

Activity 9.2: Clearville Pigeon Problem Role Play

TIPS FOR TRAINERS



Suggested Use

Use this activity during your presentation on *Group Process Tools* just before explaining the Tuckman Model of group development. This is also a perfect activity for a retreat or other not-too-formal training session, since it is both fun and informative.



Time

About 90 minutes:

- 5 minutes for instructions and assigning of roles
- 10 minutes for members to review the scenario and assigned roles (including observers)
- 5 minutes to gather people and set up the role play
- 20-25 minutes for the role play
- 10 minutes for general review/discussion by participants and observers
- 10 minutes for the facilitator to present the four stages of Tuckman group development
- 20 minutes to apply those stages to the role play and to the PC/PB
- 5 minutes for sum up



Materials

- Handout for Participants: The Clearville Pigeon Problem Role Play
- Slips of paper with Clearville Pigeon Problem roles
- Easel pad paper and markers for summarizing debrief/discussion
- Chairs arranged in a large circle or around a table big enough for all role play participants



Knowledge or Skill Development

The role play will help PC/PB members and stakeholders better understand how groups form and develop. This includes stages and dynamics of group development and how they apply to PC/PBs.

Activity Steps

1. This activity requires at least 12-15 participants, but can be used with a larger group, since individuals without an active role can serve as members of the public who observe the meeting and share their observations after the role play. Before the training, copy the Clearville Pigeon Problem Roles, and cut them into strips. Four of the roles call for 2 or more people—though they can be played by one person if necessary. Be sure to have multiple copies of the roles calling for at least 2 people and the Member of the Public/Observer role—you need at least 2-3 Observers. Either ask for volunteers if the group is larger than 15 or simply assign roles. Give each participant a copy of the Handout for Participants and a strip of paper describing their role.
2. Introduce the session by explaining that every group that comes together to work on a problem has to figure out how it will work best together. This is particularly true of groups that expect to be together over a period of months or years. As participants have seen from working with their own Planning Councils/Planning Bodies, things do not always go smoothly, and may need some adjustments along the way.
3. Explain that the purpose of this session is to help participants understand that there are stages of development that all groups go through when they are learning to work in partnership, and that making adjustments is normal and necessary.
4. Give everyone 10 minutes to review the situation and think about their roles.
5. While the participants are reviewing the situation and their roles, talk individually to the person playing the Chair of the Clearville Department of Tourism. Ask that person not to join the meeting when it starts, but to come in after the meeting has begun.
6. Arrange chairs for all participants around a large table or in a circle, with observers seated separately near them. (Leave an empty seat for the Chair of the Department of Tourism.)
7. When the 10 minutes are up, ask the participants and observers to take their seats, and ask the Director of the Department of Natural Resources to call the meeting to order.
8. Allow about 20-25 minutes for the role play. Don't intervene unless the group gets seriously stuck. If that happens, introduce a new piece of information—such as a plan from City Council to introduce some form of resolution next week if the group does not make some progress.
9. Stop the role play when you feel the stages and challenges of group development have been demonstrated.
10. Ask participants to share how they felt during the meeting and by the end of the meeting. Be sure to get feedback from the person who chaired the meeting.
11. Ask the Observers for their feedback, particularly about how the group seemed to form and then adjust (or not adjust), in order to establish at least a process for moving forward to address this pigeon problem. Who helped the group come together? Who made it harder? What role did the Chair play?
12. Discuss as a group what this role play suggests about stages of group formation and development, and how they may apply to a PC/PB or one of its committees.
13. If desired, move immediately to a discussion of the Tuckman model of group development, with the Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing stages, and ask where the group was at the end of the meeting—and what might be needed to help it move to the next stage.

Clearville Pigeon Problem Roles

Assign each participant a role; you will need multiple copies of some roles.



Restaurant Owners: (2 or more people) You have already been to the City Council voicing your concern about the pigeon problem. You don't think it's fair that you will have to buy new table umbrellas every few months for your restaurant. Most people want to sit outside when the weather is nice, but they certainly don't want to be outside getting "dropped on" by birds. This pigeon thing is bad for business.

Car Rental Agency Owners: (2 or more people) The ride through the oaks is a great money-maker for you. Tourists can fly or take the train to get here, but they need cars to really appreciate the beauty of Clearville and those lovely oak trees. However, your profit margins are decreasing. The expense of having to wash those cars and the paint damage done by the pigeons has become a real issue for you.

Car Wash Owners: (2 or more people) This pigeon issue is a problem for the town, but it's a good deal for your business. All those lovely cars need not only a wash, but also waxing, which helps protect the finish from the damaging effects of pigeon waste. You don't want to seem too eager, greedy, or insensitive, but the increase in profits for you is much more than birdseed.

Environmental Activists: (2 people) You believe that the pigeons have every right to be here. This is their natural habitat. The Department of Natural Resources decided not to support your group last year in the protection of the lake turtle habitat at Lake Forget-Your-Troubles. They said it would cost too much. You are still angry about all those homeless turtles, so any pigeon eradication plan reminds you of what happened to those poor little turtles.

The Director of the Department of Natural Resources: You are the person who called this meeting. You are concerned about this issue because pigeon eradication might do further damage to the environment of Clearville. Last week you had to work with the Department of Homeland Security on protecting the natural water supply. Now a pigeon crisis! The Mayor's office is looking for you and your staff to solve this problem quickly.

Staff of the Department of Natural Resources: Your boss is here. You are not sure why s/he asked you to come to this meeting. They never listen to you anyway, and you were not asked to prepare any data presentations on this topic. You are overworked and underpaid, but at least you are not at one of those Planning Council meetings like your friend in the Department of Public Health.

Director of the Clearville Historical Society: The cultural and historical legacy of Clearville are being destroyed. The town's prized marble statues are over 200 years old. Your agency doesn't even have money to assess what else these birds are destroying.

Head Ornithologist from University of Clearville, Department of Ornithology: Ornithology is the study of birds, and you are the best and brightest when it comes to birds at Clearville University. You are so good that you have a U.S. Department of Energy five-year grant studying “Agent Z,” a chemical found only in pigeon waste. DOE and you are looking at harnessing “Agent Z” as a way to reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil. There is an abundance of pigeon waste here in Clearville. Why else would you leave Harvard to continue this magnificent work?

PhD Student from University of Clearville, Department of Ornithology: Ornithology is the study of birds, and you are the best and brightest student when it comes to birds. Your Department Head is here at the meeting. S/he has given you a three-year position to work together on this study that relies on pigeon waste. If this work is successful, you will be the first PhD and first college professor in your family. Your family came to the U.S. three generations ago. Clearville has some of the best pigeon waste around. Using it is going to make you famous and make your family proud.

Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor’s Office: The Mayor sent you. The Mayor is about two months from announcing a re-election campaign, and does not want pigeon waste to be a campaign issue. Given the recent state budget crisis, Clearville will have to do some budget tightening. Budget cuts, tax increases, and unemployment will make it a tough campaign for the Mayor. Therefore, the Mayor would prefer that issues like pigeon waste be swept under the rug.

Chair, Clearville Board of Tourism: You are late to the meeting. You only found out about it late yesterday afternoon. You were not invited as an interested party in this meeting. Yet, tourism is the only real industry in town. You know the restaurant owners and car rental agents, and have worked with the Director of the Historical Society. You want to make this a win-win situation for everyone. You come in and take your seat, listening to the discussion for a while.

Members of the Public (Observers): You are attending the meeting to see how community leaders deal with this issue of pigeon “waste.” You are concerned about the issue, but also interested in observing whether city leaders and other stakeholders are able to come together and find a way to deal with this situation.



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HANDOUT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Instructions

1. If you have an assigned role, spend about 10 minutes reviewing the Clearville Situation below and thinking about your assigned role. Consider how a person in your role is likely to feel about the pigeon problem and about the meeting.
2. If you are a Member of the Public/Observer, consider the situation and how you might watch participants during the meeting so you can report on what you saw.
3. When it is time for the role play to begin, sit around a table or in a circle with other participants if you have an assigned role. If not, sit outside the circle where you can observe the discussion.

The Clearville Situation



The town of Clearville has no industry other than tourism. People flock to this rural lake-side community to see the beautiful Clearville oak trees that are not found anywhere else in the world. This community of 60,000 makes its living off the tourist dollars that come every spring when the Clearville oak trees are in full bloom.

The problem is that the flower produced by the Clearville oak tree attracts common pigeons. Thousands and thousands of pigeons flock to the Clearville area to eat the lovely flowers. They fly and nest all around town, and naturally they produce pigeon “waste.” This pigeon waste is the cause of much controversy for the following reasons:

- The pigeon waste is damaging the marble statues that the city founders erected 200 years ago.
- Restaurant owners are complaining to the City Council that their customers cannot eat on the open terraces because of the constant bombarding of pigeon waste. They will either have to invest quite a bit of money to buy table umbrellas or hire more staff to clean the pigeon waste – or both.
- Environmental activists have been protesting that the pigeons have every right to be here, because this is their natural habitat.
- The local Department of Natural Resources is concerned that any pigeon eradication plan would be detrimental, as pigeons are necessary to control the insect population.

The Mayor’s Office is looking to the Director of the Department of Natural Resources to solve this problem quickly. So a meeting has been called. A number of invited stakeholders have arrived to participate in the meeting, and some members of the public are on hand to see what happens. The Department Director will chair the meeting.