



PAPER TOWER EXERCISE

STEP 1. The group leader will organize the class into groups of **5-8 people**.

STEP 2. Each group receives one 12-inch stack of newspapers and one roll of masking tape. The groups have **20 minutes to plan** a paper tower that will be judged on the basis of three criteria: **height, stability, and beauty**. No physical work is allowed during the planning period.

STEP 3. Each group has **30 minutes** for the actual construction of the paper tower.

STEP 4. Each group should sit near their towers. The leader will then direct you to individually examine all the paper towers. Your group must then come to a consensus as to which tower is the winner. A spokesperson from your group should report its decision and the criteria the group used in reaching it.

STEP 5. Discussion. In your small groups, answer the following questions:

1. What percent of the plan did each member of your group contribute?
2. Did your group have a leader? Who? How was he or she chosen?
3. Which of the following best describes your role in the planning session: **dominator, facilitator, inventor, design engineer, questioner, clarifier, negativist, humorist, artist, etc.**? Which describes your role in the building session?
4. How did the group generally respond to the ideas that were expressed?
5. List specific behaviors exhibited during the planning and building session that you felt were **helpful** to the group.
6. List specific behaviors exhibited during the planning and building session that you felt were **dysfunctional** to the group.

STEP 6. Discussion. With the entire class, answer the following questions:

1. How did the groups' behavior differ?
2. What characterized effective groups?
3. How does your knowledge of group dynamics, specifically norms, roles, goals, structure, and decision-making explain your own and other groups' behavior.
4. How could the behavior of the groups be improved?

This exercise is based on "The Paper Tower Exercise: Experiencing Leadership and Group Dynamics" by Phillip L Hunsaker and Johanna S. Hunsaker, unpublished manuscript. A brief description is included in *Exchange: The Organizational Behavior Teaching Journal* 4(2) (1979): 49.