

# Group Discussion-An Effective Tool for Assessing Personality Traits

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## Abstract

Human Personality is such a wide concept that it embraces almost all the notions and emotions of the world. Though it is not easy to assess this wide concept of personality, yet the efforts have been made in various ways by the intellectual persons again and again. When it comes to assess the personality of an individual, communication plays a very important role because communication is the most spontaneous way of expression of personality. Though the other ways of expression are equally important just as attire, postures, gestures and so on but among all these ways, communication acquires a unique place and value. Communication comes out in various forms when it takes place in different situation and with different people like with another individual or friend or with peer group or colleagues or senior persons etc. Keeping this wide circumference in mind, the present paper focuses on Group Discussion, a very popular form of communication which is used to assess the personality traits for career perspective as well as for teaching-learning process at school level. The present paper focuses on the need, importance, precautions, and strategies to overcome a group discussion.

**Key Words:** Personality, Assessment, Peer group, Circumference, Career, Teaching-Learning Process, Posture, Gesture etc.

“Communication is an art form that is crafted throughout our life.”

This definition of communication by Asa Don Brown reveals the process and importance of communication. Communication is the process which takes place with the presence and consent of two or more than two persons. Though there are several elements which are

included in the process of communication, but the utmost purpose of communication is to express one's feelings, emotions, and potentials. The process of communication can be divided widely into two parts, verbal and non-verbal. Further, the most important thing of communication is to listen what is not being said as the sixty-five percent of any communication is non-verbal and remaining thirty-five percent is verbal.

However, when it comes to verbal communication, various aspects get included in this. Communication is not confined to one-to-one conversation or only for the conveying of information. As already said, it is a vital tool for expression, sometimes it serves as assessment tool also for the evaluation of individual's personality. The personality assessment is required for various purposes just as for career perspective, personal life, professional life, business etc.

As far as career perspective is concerned, personality of individual plays an important role for the recruitment. Human personality is a collective form of selfconfidence, body-language, attire, communication skills, behavior skills and all the other soft skills. The process of group discussion serves as an effective tool for the enhancement of personality traits in the individuals. During the course of group discussion, everyone has to speak and in order to make others listen his point of view, the individual has to speak with confidence. Individual needs to affirm his point of view again and again to convince others, to overcome the differences and challenging. The process of group discussion is an ordeal of individual's communication skills as well as of behavior skills.

As the focus of the paper is group discussion, firstly the efforts should be done to understand group discussion by the definition given in Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

“A group discussion is a discussion involving a number of people who are connected by some shared activity, interest or quality.”

In this definition ‘shared activity’ ‘interest’ or ‘quality’ can be taken as the similarity between educational background, targets to achieve etc. In a business organization, group discussion is applied as a hiring technique to select an ideal candidate for a particular job role. In this situation, the purpose of group discussion is to evaluate the communication skills, convincing capacity, leadership, team spirit, adaptability, subject knowledge, and body language of the

participants. In order to assess all these aspects of the candidate's personality, organization provides a topic for the discussion to a group of approximate 6 to 10 candidates which is the ideal number of group members for a healthy and meaningful group discussion.

Topics given for the group discussion may be of different nature like case studies which are offered particularly in business organizations to MBA candidates. In this kind of group discussion, a complex business situation is presented before the participants and they are supposed to make decisions for the betterment of business.

Another kind of topics may be of abstract nature. In this type of group discussion, the topics are free from a certain framework and hence no definite direction to start or to continue the group discussion. This kind of topic may be single worded just as 'Blue' or 'Red' or the organization can present a picture or an image to discuss about. Though this kind of topics prove a little difficult to be handled but these topics provide a wide range of thoughts.

The next possible nature of group discussion is Topical Group Discussion. In this kind of group discussion, the given topics are usually related to general knowledge or current affairs within a decided time frame. This category of group discussion is most useful for the classroom teaching for the students of undergraduate and post-graduate. By the practice of these topics, students develop their self-confidence, fluency in speaking, remove hesitation and improve their participation skills.

In a business organization, the topic for the discussion is given by a member of the judging panel. After assigning the topic, around 5 to 10 minutes are given to think about the topic. Then, the group discussion starts to take place and continues for 15 to 20 minutes, and sometimes for a longer duration. During the course of discussion, the panelist may take the role of moderator for healthy and fluent discussion.

After the discussion among the participants, now it is the time for evaluation of the participants on different parameters which includes firstly subjects knowledge. By this parameter, the members of the panel want to assess the individual participant's existing stock of knowledge about the given topic and subject. The second parameter of evaluation is creativity or originality. The purpose of this parameter is to examine that to which extent the

individual participant can think with a new angle about the subject or topic. Next parameter is voice which stands for the tone and volume of voice or speaking. The diction, used during the discussion, reveals the harshness or mildness of the character of individual. Another parameter for evaluation is body language which plays a very important role in group discussion. Body language involves eye-contact with other participants which helps in expressing self-confidence of the speaker, gestures (use of hands), postures (angles of body during discussion), attire (dressing sense), chronemics (taken time for conveying or receiving the message), proxemics (individual's bubble or personal space) etc. Next parameter for evaluation is analytical ability which stands for intellectual depth of the participants. Then, next is fluency which reveals the communication skills. Initiatives, enthusiasm, and leadership are the other important parameters which come out at their best during group discussion. The parameter of listening also should be kept in mind because group discussion does not allow only to speak. It expects for listening as well.

The most important parameter for the evaluation of group discussion is group behavior. Group discussion is powerful tool to examine the behavior of an individual in a group whether it is assertive or aggressive. In a group discussion, the difference between a debate and a discussion should always be kept in mind by the participants. In a group discussion, one can try to convince others with one's ideas but cannot force others to accept the ideas. While in a debate, the speaker can go for enforcement of his ideas to convince others and the purpose of the speaker is to win the debate. So, in a group discussion, a participant should be very careful about her/her behavior with the other members of group during the discussion. The group discussion which takes place for hiring purpose, is called Selection Group Discussion or SGD. As per M Ashraf Rizvi,

“A Selection Group Discussion (SGD) is a recruitment method to evaluate the group participation, leadership, and team communication skills of a candidate.”

All the above-mentioned parameters reveal the purpose and importance of the group discussion as an effective tool for hiring or assessment of the personality. All these parameters are the generally sought out qualities in a candidate for job in an organization. To overcome the group discussion, no participant can sit silently. As a bottom line, it can be said,

“Competition is tough. So, Speak up!”



How to participate in a group discussion? The answer of this question involves several things. For example, if the participant feels him/herself confident about the knowledge of the given topic, then he/she can start the group discussion which always proves to be very beneficial as it exposes the quality of leadership and self-confidence. If the participant does not agree with the ideas, given by other members of the group or by any individual, he/she can express own ideas with a mild objection to others which reveals the capacity of thinking differently and out of the box. The participant should be proactive but not reactive. Sometimes participants may find that they don't know anything important about the given topic. In this situation, always keep remember that it is not the time to lose heart.

To overcome this situation, the participant should keep the notes of the important points given by the others. In the last, he/she can summarize, analyze, and give a meaningful conclusion to the discussion. The important thing is that one should not lose the efforts at any point during the group discussion. It is a group activity and each individual are a part of this activity.

Another important aspect to keep in mind during group discussion is the deviation from the subject which should be avoided at any cost. Various aspects of the topic may be discussed but the main theme is only one which should be maintained throughout the discussion. The process of group discussion should be fluent and neutral, without any personal attack.

Another important thing, it should be qualitative rather than quantitative. Too much discussion of facts and figures should be avoided in a healthy group discussion as the purpose of discussion is to find out the solution of the given problem, not to discuss only about the problem. Proper analysis of the topic is must before speaking and lastly, speaking is necessary, but dominating is prohibited in a group discussion.

The tone of the speaker and selection of words play a very important role in a group discussion. As already said, non-verbal communication is more important than the verbal communication and one should be very careful towards one's body language while participating in a group discussion.

To conclude the paper, it can be said that the assessment of human personality is an integral part of professional life and to some extent it is required in personal life as well. It helps to improve the self-confidence of individual and remove various short comings of the human personality. The art of mastery over group discussion grooms individual in a versatile personality who can lead, convince, find the solutions, and leave an impression of successful

one. It is used not only as a hiring technique by the organizations but used in classroom teaching with the same efforts as it helps in the development of the personality of students.

“It is not practical to pay attention to every student to the level of individual practice. A well planned and executed GD has proven to be the most efficient solution when we carry out a 'cost benefit' analysis. The cost here is the 'time investment' and benefit is the 'learning outcome' in terms of communication skills improvement.”

Group discussion is of great value in order to assess the qualities such as selfconfidence, leadership, convincing ability, problem solving attitude, positivism in the individual. Group Discussion should be included as the integral part of syllabus because of its immense benefits for students. The regular practice of group discussion inculcates the necessary traits among the students for a better career. It teaches them to adjust with the views of others and to act in a group which improves the team spirit among the students. Though it is the most popular tool for the assessment of the personality, yet it has a lot of things, precautions, preparations to be kept in mind during the discussion. If one acquires the ability to overcome a group discussion, he/she may face the any for form of interview or assessment and the chance to get success also improve.

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