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**THREE EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA:
PERFORMANCE, PROCESS, AND PERSONAL**

Before answering the question of what elements contribute to a work group's effectiveness, we need to first consider what it means for a group to be effective. An effective work group meets the three criteria listed in Exhibit 2.1.

Exhibit 2.1. Three Criteria for Effective Groups

Performance: The services that the group delivers or the products it makes meet or exceed the performance standards of the people who receive it, use it, or review it.

Process: The processes and structures used to carry out the work maintain and preferably enhance the ability of members to work together on subsequent group tasks.

Personal: The group experience contributes to the growth and well-being of its members.

Source: Adapted from Hackman (1987).

Rather than simply measure the quality and quantity of the service or product against some objective or internal group standard, the first criterion – *performance* – uses the expectations and satisfaction of the group's customers to determine whether the service or product is acceptable. There are two reasons for this. First, many groups do not have objective standards of performance that can be measured clearly or easily. Second, because the group is a system, the value of its output depends greatly on those outside the group, who either evaluate its performance directly or receive its products or services, more than on any objective performance index alone. This criterion reinforces the idea that a group must respond to the demands of its customers if it is to be effective (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990). A group must meet the demands of two types of customer: internal (those inside the organization who either receive the group's work or evaluate its performance) and external (those outside the organization who receive the group's work). The group's own standards for performance are still important, but they do not replace the assessments of others.

The second criterion, which I call *process*, takes into account that most groups work together over an extended period on a series of tasks. Consequently, the processes and structures they use must enable them to work together in a way that enhances their ability to do so in the future. For example, group processes that burn out members or that erode trust among members reduce their capability to work together on subsequent group tasks. Having a process and skills for reflecting on their behavior in order to learn from it becomes an essential tool for meeting the second criterion.

¹ This book can be found in the library of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the MUni.

The third criterion, which I call *personal*, is that the group experience contributes to the growth and well-being of its members. Group members reasonably expect that through their work group they can meet some of their personal needs – say, doing work that is important or that makes a difference in others' lives, or the need to feel competent, or the need to learn. The members' needs can also lead them to set their own standards of quality for their service or product. In the long run, a group that does not meet its members' needs is less effective than one that does.

To be effective, the group must meet all three criteria, which are interrelated.

For example, consider a group in which members manage conflict such that trust among the members is diminished. This in turn leads members to withhold information from each other. As a result, key information is not available to the full group, and the quality of the service the group produces begins to drop. Finally, members' personal needs for feeling competent suffer as they find themselves part of a group with declining quality and no means of solving the problem. As this example illustrates, if in the long run one criterion is not met, it affects the other two criteria. Groups are not, however, either effective or ineffective; their effectiveness is measured on a continuum of effectiveness.

Three factors contribute to group effectiveness: group process, group structure, and group context (Hackman, 1987; Hackman, 1990). Each factor has a number of elements (Figure 2.1). On the one hand, group process and group structure can be thought of as characteristics of a group. The group context, on the other hand, comprises elements of the larger organization that are relevant to the group's structure and process. The interrelationships among group process, group structure, and group context are complex. For now, it is sufficient to say that each element can influence the others, as illustrated by the arrows in the diagram. As I will discuss later in this chapter, **facilitators intervene primarily through a group's process and structure, enabling the group to examine and perhaps change its process, structure, and group context.**