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TESTING THE PAGE TECHNIQUE: RESULTS AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Daniel W. McAllister, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

ABSTRACT

In the 1985 Annual Conference of ABSEL, the concept of using "real world" experience as an experiential activity was presented (1). This approach was called the Process Analysis of Group Experience (PAGE) Technique. The purpose of the PAGE Technique is to create a reflective learning experience in which participants can use their own group experience as the basis for discussion and analysis. At the ABSEL presentation, interest was shown in regards to whether the PAGE Technique would successfully lead to greater commitment and satisfaction for the participants, and to greater productivity and quality for the group. The purpose of this paper is to review briefly the concepts of the PAGE Technique and then to report on the results of experimentation with this Technique.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PAGE TECHNIQUE

There seems to be widespread support for Fayol's argument (2) that the manager should be a reflective planner, organizer, controller, etc. However, research (3,4) tends to show that managers are not reflective, but instead are action-oriented in their activities. Duncan (5) and Bologna (6) indicate that there are two reasons for a lack of reflective activity. They are (1) a knowledge deficiency and (2) an attitude deficiency. Either managers do not know how to be more reflective or they do not enjoy the process. The PAGE Technique is an approach to group reflection that is easy to learn and use and is also enjoyable. Therefore, the PAGE Technique deals effectively with both the knowledge and attitude deficiencies.

In the PAGE Technique, real world experiences are used as the basis of the experiential exercise. These activities could be the completion of a series of strategic planning meetings, or the completion of a sales campaign or, in the classroom the completion of a group research paper. Upon the completion of any of these meaningful, real experiences, the PAGE Technique can be used.

As group members participate in the PAGE Technique, they reflect together on the current and potential strengths of the group. The direction of the activity is strictly positive, looking at what the group does well and what the group can do better.

The guidelines for the PAGE Technique are as follows:

1. Two general questions are answered by the group. These are:
   a. In the completion of this task, what did we do particularly well?
   b. If we were to do the project again, how could we improve our already successful performance?

2. Within the context of the two questions above, the group discusses specific areas of significance. These might include leadership, conflict management, decision making, commitment, Individual contributions, etc.

3. Members should be as specific as possible. Vague generalities create fluff without substance, while specific examples lead to a meaningful reflective experience. As more specific examples are included, greater attention to real life situations will be accomplished, leading to the repetition of positive behaviors and to the improvement of less favorable behaviors.

4. The focus should be on controllable behavior and performance, so that those behaviors can be repeated and improved.

5. Group members should maintain a consistently positive and constructive direction in the discussion. This allows better communication (defensive barriers are not raised) and a greater chance for improvement.

6. Participants should claim ownership of their opinions. When opinions are stated as facts, they are often discounted and the substantive value of the opinion is lost.

7. Participants should have fun with the PAGE Technique. It should be a unique learning experience based upon reflective insight shared with a group of friends who have already successfully completed a meaningful group task.

TESTING THE PAGE TECHNIQUE

The hypotheses to be tested in experimenting with the PAGE Technique are as follows:

When people participate in a group task where they know that a process analysis will be held, they will experience the following:
(1) Greater commitment to the group task.
(2) Greater payoff in knowledge for the participant.
(3) Greater satisfaction for the participant.
(4) Greater investment of time and effort for the task.

Test 1

To test these hypotheses, a questionnaire was developed in which subjects were asked to compare their experience in a group using the PAGE Technique with their experience in other groups. A total of fifty subjects were included. They were all upper division students at a state university, ranging in age from 21 to 63. There were 28 men and 22 women.

The questionnaire included fifteen questions. Seven of these focused on demographics (year in school, age, sex, major, etc.). The remaining eight questions tested the four hypotheses, using a seven point Likert scale. The first two of these questioned commitment. The second pair questioned knowledge gained. The third pair questioned attitude and satisfaction, and the fourth pair questioned the investment of time and effort. To avoid directional bias, the ordering of the questions within the pairs was alternated to allow both the current and past group experiences to come first.

Results of Test 1

The results of the questionnaire are summarized in Table 1. Note that each of the four hypotheses was supported, indicating that the PAGE Technique is successful in generating greater commitment and investment in time and effort for the group task, and greater knowledge and satisfaction as payoffs to the group

TABLE 1

		Mean Response	t	Two Tail Probability
Commitment	with PAGE	5.44		
	before PAGE	4.52	3.36	.002
Useful	with PAGE	5.50		
Knowledge	before PAGE	3.96	5.67	.000
Satisfaction	with PAGE	5.24		
	before PAGE	3.42	6.23	.000
Investment	with PAGE	5.80		
of time and	before PAGE	5.18	3.20	.002
Effort				

N of Cases: 50, 49 d.f.

TABLE 1: Summary of Test 1 Results:
Same individuals, with PAGE and before PAGE

Test 2

A second test was conducted with a control group. This test compared the responses of a group that had no experience with the PAGE Technique with the responses of the group that had completed the PAGE Technique in Test 1.

Questions regarding the same four hypotheses that were tested in Test 1 were asked to a group of fifty upper division students, ranging in age from 21 to 58. There were 26 women and 24 men. These students had to be introduced to the concepts of the PAGE Technique. They were asked to consider their past experiences with groups when answering the four questions.

TABLE 2

		Mean Response	t	Two Tail Probability
Commitment	PAGE group	5.44	2.72	.005
	Control group	5.02		
Useful	PAGE group	5.50	6.27	.000
Knowledge	Control group	3.79		
Satisfaction	PAGE group	5.24	5.83	.000
	Control group	3.79		
Investment	PAGE group	5.80	3.96	.001
of Time	Control group	4.90		
and Effort				

N of Cases: 50, 49 d.f.

TABLE 2: Summary of Test 2 Results:
PAGE group vs. NonPAGE Group

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the results of these tests, there is significant support for the four hypotheses. It appears that the use of the PAGE Technique leads to a better experience for group members and to better results for the group task. When people know that their contribution to the group effort is recognized by the group members, when participants know that the focus on their contributions will be strictly positive, and when they know that they are expected to focus on the specific positive contributions of other group members, then this awareness has a significant positive valuable impact on the group task and the individual experience. In summary, these tests indicate that the PAGE Technique does work.

Results of Test 2

The results of the second test are summarized in Table 2. Note that each of the four hypotheses are once again supported.

REFERENCES

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