

TECHNIQUES 4 EFFECTIVE GROUP DISCUSSION

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First Edition : 2017

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- Published by** : Mrs. Meena Pandey for **Himalaya Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.**,
"Ramdoot", Dr. Bhalerao Marg, Girgaon, Mumbai - 400 004.
Phone: 022-23860170, 23863863; **Fax:** 022-23877178
E-mail: himpub@vsnl.com; **Website:** www.himpub.com
- Branch Offices** :
- New Delhi** : "Pooja Apartments", 4-B, Murari Lal Street, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj,
New Delhi - 110 002. Phone: 011-23270392, 23278631; Fax: 011-23256286
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Phone: 033-32449649; Mobile: 7439040301
- DTP by** : Sudhakar Shetty (For Himalaya Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.)
- Printed at** : M/s Sri Sai Art Printer Hyderabad. On behalf of HPH.

PREFACE

The way individual speaks and interacts with other group members plays a vital role in Group Discussion. This has a powerful impact on the way our words are perceived by others. So, everyone has to take care the way they speak during Group Discussion. The message to be conveyed should be clear and concise and has to be interactive and within the scope of the discussion. It should not be out of the topic and lead to something else. One should not repeat the same point on and on and one has to raise intelligent points which let others think about it.

This book provides all the tips and experiences of Group Discussion. Try this in every group you are interacting with. This will help in leading the group and also participating in the group which is very essential professionally. The present book is written for the students of Management, Computer Science, Engineering, Pharmacy, and for other professional courses who are going to attend the campus interviews.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to **Prof. G. Tulasi Rao sir**, who is my teacher and who is my role model for encouraging me at every stage of my academic career. I also thank Prof. D. Rambabu sir, Prof. B. Rama Krishna Rao sir, Prof. T. Kamaraju sir, Prof. D. Vishnu Murthy sir, Prof. K. Venugopal sir and to all my teachers whose blessings have always been a source of strength and inspiration in all my academic endeavors. Thanks are also extended to the Heads and Faculty of different colleges, Dr. B. Siva Kumar, Dr. L. Ramesh, Dr. C.P. Patnaik, Dr. B. Balaram, Sri V. Mahesh, Sri T. Balaji, Sri B. Upendra, Sri J. Prabhakara Rao, Dr. B. Rajesh, Sri Ch. Venugopal, Dr. D. Srinivasa Kumar, Dr. T. Lokeswara Rao, Sri L. Prasad Rao, Smt. Shanthi Prasad, Dr. M.P.S. Ganesh, Sri Ravi Kumar, Dr. Ch. Karuna and Sri P. Manoj Kumar. I shall fail in my duty if I do not acknowledge my gratitude to **my parents, family members, and friends** for their cooperation and help.

Last but not the least, I have to thank all of my students of Gayatri College, Andhra University, Pydah College of Engineering, Sivani Group of Colleges, Sri Venkateswara College, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, who have helped me in the publication of this book form.

Dr. N. Santosh Ranganath



CONTENTS

I.	Group Discussion Techniques	1 – 105
1	Introduction	3
2	Aims and Objectives of Group Discussion	7
3	The Purpose of Group Discussion	10
4	Significance of Group Discussion	12
5	The Pillars of Group Discussion	15
6	The Way of Facing a Group Discussion	17
7	Factors to be Considered for a Group Discussion	20
8	Classification of Group Discussions	23
9	Selection of Topic in a Group Discussion	25
10	Tips for Successful Group Discussion	27
11	Preparation for a Group Discussion	31
12	Winners' Skills for a Group Discussion	35
13	Leadership Skills	39
14	Leading a Team in a Group Discussion	47
15	Team Building Skills	52
16	Body Language	58
17	Questioning Skills	69
18	Ten Cs Concerning Quality Questions	74
19	Steps for Acing a Group Discussion	77
20	Challenges for Group Discussion	79
21	Personality Traits	84
22	Do's in a Group Discussion	90
23	Don'ts in a Group Discussion	91
24	Major things to Remember	93
25	Techniques for Group Discussion	95
II.	Model Evaluation Sheet	107 - 111

III.	Topics for Group Discussion	113 - 208
1	Gender Equality	115
2	Empowering Youth	118
3	Corporate Social Responsibility	122
4	Financial Inclusion	126
5	Women Empowerment	129
6	Special Economic Zones	134
7	Rural Entrepreneurship	137
8	Right to Education	142
9	Global Financial Crisis	146
10	Corporate Governance	150
11	E-commerce	153
12	Indian Insurance Sector	157
13	Foreign Direct Investment	160
14	E-tailing	164
15	E-governance and ICTS	168
16	Nanotechnology	172
17	Green Banking	176
18	MGNREGA Programme	180
19	Social Networking Sites	183
20	Stock Market	187
21	Green Water Management	191
22	Work-Life Balance	195
23	Food Security Bill	198
24	Live-in Relationships	201
25	Digital India	205
References		209 - 210

I. Group Discussion Techniques



Chapter

1

INTRODUCTION

Group Discussion is a methodology which is used by organizations to select candidates for employment or admission to certain professional courses like MBA, MCA, Engineering BBA, etc. For example, in campus recruitment, group discussion is held along with interview by most of the companies.

Even in the case of off-campus recruitment, this practice is followed by many organisations. Similarly, for admission to MBA course, group discussion is invariably conducted along with interview. Therefore, it is desirable for you to understand dynamics of group discussion and how you can perform well in it.

As a professional in the working world, there will be times when you will be required to participate in group discussions. This book offers helpful articles analyzing the rules for success in group discussions. Your career and status within your field can improve if you learn some guidelines and tactics that refine your group discussion skills.

If you have trouble speaking out of turn, interrupting others, or a lack of confidence about properly expressing yourself, the techniques about handling yourself in a group discussion can be invaluable. This is helpful advice for any individual working with other people in any industry. Discussing ideas in a group is one of the best ways to solve the problem. When a person becomes a burden in group discussions due to lack of experience, an excess amount of excitement, or a general lack of social skills, these factors can contribute to how you are viewed by your colleagues and superiors in the workplace.

If you are in a managerial position, it is imperative to provide an open forum for discussion where your subordinates feel comfortable sharing their ideas. If a person participating in a group discussion feels that their opinion will be ignored then the members within the group will hesitate to share what could be valuable solutions to business issues in group discussions.



Group discussions are common in our society, and have a variety of purposes, from planning an intervention or initiative to mutual support to problem-solving to addressing an issue of local concern. An effective discussion group depends on a leader or facilitator who can guide it through an open process — the group chooses what it's discussing, if not already determined, discusses it with no expectation of particular conclusions, encourages civil disagreement and argument, and makes sure that every member is included and no one dominates. It helps greatly if the leader comes to the task with a democratic or, especially, a collaborative style, and with an understanding of how a group functions.

A good group discussion leader has to pay attention to the process and content of the discussion as well as to the people who make up the group. She has to prepare the space and the setting to the extent possible; help the group establish ground rules that will keep it moving civilly and comfortably; provide whatever materials are necessary; familiarize herself with the topic; and make sure that any pre-discussion readings or assignments get to participants in plenty of time. Then she has to guide the discussion, being careful to promote an open process; involve everyone and let no one dominate; attend to the personal issues and needs of individual group members when they affect the group; summarize or clarify when appropriate; ask questions to keep the discussion moving, and put aside her own agenda, ego, and biases. It's not an easy task, but it can be extremely rewarding. An effective group discussion can lay the groundwork for action and real community change.

Group Discussion (GD) plays a major role in selecting the final candidates in any interview for the Corporate. It is also a method used to test the fluency of a candidate. It is used for testing the potential and the behavioural aspects of the candidates which reflects the inherent quality of the candidates. It is a modern way of assessing the student's personality. GD is a forum where people sit together to discuss a topic with the common objective of finding a solution for a problem or an issue that is given. GD is conducted to measure certain attributes in a candidate such as content, communication skills, group behaviour and leadership skills. The students have to be very fluent in English if they want to participate in a Group Discussion. In any group discussion the students are required to speak constantly on a topic, so good communicative skill is a must.

The speech should be without grammatical errors. Use of appropriate vocabulary would be an added advantage. Group discussions are also conducted to test the candidates' fluency, pronunciation and communicative skills. Listening carefully is another important aspect of a group discussion. In any group discussion the candidates are required to listen to others. If the candidate's listening skills are poor, then they won't be able to concentrate. Effective listening would help the candidates respond to others in a better way. This book presents the importance of the GD and the role of the participants in the GD in a detailed manner, so that this book will be helpful for the students' community those who want to participate in the group discussions successfully.

The Group Discussion is a form where people sit together and discuss the issue administered to them with the common objective of discussing in a whole some way. It is very important to note down the topic as the exact wording. The group discussion allows the selectors to judge the individual's performance and behaviour in a group. In a typical group discussion, there are 8-10 participants seated in semi-circle or a U shaped arrangement. Occasionally there might be a round table for a group discussion. The panellists sit in front of the group or in the case of a round table, they may observe the group from a distance. 15-20 min. is usually given for a group discussion. Some Corporate/Institute conduct the group discussion for an hour. There are a number of roles that a candidate can play in a GD such as Initiators, Data Giver, Criticizer, Supporter, Listener, Questioner, Traffic Policeman, Spectator and Leader (Coordinator). It has been observed that many candidates act or behave in a certain way or make their points in a particular manner. English is the most common language spoken

everywhere. During the Group Discussion, the panel essentially evaluates the candidate's potential to be a leader and also his/her ability to work in teams. In today global Scenario, the engineering students and practitioners need to enhance not only their English communication skills, but also soft skills, in order to meet out the competition and to have an edge over the competing corporate world. 'Be Different' is the success in mantra in group discussions.

Soft skills are a combination of interpersonal people skills, social skills, communication skills, character traits, attitudes, career attributes and EQ (emotional intelligence quotient) amongst others. The Collins English Dictionary defines the term "soft skills" as "desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude."

Soft skills are a cluster of personality traits that characterize one's relationships in a social milieu with other people; these skills can include social graces, communication abilities, language skills, personal habits, cognitive or emotional empathy, time management, teamwork and leadership traits. National Business Education Association deems soft skills as critical for being industrious in today's workplace. Soft Skills complements hard skills for productive workplace performance and everyday life competencies. Hard skills also known as technical skills were the only skills necessary for career employment and were generally quantifiable and measurable from educational background, work experience or through interview. In twentieth century soft skills are a major differentiator and absolutely necessary for employability. A study conducted by Harvard University noted that 80 per cent achievements in career are determined by soft skills and only 20 per cent by hard skills. Experts say soft skills training should begin for a person when they are students, to perform efficiently in their academic environment as well as in their future workplace.

A person's soft skill is an important part of their individual contribution to the success of an organization. Organizations which deal with customers face-to-face are generally more successful if they promote activities for staffs to develop these skills through wellness enhancing programs. Training or rewarding for personal habits or traits such as dependability and conscientiousness can yield significant return on investment for an organization. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard qualifications. Studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 CEOs established that 75 per cent of long term job success resulted from people skills and only 25 per cent from technical skills. Hence, soft skills are as important as cognitive/technical skills.

Following is a list of soft skills compiled by Eastern Kentucky University from executive listings.

- Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening.
- Courtesy – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful.
- Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable.
- Integrity – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what's right.
- Interpersonal skills – nice, personable, sense of humour, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth and social skills.
- Positive attitude – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident.
- Professionalism – business like, well-dressed, appearance, poised.

- Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense.
- Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful and collaborative.
- Work ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance.

Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, career prospects and job performance. Unlike hard skills, which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are broadly applicable. Soft skills are personal attributes that describe an individual's ability to interact with others. Soft skills, also known as people skills, complement hard skills to enhance an individual's relationships, job performance and career prospects. It's often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get — and keep — the job. Unlike hard skills, which comprise a person's technical skill set and ability to perform certain functional tasks, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable across job titles and industries. Many soft skills are tied to an individual's personalities rather than any formal training, and are thus considered more difficult to develop than hard skills. Soft skills are often described in terms of personality traits, such as optimism, integrity and a sense of humour. These skills are also defined by abilities that can be practiced, such as leadership, empathy, communication and sociability. IT organizations aim to employ individuals possessing both hard and soft skills. However, the demand for the latter is increasing, especially among those in IT leadership roles. This demand is due to a "soft skills gap," or a perceived lack of these skills, among many IT staffs, as well as the increasing need to align IT with business goals.

