the planning time because many of the potential problems are ironed out in advance. Consequently, total time consumed is usually less than that required by Fragmented or Divergent groups. Cohesive Teams may also display the following characteristics:

- Team members use democratic processes in planning and implementing the project.
- If conflict arises, it is addressed and worked through.
- People feel excited, committed, and involved in the project.
- Cohesive Teams feel very satisfied with their group effort.



Elements of Effective Teamwork

During the life cycle of a particular project, task, or assignment, there are indicators that can help a team determine whether it is operating effectively. These are the critical elements of effective teamwork. The existence of these elements can promote a team's growth and success. On the other hand, the absence of these elements can create distracting challenges that can slow down productivity and cause a team to lose its focus. The *Jungle Escape* activity is designed to surface many of these vital team principles.

When a team is operating at its best, it will demonstrate the following behaviors and actions.

Climate — Group members feel a sense of urgency and interest in the project at hand. A cooperative, supportive environment exists.

Involvement — Everyone is involved in the project in a meaningful way and is making the best use of their unique skills and abilities. In this democratic atmosphere, group member productivity and satisfaction are related to their degree of participation.

Leadership — Leadership rotates among group members, depending on the skills, abilities, and attitude needed by the team. Broadly speaking, leadership is anything that anyone does to help the team complete its tasks and/or work together more effectively.

Goal Setting — Each person understands clearly the project's purpose and scope. One of the team's first steps was to set realistic goals and develop a shared vision of the project outcome.

Problem Solving — The team acknowledges problems quickly and works to address them using a process that is understood by all.

Decision Making — Decisions are made by consensus among the team members. Everyone gives his or her input and listens to the ideas and reactions of others. When a decision is made, group members feel they can support it, even though it might be different from the decision they would have made.

Conflict Management — The team treats conflict as an opportunity. This positive perspective can help to de-escalate the conflict, ensure that it is confronted and handled, and spark the group toward more creative thinking. When conflict is treated as a problem, it is often ignored or suppressed and can become destructive.

Communication — Team members actively listen to one another, respond constructively, and give feedback in a positive way. They feel secure and confident in offering ideas and knowing that those ideas will be welcomed and reinforced. Messages are clear and understood by all.

Task Satisfaction — Team members feel enthusiastic and energetic about their contributions and their involvement in the project. They are energized by their efforts and the group's work, are happy to talk about it, and enjoy celebrating their successes.

Each team member needs to be aware of the dynamics that are operating within the team and find ways to address these critical teamwork elements so that the team grows, develops, and becomes more productive.



Technical Development

Jungle Escape is not a test, and completion times should not be regarded as results against which to measure teams. The real value of this activity is its ability to help the Facilitator introduce some of the concepts that are fundamental to good teamwork.

The following data is offered for comparison purposes only and may help you during group discussion. *Jungle Escape* has been in continuous use since 1980. Thousands of teams have used the exercise. The data reported here is based on 73 management teams from various types of organizations. Fifty-three teams actually completed the exercise. The average size of the team was six team members. The best time recorded was 12 minutes total for both planning and assembly.

Planning Time (in minutes)

| | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Very High | 11–15 |
| High | 8–10 |
| Average | 4–7 |
| Below Average | 1–3 |
| Very Low | 0–59 seconds* |

*0 means that no time was spent in planning the assembly.

Assembly Time (in minutes)

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Very High | 31–33* |
| High | 24–30 |
| Average | 17–23 |
| Below Average | 10–16 |
| Very Low | 6–9 |

*More than the 30 minutes recommended time was allowed.

Total Time for Planning and Assembly Combined (in minutes)

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Very High | 35–37* |
| High | 30–34 |
| Average | 23–29 |
| Below Average | 16–22 |
| Very Low | 12–15 |

*At least one team was allowed 37 minutes to complete the activity.
A time of 12–15 minutes for completion would be substantially better than the average time taken.



Learn More

Experience the difference between a cohesive team and a fragmented one with *Jungle Escape!* Challenge your team to work together in a thrilling survival scenario that enhances their planning, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills



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