

1

So, You Want Other People to Work Well Together?



Getting people to work well together is a challenge. No matter the role you play on a team, in an organization, or for a community, getting others to do what you want can feel like working with a bunch of chickens or cats. Try to get chickens to move calmly in a particular direction and they will scatter frantically before you (and behind), going every which way including up. Try to focus a cat on something uninteresting to it and you will be treated as beneath contempt. You may as well try to converse with a cabbage! Fortunately, getting people to work well together is a little easier than herding birds or focusing felines. It is the purpose of this book to help you figure out how to become more effective when you try to give direction to groups of people.

It can be difficult to believe that your own actions matter much when it seems that the whole world is run by feuding and impervious governments, giant and impersonal corporations, and various religions that seem determined to contradict and condemn each other. Explanations for what is happening in the world are dominated by talk about enormous economic exchanges and the activities of a few key people who seem to wield the hammer of change all by themselves.

In this book, we try to change that predominant framing, arguing that it is really interacting people who shape the groups that shape the world.

The title of the first unit in this book incorporates our assumption that: *You have power as a direction-giver in your team, organization, or community.* In this first chapter, we explain that your power to get things done usually comes from getting other people to work well together. We identify five ways you can shape your group as you help to give it direction. These five ways can be useful to you in any group: from a team to a complex organization, from disjointed social movements to formal campaigns to legally incorporated communities. Understanding the ways to give direction to a group helps give you more power as a direction-giver in your group.

Being able to give direction well is important to you and to others in your group: to anyone who wants the group to succeed. To give direction to others, it helps to know the processes people use to give direction to each other as members of a group. It also helps to know why they think they need to be in the group. Why are they on this team, working in this business, or a member of this community? When you find out what motivates the people in a group, you can figure out the kind of direction they are willing to receive from you for their group. As motivation changes, so can the kind of direction you attempt to provide. Our thesis is that *each of us is responsible for helping our own groups to thrive, which requires our best direction-giving efforts to help frame effective experiences for our groups.*

❖ **GROUPS CAN CREATE A COMMUNITY, CALM A COMPLEX ORGANIZATION, OR MOVE MILLIONS**

"Never underestimate the power of a small group of dedicated people attempting to change the world. In fact, that is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

When something significant changes in our world, it is human nature to try to explain what is happening. Explanations tend to attribute simple causes for change. Leadership, as a concept, treats causality as emanating from the acts of a key person (e.g., the star member of a team, the founder of the organization, the governor, the CEO).

Some people tend to treat causes and consequences as the work of the gods or God or joss or fate or karma or magic: Some spirit or force

or the universe is blamed in their accounts about what happens that is bad or good. Other people tend to explain the failure or success of a team, organization, or community as the consequence of efforts made by a prominent group member, usually labeled the leader. During the past two centuries, more and more people use leadership as part of their accounts.¹

Leadership is a concept that helps us answer questions about why things happen. It helps us to organize our stories of significant change. Why is it so useful? Well, first, because there are times when a single person's efforts do make the difference. Regardless, second, it is easier to frame a compelling story about what is happening in a business or country around a central person than it is to accurately detail the myriad interactions among many people that are the more likely causes (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). If people are not buying accounts that seem too complex, when they are unwilling to use fate or the gods to explain what is happening, then making a story about acts of leadership can be compelling.

Something to Think About and Discuss With Others

We like heroes and villains: to adore or to hate. But real people and how they behave are rarely so purely good or bad or alone in their doings. In 2006, the University of Miami's (Florida) football season was marred by a brawl before the start of a game early in the season. Thirteen Hurricane players were suspended, and head coach Larry Cocker was fired at the end of the season just 4 years after he was lauded for coaching Miami to a national championship. Getting another coaching job was difficult for Cocker, who said that the 2006 brawl was a topic raised in the first 30 seconds of subsequent employment interviews. Ask yourself what a simple causal story omits. A team brawls/wins. Who is the coach? That is who is responsible. That is who must be blamed: either praised or denigrated.

¹"The word leadership is a sophisticated, modern concept. In earlier times, words meaning 'head of state,' 'military commander,' . . . 'chief,' or 'king' were common . . . [to differentiate] the ruler from other members of society. A preoccupation with leadership, as opposed to headship based on inheritance, usurpation, or appointment, occurred predominantly in countries with an Anglo-Saxon heritage. Although the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933) noted the appearance of the word 'leader' in the English language as early as the year 1300, the word 'leadership' did not appear until the first half of the nineteenth century . . . [and] did not appear in most other modern languages until recent times" (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 11).

The enormity of what happens in the world can overwhelm someone who wants to make a difference. That is especially true when explanations assign causality for what is going on to an impersonal bureaucracy, or to a concentration of power in the hands of one or a few highly-placed individuals, or to the whims of the gods. Any bureaucracy, any concentration of power, any institutionalized process of control ultimately serves more as a mechanism for change than as its source. Instead, important intentional changes almost always can be traced back to interactions among people. As people talk, they can help to instigate and to breathe life into and to shape something that becomes meaningful over time.

The acts of a single person are always necessary but rarely sufficient for successful change. Without attention and thrust provided by others along the way, most acts fade into obscurity. For example, Thomas Jefferson is recognized for drafting the Declaration of Independence. However, that document carries little weight without the signatures of the other delegates. It is made more powerful because the colonial representatives agreed to work at their task until they reached sufficient consensus that they were able to join together in a “unanimous declaration” of independence. It is made more powerful still because more than 200 years later, people continue to group together in ways that make it so. *Interactions among, contributions from, and thrust provided by several people are part of almost every idea animated into meaningful life.*

Here is how the process works. A person or two (probably as a result of interacting with others) becomes interested in making a change. That person or two will try to recruit others to support their cause. As like-minded individuals begin to group together, the interactions they share and the work they do become the basis for starting and animating the change. The change that they work toward becomes clearer to them as they talk about it. Each story they tell, each interaction they share, and every minor little decision they make can help to shape the change.

This process is in play whether you are in a family or find yourself in the most complex of bureaucracies. Each person can make a difference to the group. Each group has the potential to influence other groups. *When a few people start grouping together, they can co-construct acts that set great waves of change into motion: acts that can change their world.* Interacting groups of interacting people create, shape, and sustain the mightiest to much meeker social institutions: everything from the United States of America to a small worship community outside Tehran.

Every social institution is a human collaboration. We must collaborate in order to interact, and we must collaborate in order to work together. Grouping is the name we give to all the many ways people collaborate. *Grouping* is people bending and blending their ideas and energies so that they can accomplish something together (Burtis & Turman, 2006). People group together in collaborative service to a shared task, ideal, or social institution.

Grouping includes any collaboration, even across time and place. Grouping can be found on any team or in any boardroom where those involved can communicate directly. However, grouping is also accomplished outside small, shared-moment entities. Whenever and however people interact to try to blend their ideas and efforts, they are grouping. It is also something we do over time and in service to less organized tasks or distinct organizations. Tom Jefferson and others in that group collaborated around their attempt to declare independence. What they accomplished was not just a product—they instigated an ongoing grouping process. By continued grouping efforts over time, in service to the evolving group called the United States, a form of the entity they began continues to this day.

Groups of interacting people play an important role in most significant human endeavors. After the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007, a few individuals perceived the need to develop a campus alert system to notify students of impending danger. Their perception that they need to respond to the shootings in a positive manner creates an exigency for them to group together and develop a plan. As they group together, they perceive an unfolding flow of new exigencies about how their interaction is playing out and what, in turn, they should do. Over time, their initial interactions spawn actions by other groups of people and the development of campus alert systems across the country. Grouping is how we collaborate. *It is while we are grouping together that giving direction to each other becomes important.* That is where you and this book come into the picture: You can decide to improve your ability to give direction to whichever collaborations matter most to you in your life.

Whatever it is that you want to accomplish in life, other people are probably needed to provide some thrust in support of your efforts. If you want to be successful, you need to group effectively with others who help you accomplish your ends. No small team or large bureaucracy operates with a single mind: Some involve tens, hundreds, even thousands of small groups of interdependent, interacting people whose efforts become the lifeblood of effective action. *So, you need other people to work well together.*

❖ **GROUPING, GROUP DIRECTION, AND DIRECTION-GIVING ARE HUMAN RESPONSES TO EXIGENCIES**

You cannot work well with others unless at least a few of those others are willing to do so too. And people are only willing to help breathe life into an idea or enterprise if they perceive an exigency to do so. To give direction well, you must figure out what motivates others, over time, to be in the group and to try to help the group. People perceive exigencies that guide their choices regarding various possible activities in a group. The exigencies they perceive help them decide what they are willing to do and what they are not.

An *exigency* is a particular, compelling impulse that you simply must try to communicate with others to address (see Table 1.1). An exigency is an imperfection or opportunity marked by a sufficient amount of urgency that it stimulates your strategic attempt to communicate with someone in order to address the exigency (Bitzer, 1968). If the urgency you feel is not sufficient to stimulate a specific communication

Table 1.1 Examples of Exigencies for Grouping

- “Oh no,” thinks Paige, “our quarterly report shows expenses spinning out of control so much that I’ve got to talk to my division managers and to corporate so that we can begin to develop a plan for cutting equipment costs somehow.”
- “Glory be,” says Cornelia to her friends, “this park is a mess. It would be fun to talk to the auxiliary: Find who else is interested in getting together and making this place presentable.”
- “Would you like to get some coffee with me?” asks Rune, who wants to cultivate a social relationship with someone special at his workplace.
- Hiram claims that we need to take top-soil erosion seriously, which is why I think we ought to organize a seminar on the subject.
- “I wonder,” muses Pagan, a senior adviser to the president of the United States, “which of you will step forward to be the person in charge of our task force to study cyber-terrorism.”
- “Doggone it,” ruminates Clee, “I’m certain that the health services market is going to strengthen significantly over the next decade as the boomers retire and I’m in no position alone to take advantage of it unless maybe I can get a group of you guys, my old college peeps, to join me in setting up an investment circle.”

attempt designed to address the exigency, it is not an exigency because it fails to motivate an aspect of your interaction (or some other closely related action). The reasons people have for being in a group and for acting in different ways over time in that group can be boiled down into the various, changing exigencies they perceive, which they use to help them make their grouping choices (Burtis & Turman, 2006).

The exigencies people perceive provide windows into their motives and help shape their choices. In particular, grouping exigencies help explain direction-giving and direction-receiving choices. If you understand the exigencies in play, they can help you refine your efforts to give direction to a group. It is the grouping exigencies that people perceive that they use to help guide their choices. You need to keep that in mind, regardless of what your reasoning tells you ought to matter to them more. Understanding the exigencies in play can help you understand seemingly irrational actions and seemingly intractable individual choices.

When you need other people to work well together, what do you do? You might begin by talking to a few people about your idea or concern. That talk may result in some of those others joining you in an effort to act effectively together. Others may spend their energies attacking what you suggest. In either case, you provide direction to a group as you attract their attention to your idea. In short, once you attempt grouping or direction-giving in response to a perceived exigency, that attempt can become an exigency for the actions of others. It was, in part, parental outrage about the lack of warning for students at Virginia Tech that drew the attention of other parents, university officials, and lawmakers around the country.

When you must rely on others, it creates a double burden for you. Not only must you find a way to communicate effectively with those people about the exigencies that concern you, but you must also find a way to communicate effectively about the exigencies that concern them. At Virginia Tech, for example, some of the grouping efforts after the shooting did not focus on an early alert system but rather on expanding access to weapons for all students across campus so they could directly respond to such attacks. There are always choices to be made about which direction the group should take: Offering direction to a group helps people make their choices.

The exigencies we perceive become evident in how we engage a group, including how we frame and respond to our situation. Framing a compelling story can help to orient others to your point of view. To get people to work well together, you must frame a story that creates an exigency for action in their minds. Do not just assume that they will do what you say. You need to find a way to fuel a sense of exigency in

them. If you fail, they may not pay attention to you at all or they may begin to actively oppose your efforts. Framing a compelling story can include telling about the experience your group could be having if others will behave as you suggest. Framing a compelling story about a potential group experience is at the heart of many successful attempts to provide direction to a group.

For grouping to be effective over time, people must begin to converge upon a shared sense of *group direction*. This convergence manifests as a shared set of words, meanings, and stories that grouping people think represent their group: their common concerns, their shared experiences, and the outcomes they desire from being in the group. The people in any team, organization, or community co-construct direction for their group using such shared terms and ideas. Their converged-upon sense of *direction* will probably include the following:

1. “who” and “what” grouping people think that they are as a system,
2. “where” and “why” grouping people think that they want to go to be successful in their enterprise,
3. “how” they think that they want to go about getting to their desired vision/outcome, and
4. “how well” they think that they are doing in their efforts.

The sense of a group’s direction may vary among its members, with some believing that the group is going in the right direction, others who do not like where the group is going, and still others who do not much care. For example, some may sense that group direction is healthy and dynamic (“we are really doing some good work here!”) or that their group is struggling (“we are going nowhere; we are lost and confused”). The direction may even be destructive (“we are tearing ourselves apart bickering,” “I’m sick of this group: You can all go to hell!”). Whether the group is succeeding, flailing about, or failing, individual members probably have a sense of the group’s direction. However, effective groups have a shared and productive sense of direction. For that to happen, it must be co-constructed: Effective groups require effective direction-giving.

Direction-giving happens whenever a grouping individual commits an act or makes a statement that commands the attention of others in the group. The action may be good or bad for the group, may help to move it in a negative or positive direction, or may function to reinforce what is already under way. Direction-giving can involve many tens, hundreds, even thousands of communicative interactions.

Messages are created and exchanged in attempts to co-construct some shared sense of what the group is and should be doing. Members may take turns suggesting or providing direction to their group, or one member may predominate as a direction-giver in a given case or set of circumstances.

Direction-givers are people who help to co-construct a sense of direction for the group. *Anyone who helps a group to thrive (or to fail) is a direction-giver.* Direction-giving happens whenever a group member helps to orient or to move the group: focusing or employing the attentions and energies of those who are grouping. Whenever someone is providing direction to a group, it means that others are focusing on what the direction-giver has to offer. Usually grouping involves people taking turns offering or providing direction to the group. Members tend to alternate giving direction and receiving direction from others in the group. Sometimes direction is offered, but nobody takes the bait. Sometimes the direction offered is attacked by others. Through such give-and-take, interacting people begin to co-create and share a sense of their grouping experience: the story of their group. Every group needs effective direction-givers in order to thrive.

Giving direction well requires rhetorical sophistication. Knowing how the exigencies that are perceived may affect choices regarding what direction someone will accept is at the heart of that sophistication. Effective direction-giving is always a rhetorical process. *Rhetorical* acts are tactical or strategic attempts to use communication or other symbolic behavior to accomplish your desired ends. You are being rhetorical when you try to influence someone. *Rhetoric* manifests in the persuasive aspects of your message: the words and deeds you use to try to influence someone's choices. If you forget the rhetorical nature of your attempts to give direction, you are much less likely to frame compelling stories for the group's consideration and much less likely to be effective.

Something to Think About and Discuss With Others

In 2005, Cindy Sheehan held a silent vigil outside President Bush's Crawford, Texas, ranch in part because her son was killed in action in 2004. Her rhetorical choice encouraged others to join her grouping effort and was one of the acts that inspired debate about U.S. action in Iraq. Others around the country used a variety of other rhetorical strategies to support or oppose the war (rallies, marches, parades, Web sites, speeches, town hall meetings, and support for candidates with particular war positions). What other rhetorical efforts are in play as people attempt to initiate, perpetuate, change, or stop war choices?

Becoming aware of grouping exigencies is a valuable rhetorical resource because being in touch with those exigencies can help you to make more informed interaction choices. You need to figure out which of your possible words and deeds might best help to get other people to work well together. To do so, you must consider the exigencies they perceive as most compelling in a particular situation and/or over time.

Because exigencies change as people interact, so will a group's needs. Each group needs different types of direction-giving efforts over time. Each type is a different approach to giving direction. Each type may be needed by a group at different points in time. Each person may act as each of the different types over time. What distinguishes among types of direction-givers is a combination of the exigency perceived for needing direction and the direction-giving behavior that should be offered to the group in response.

What groups of people are willing to hear in the moment affects what direction they are willing to receive. All such choices filter through the exigencies they perceive as most important to their group at a given point in time. They also consider how well the direction that is offered seems to address those exigencies and they consider the communication credentials and direction-giving skills of the person who is offering direction. Each person who tries to provide direction to the group will find that their efforts are usually accepted by others only to the extent that those others think that the offered direction fits the situation as they perceive it to be.

Consider the following descriptions about various types of groups. Even from the snippet provided, you can tell whether the group is heading in the right direction or requires change.

- "Our company is really making progress now."
- "Our town is falling apart. Everyone seems to be leaving and if they close the school, they might just as well shut us down."
- "Our team's preparations are on track, but we are still kind of just sputtering along."
- "Our potential merger is like a love affair; it feels like an adventure, but it is a trip with an unknown destination, and we just cannot risk getting seduced into this scheme."
- "If we want real change in this country, we have got to reject the old ways and form a new covenant, which we can use to transform ourselves."

Each statement frames the group's experience from the perspective of the person making the account. Each frame suggests a longer story

attached to that person's opinion regarding the presence or absence of effective direction-giving in his or her group. The first group appears to our storyteller to be well managed. The second apparently needs drastic change in order to survive a crisis. The third may need some form of additional guidance to improve performance. The fourth should avoid making a drastic change in direction. The fifth group may not even exist yet, except as an exigency for action in the mind of the person trying to call others to arms against what is happening in their country. The exigencies being framed are different in each of the scenarios, and so each group requires efforts from a different type of direction-giver.

The exigencies people perceive for grouping should help determine the type of direction-giving you offer or provide. The more closely you can tie your direction-giving attempts to the exigencies people perceive for grouping, the more potential you have to be effective.

❖ **DIRECTION-GIVING TYPES INCLUDE THE WORK OF A DOER, FOLLOWER, GUIDE, MANAGER, AND LEADER**

All grouping members play a part in giving direction to and in receiving direction from others in the group regardless of whether they are the supervisor, chairperson, president, head honcho, or prince of particularly pertinent personnel. What matters more than any particular title or position is what the individual does that provides direction to a group. Across the almost infinite number of possible direction-giving acts, five general forms of direction-giving behavior tend to recur (doing, following, guiding, managing, and leading), which we translate into the five types of direction-givers: a doer, follower, guide, manager, and leader. As a set, *the five types show how any member can help give direction to a group: to help a group to thrive.*

The differences between types of direction-givers matter. When you attempt to act as each type of direction-giver, you must demonstrate to the group that you have the specific communication credentials and skills required of that type. It is those varying credentials and skills that allow you to give a particular type of direction well (see Chapters 2 and 3). A group may be willing to accept direction from you as a doer but not as a guide. Or, it may be willing to use you as a guide one day and not the next.

Cindy Sheehan acts as a guide while her silent protest attracts the attention and support of others. However, she failed in her 2008 bid to get elected to Congress, which means that voters decide not to make

her into one of the managers entrusted to help make decisions about funding the war. Different groups, perceiving different exigencies and different direction-giving skills on her part, are differently willing over different times to accept the different types of direction-giving she offers.

Sometimes the same group receives different types of direction from the same individual over time. Former Army Chief of Staff General Shenseki was a manager until his retirement during the second Bush administration. Then, he could no longer influence the Iraq war as a manager, but he could offer guidanship through his insights into the long-term implications of a current war plan. When he was asked to give direction by the Obama administration, it is again as a manager, this time over the Department of Veterans Affairs.

There are five types of direction-givers (Burtis, 1995; Burtis & Turman, 2006). Brief definitions show why each type tends to recur (see Table 1.2). A *doer* offers direction to a group by taking the initiative to act on behalf of the group. A doer's work begins alone but is on behalf of the group and must, over time, draw attention from others in the group for the doer's work to provide any direction to the group. Acting as a doer is a type of direction-giving that initiates something that does not require interaction until the point at which the group decides whether to accept the fruits of the doer's work. A *follower* offers direction to a group by providing support for the direction-giving attempt of another person. A follower gives direction by enhancing or limiting the group's momentum as it responds to the direction initiated by other people. A *guide* offers direction to a group by providing something on which the group can focus its attentions for the moment.

Doers, followers, and guides can play key direction-giving roles and are always necessary for effective groups. Managers and leaders are additional, specialized types. A *manager* has the formal responsibility and authority to offer direction by attempting to marshal the resources of the group. For example, a manager may oversee group processes, personnel, or other resources (e.g., time, money, equipment). A *leader* offers a transformative vision for the future of a group facing its end. As a set, the five types name the kinds of direction groups may need, given the shifting exigencies they face. Further elaboration on each of the types is useful at this point, and we provide detailed discussions of the communication credentials and skills involved in acting as each type of direction-giver in Chapters 2 and 3.

A *doer* takes the initiative to act on behalf of a group. This individual takes responsibility upon himself or herself. He or she undertakes a task, makes some contribution to a task, and/or completes a task that

Table 1.2 Direction-Giving Acts by Type of Direction-Giver

<i>A doer takes initiative to act.</i>	You must take the initiative to do something that is needed or wanted by the group. Then the fruits of your act must be considered and accepted by the group as its own. You provide direction as a doer when the group accepts your fruits as its own or is otherwise affected by the process of having considered your work.
<i>A follower provides support.</i>	You must put your own efforts behind the direction given by another person. Or, you must clearly withhold that support, essentially saying “no” or “not yet” or “not you” to the direction-giving attempt. Your acts must provide direction by enhancing or reducing group momentum initiated by others.
<i>A guide focuses the group’s attention.</i>	You must interact with the group in a manner that focuses their attention on what you are doing or saying. You do that by providing them with something they want or need to see, hear, question, or try. While the group’s attention is on any other type of direction-giver, she or he is also, in that moment, acting as a guide.
<i>A manager marshals a resource.</i>	To be a manager, you must have a formal position with the authority to marshal a system resource: e.g., budget; personnel; priorities. Making decisions about how to marshal those resources is how you act as a manager.
<i>A leader offers a vision.</i>	You must articulate and/or personify a group-transformative vision made salient by system-threatening crisis.

can somehow help the group. It is a form of direction-giving that can be initiated without interaction, at least up to the point at which the group decides whether to accept the fruits of the doer’s work. In the end, of course, the group has to decide whether to receive the fruits of the doer’s work as its own. If so, the doer’s act may enhance the group’s efforts to complete its work (serving a task function for the group) or to maintain viability (serving a relationship function for the group). To be effective as a doer, your work should enhance, change, or perpetuate group direction, perhaps simply by freeing up group resources for other action. For example, some NFL players offer to take a reduction in salary to free up space under the team’s salary cap so that other key personnel can stay with the team.

The doer's act may be solicited by the group or done without interaction, in hopes that the group will someday accept the doer's work as its own. For example, a school board member who is a manager in her or his own right decides alone to develop a new approach to presenting data to the public about the school district's performance. Acting alone, undertaking a task that no other board member or mandate makes necessary, means this manager is attempting to provide direction as a doer. When she or he finishes the work and presents it to the board, if other board members embrace the new approach, or if the group is otherwise affected by the process of having to consider the merits of the new approach, the initiating member has provided direction as a doer.

A *follower* offers direction to a group by providing (or withholding) support for the direction-giving attempt of another person. A follower's acts give direction by enhancing or limiting the group's momentum. To be effective as a follower, you must decide whether to put your own efforts behind the direction offered by someone else. If so, you should try to do so effectively. If not, you should clearly withhold your support, in which case you essentially say "no" or "not yet" or "not you" to the direction-giving attempt (Frye, Kisselburgh, & Butts, 2007; Perreault, 1997). For example, the new reporting structure presented to school board members must gain followership from at least one other member to develop any momentum as a change. Without such followership, a doer's or guide's efforts are likely to be rejected or ignored.

Only when needed direction from followers and/or doers is not forthcoming does the remarkable importance and potency of these two direction-giving types become fully evident. Some doers and followers actually become key direction-givers in a group (see Table 1.3). When denied the ongoing contributions of people willing to do and to follow, most groups will quite literally seize up and stop functioning almost immediately. Any group member can be a doer, and most members in every group move frequently in and out of the follower role, even the president or CEO. In fact, groups tend to suffer when a key direction giver is unable to ever follow effectively when useful direction is offered by other group members. Further, most effective group members, regardless of their role, will take on the doer role at times to instigate initiative, create change, or otherwise create an impression that they are making a sufficient contribution to the group.

A *guide* offers direction to a group by providing something on which the group can focus its attentions in the moment. A guide is the person who, in the instant, has the attention of the group. A guide

Table 1.3 Key Direction-Givers May Emerge Over Time

A *key direction-giver* is someone to whom others look for guidance on a given subject, in using a particular process, or in hopes of a particular type of direction. People become key direction-givers after their contributions prove to be crucial or consistent over time.

Crucial contributions are made during *critical incidents* (see Chapter 8), which are when a direction-giver's contributions substantially change the group's experience from then on.

Consistent contributions are made as the group learns to look again and again to the same person because they want that person's direction-giving contributions again and again over time.

Anyone given a management position and anyone who emerges as a leader is a key direction-giver for a group. There may be others as well (i.e., people whose doing, following, or guideship activities teach the group to trust their contributions and to request them regularly over time).

probably offers direction by “answering” whatever “question” (e.g., concern, discomfort, interest, or uncertainty) other grouping members are experiencing regarding what they should do now/next. For example, hesitant board members might raise important questions about the impact of a new reporting structure on student performance. What purposes can it serve? Will this reflect favorably on our district? What administrative costs are involved? Both raising pertinent questions and offering up possible answers to them help to shape group decision-making. Both focus attention on the person asking or answering the question. In those moments, that person is playing the important direction-giving role of a guide. Even the devil's advocate or a follower who says no serves as a guide as his or her objections are considered by others. Raising important issues helps guide the group and provide it with direction.

To be an effective guide, you must interact with the group in a manner that focuses the attention of other people in the system on what you are doing or saying. When you guide, you are helping to orient the group in this moment of the life of the system. You can do that by providing them something they want or need to question, hear, observe, or try out themselves.

The range of possible guideship acts is quite broad—for example, the jokester breaks the ice for a new group, the oldest member shows the way because she or he best knows the territory the group must cover, the expert demonstrates a new process for, or explains a difficult

idea to, the group, the hired consultant helps the group attempt to manage conflict, or the CEO briefs the group on a proposed merger. Further, when a doer, follower, manager, or leader explains her or his work or ideas to the group, in that moment, as the group's attention is on her or him, that person is serving as a guide. Consequently, any direction-giver will be effective in part because of her or his guideship skills and not solely because he or she is an effective leader, manager, or doer. Regardless of the other roles you may play, your guideship skills will probably be exercised at times in every group that matters much to you.

Multiple people should be able to play a guideship role, often in quick succession. Each should be able to offer direction when they have expertise, information, perspective, or pertinent questions or concern that can help orient the group or improve its efforts or deliberations. In an egalitarian group that shares responsibility and power, all grouping members should tend to move in and out of guideship roles. Even heavily hierarchical bureaucracies are more likely to be healthy and effective to the extent that guideship behavior is allowed and encouraged among its members.

The health of most groups correlates to how well its members are able to contribute while acting as these first three direction-giving types. Not everyone, however, needs to act as a leader or manager and not every group requires the efforts of someone at managing or at leading.

A *manager* offers direction to a group from a position of formal authority over others in the group. The manager uses that authority to marshal some of the resources of the group (e.g., group process, personnel, budget, or supplies; the record of the group's decision-making; the group's agenda and/or long-term plans; and/or other resource). It is not the title that makes you a manager; it is doing the work expected of the person in your position. You act as a manager when you make decisions about how to marshal group resources that are under your purview.

Managers (if a group needs one) tend to hold a relatively long-lived and stable position. Some groups employ the efforts of many managers, each with a specified set of resources to marshal on behalf of the group (e.g., a board, a CEO, a CFO, multiple vice presidents, and a myriad of mid-level directors, heads, supervisors, and chairpersons). The fraternity president, head coach of a soccer team, regional division head in a *Fortune* 500 company, and Senate majority leader are individuals vested with a job of acting as a manager for their respective groups. Each is responsible for overseeing group resources and is faced with related decisions. For example, who might be in the next pledge class, what players will start in the first game of the

season, which of several possible mergers under consideration by corporate will get the full-throated support of the division, or what might comprise the agenda for the Senate?

A *leader* offers a transformative vision for the future of a group facing its own end. A leader (if a group has one) articulates the hopes and dreams of a group in crisis. Leadership is vision made salient by crisis (Burtis, 1995). A leader offers direction by articulating a group-transformative vision and may personify that vision when it is made salient by crisis.

During the world's economic upheaval at the end of the first decade in the 21st century, fears are given voice that what might be happening is the start of a great depression. In the United States, first a Republican and then a Democratic administration issue statements framing the situation as a crisis. "We must do something" and "the greatest risk is in doing too little" are frames used by both Bush and Obama people. Showing a shared sense of urgency that there is a crisis results in some level of agreement that drastic action is necessary. Translating agreement into sweeping programmatic changes of transformative leadership vision for how to escape the crisis is much more difficult.

Some claim that the lessons of the Great Depression of the 1930s should guide any vision for today. Others disagree about what lessons are learned from the Great Depression. Countries disagree about how to approach the crisis: Some favor more drastic solutions as others advise caution. People in positions of power within each country disagree. Leadership options to transform the status quo are advocated, but those visions get locked in struggle against more managerial plans: options that advocate incremental, careful changes. Over time, many people try to cobble together something approximating a vision that gains sufficient traction to work.

Crisis can help make a vision salient, but a vision does not provide leadership until it gets sufficient support from needed constituencies to support group-transformative action. Perhaps some of the countries and industries around the world can manage their way through the crisis without suffering the pain of a transformation wrought of leadership vision. When vision is in play, and regardless of the particulars of the vision, you can expect harshly competing claims: both about what is happening and about what ought to be done next. Even then, some will say that a vision is in play, and others will deny that fact. Violently coalescing and competing framings of the crisis and of the appropriate vision for response are at the center of leadership, which makes us grateful that most groups never require such leadership.

Effective direction-givers help shape the grouping experience. All five types of direction-givers are necessary to understand how groups become successful even though not every group requires all five types. (We discuss the skills necessary for each of the five in Chapters 2 and 3.) We hope that you can tell from the brief descriptions that there are ways for you to become a more active and effective direction-giver for your group. You have contributions you can make that will help your groups to thrive.

❖ **EVERYONE HAS THE OBLIGATION
TO HELP HIS OR HER GROUP TO THRIVE:
THE SOCIAL CONTRACT OF CITIZENSHIP**

Part of the thesis for this book is that each of us has an obligation to try to find ways of assisting our group's efforts to thrive. In fact, the subtitle for the book was supposed to be *Leadership Communication as Citizenship: Give Direction to Your Team, Organization, or Community as a Doer, Follower, Guide, Manager, or Leader*. Our argument assumes that a *social contract* manifests as we blend our efforts and energies with those of other people. We name this social contract *citizenship*. It requires us all to help our groups thrive by using our direction-giving skills to help frame and shape our group's experience. This direction-giving responsibility is a duty of participation: a membership obligation we ought to feel as we become part of a group.

Group membership always involves responsibility as well as privileges (Gastil, 1992²). Why? Because *we each always help give direction to every group we are in*: intentionally or not, well or poorly. It is the nature of groups that they must be co-constructed, given direction, and sustained. Doing so is always the work of the citizen. This responsibility applies regardless of the role we play (leader or follower, CEO or line worker, team star or bench warmer, teacher or student, parent or child, board member or stakeholder). The social contract applies regardless of the type or size of the group we are in. The only question is whether we do so with good or bad effects: whether we help our group to thrive, or let it be less than at its best, or to falter (see Table 1.4).

²Those who are denied volition, or freedom of choice, or who are otherwise without the means of exercising volition are excepted by some theorists (see Gastil, 1992) from the burdens and privileges of the social contract (e.g., slaves, infants, criminals, and individuals deemed to be of less than full mental capacity).

Table 1.4

Violators of the Social Contract: Those Who Do Not Help Their Group Thrive

The *social contract* obligates people to each other in two ways. The obligation is on each individual to try to help his or her group to thrive. The obligation is on the group, as a collective, to each individual. As a consequence, we judge poorly those who violate the contract. Several terms name behaviors that do not help a group to thrive. Each of these, though direction-givers, violate the social contract, reduce their group's ability to thrive, and deprive their group of its due. What terms would you add to the following list?

- *Social loafers* let others carry their part of the load (Latane, Williams, & Harkins, 1979).
- *Passive members* acquiesce to others rather than taking a stand (Burtis & Turman, 2006^a).
- *Saboteurs* try to undermine the group's efforts to reach its goals.
- *Tyrants* force outcomes without taking direction from others—eviscerating the concepts of direction-giving, leader, and follower (Burns, 1978^b).

a. See Burtis and Turman (2006) for an elaboration of additional pitfall possibilities and remedies for every grouping enterprise.

b. Burns (1978) distinguishes leaders from tyrants by pointing to when members can no longer provide direction as followers. He raises nagging questions: Can an evil genius, acting badly, be a great leader? He says no. Are people, forced into passivity by a tyrant's brutality, really followers? We say no; not unless they find a way to rise up or to enjoy.

A person or group *thrives* if it is healthy, has prospects, and can anticipate and adapt to change as a regular and ongoing response to its circumstances. A complex organization does not thrive as a group unless smaller groups within it thrive and spread their health to the larger organization. A country does not thrive as a group unless various groups engaging its citizens also thrive. A family does not thrive as a group unless the various supra-groups in which it is nested and that help to sustain it are also thriving (e.g., employment, educational, civic, leisure, food production, and governmental groups). Human action and interaction make some groups thrive and others falter or wither away. The obligation of citizenship is to help co-create the direction a group takes. That means helping those in the group figure out what they need to do for their group to thrive (see Chapter 7).

The remainder of the thesis for this book is that, to be effective as we help give direction to our groups, each of us should develop the

skills involved in helping to frame and shape our group's experiences and the accounts we make and share about those experiences. This also means learning what it takes to be effective as a doer, follower, guide, manager, and leader. This allows each of us to find ways to make a contribution to our group. *If we do not recognize the potential value of our own contribution, we will almost certainly diminish or distort it.*

Each of us needs to help shape the story of our group's experience. Our contributions are especially important in helping negotiate the values and actions that we use to co-construct the future of our group. This is the work of every grouping member, not just a job for the manager or leader (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). For example, a new congregation needs to converge upon a joint framing for its mission to ensure that members are moving toward similar goals. Should we focus on growing our congregation? Should we focus on our role in the larger community or on the spiritual lives of our individual members? How does our decision-making structure affect our outreach? Such pragmatic questions are value-based choices about the direction the new congregation wants to take.

In every group, people frame the grouping situation, including which exigencies we ought to use to orient our group. People frame the processes they think we might employ. People frame the outcome options they want us to choose. Framing is "a quality of communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another" (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). We help shape a group's experience and give it direction as we affect how it converges around key framings.

❖ IN CONCLUSION

Understanding the process of grouping, direction-giving, and communicating is fundamental to your effectiveness. In Chapters 2 and 3, we elaborate on the skills needed to employ your five direction-giving options to help shape the direction and story of your group's experiences. In Chapters 4 and 5, we review contemporary leadership theory and research and then walk you through a process for developing your own framework for giving direction well. Understanding basic communication processes and skills can enhance your efforts to help your group (Chapters 6 and 7). We also discuss the communication skills specific to direction-giving (framing and shaping stories of grouping experiences) in Chapters 8 through 10. All of these can help you shape

the story of your group regardless of the type of direction-giving you provide.

This material will be useful as you make connections between it and your grouping experiences. To make that connection, be intentional, proactive, and alert. Look for ways to boil down useful ideas into nuggets you can easily remember. Then use those to try to change what you do in your own groups. (We explain in Chapter 8 why nuggets are a useful direction-giving tool, but for now, we encourage you to practice looking for “small treasures you can put to use later.”) You have to translate the material into your own specific circumstances. Then, if you decide to become more effective, you might actually begin to change your part of the world.