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"GROUPS WITHIN A GROUP"

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Recently I was reading *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Emotional Intelligence* (from Harvard Business Review's "10 Must Read" collection of best practices in business). This collection of articles discusses the theory of "groups within a group." The idea is that within any organized group of people, there are sub-groups within the larger group. The contributors in this series, leading experts on emotional intelligence, researched these factions and behaviors that influence the overall performance of the entire group. The unfortunate truth is that groups within groups often cause individuals to act disrespectfully to those outside of one's closest group.

As I started to let this sink in, I came to realize that being part of such an arrangement began very early on in my life, and I reflected on the impact it

undoubtedly had on me and perhaps, at times, on my ability to perform tasks.

My first grouping happened as a young child. I was the youngest of five children, and there were specific subgroups in our family – the older kids, the boys (4), and the younger kids. My closest connection was to the last group, mainly my closest-in-age brother and me. I was least connected to the older kids. Next, during my school years, I experienced groups within groups again! First, there were the girls and the boys. It didn't stop there, because of course there were smart kids and the not-so-smart kids, there were athletes, band kids, rich kids and so on. You get the concept.

Sports teams have a similar arrangement, especially football teams where you have the offense, defense, special teams, and of course, the kickers. When I was growing

up, I played on a football team, and in two years we won all but one game. We were a cohesive group - we had no "groups within a group", and therefore we grew into a tight-knit team, and we were unstoppable. Here is why. We barely had enough players to make up the roster for a football team. I attended a small school, so we struggled to have enough boys for a football team (if it had been allowed, we would have had girls play). So, this meant everyone on the team had to play all the time. For example, I played center for the offense, defensive end for the defense, and I was also on special teams for kickoffs and receiving. What I just described was that every member of the entire team had to play the whole game. We had such a small team that if someone were injured, they would just have to stand on the field, or we would have had to forfeit the game. Although we competed against teams

from schools that had a lot more kids, with players that only played offense or defense and generally played on special teams and kicking – these well-organized teams could not beat us.
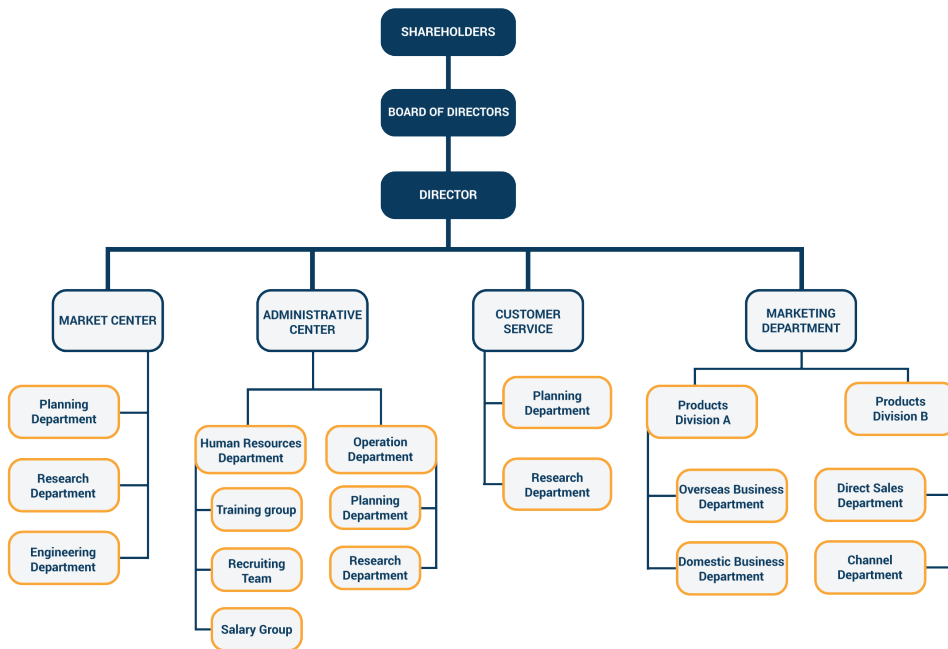
You might be thinking, "What does any of this have to do with sales?"

According to the experts' research, "groups within groups" are directly linked to the success of a business. Businesses certainly experience the "groups within a group" situation with the typical hierarchical organizational structure. This following example of a hierarchical organizational chart shows the multiple levels of management and the departments that should work together to accomplish the organization's objectives.

Why is it important to discuss this issue? Unfortunately, what usually happens when we are part of a smaller group within a larger group, we tend to think that our division is more important. The actions of the larger group aren't as significant. We may even harbor animosity or lack empathy for individual business associates. If this sounds familiar within your company, you may want to read on. An analysis of "groups within a group" may be one of the most important topics to address. The goal should always be to have respect and appreciation for every business associate and what they bring to the table as it impacts the overall success of the entire business. Some companies are better at creating cultures of respect

than others, but I am sure you would agree there is always room for improvement.

Have you ever considered the negative effect of disrespectful behavior between various departments on the overall productivity of your company? The following excerpt from the chapter "The Price of Incivility" by contributors, Christine Porath, an associate professor at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business and Christine Pearson, a professor of global leadership at Thunderbird School of Global Management, describes the adverse outcomes:

"Many managers would say that incivility is wrong, but not all recognize that it has tangible costs…Through a poll of 800 managers and employees in 17 industries, we learned just how people's reactions play out."

THE FOLLOWING CHART ILLUSTRATES "THE COSTS OF INCIVILITY" IN THE WORKPLACE:

48%	intentionally decreased their work efforts.
47%	intentionally decreased the time spent at work.
38%	intentionally decreased the quality of their work.
80%	lost work time worrying about the incident.

63%	lost work time avoiding the offender.
66%	said that their performance declined.
78%	said that their commitment to the organization declined.
12%	said that they left their job because of uncivil treatment.
25%	admitted to taking their frustrations out on customers.

If the above list concerns you, it should. It concerned me as well, and it compelled me to write this article to bring attention to the subject.

Since my focus is on sales, let's discuss how incivility influences the sales of your company. For some reason, the sales department can become the most disliked group in the company. Oddly, in most cases, it generates the income or resources that provide everyone else with a job. It may sound like I am biased towards the sales department, but I also realize that without the other departments, I have nothing to sell. However, over the years, I have seen and experienced uncivil behavior simply because of being in the sales department. I have been treated disrespectfully by others, and in all honesty, I have been detached and indifferent towards others. What is the point? Within a business, each of us is part of some group; however, to be a successful business, we are reliant on the entire team. Creating a culture of respect for everyone on the team, regardless of the position in the hierarchy, is imperative.

The costs of incivility are immeasurable. It only makes sense that it should be a priority to lessen the impact of this behavior. It is easier said than done since, as young children, we have been programmed with the "group within a group" mentality. However, having an awareness of "the costs of incivility" and an open discussion about it is crucial, and when this adversarial conduct comes to light in your organization, root it out. I strongly recommend *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Emotional Intelligence*, not just for business managers, but as an excellent resource for every member of the team.