

The Importance of Group Discussion and the Role of Participants

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Abstract

Group Discussion (GD) plays a major role in selecting the final candidates in any interview for the **Corporate**. It is also a method used to test the fluency of a candidate. It is used for **testing the potential** and the behavioral aspects of the candidates which reflects the **inherent quality** of the candidates. It is a modern way of **assessing** the student's personality. GD is a forum where people sit together to discuss a topic with the common objective of finding a solution for a problem or an issue that is given. GD is conducted to measure certain attributes in a candidate such as content, communication skills, group behavior and leadership skills. The students have to be very fluent **in English** if they want to participate in a Group Discussion. In any group discussion the students are required to speak constantly on a topic, so good communicative skill is a must.. The speech should be without grammatical errors. Use of appropriate **vocabulary** would be an added advantage. Group discussions are also conducted to test the candidates fluency, pronunciation and communicative skills. Listening carefully is another important aspect of a group discussion. In any group discussion the candidates are required to listen to others. If the candidate's listening skills are poor, then they won't be able to concentrate. Effective listening would help the candidates respond to others in a better way. This paper presents **the importance** of the GD and the **role of the participants** in the GD in a detailed manner, so that this paper will be helpful for the students community those who want to participate.

Key words: group discussion, role of participants, vocabulary usage, fluency

Introduction

A group discussion is a very important round in any selection process be it for an MBA course, campus recruitment etc.. In the job arena, various companies utilize this selection tool in different ways, like some conduct GD after written test and before the interview, others may conduct it even before the written test. The Group Discussion (GD) is a form where people sit together and discuss the issue administered to them with the common objective of discussing in a whole some way. It is very important to note down the topic as the exact wording. The group discussion allows the selectors to judge the individual's performance and behavior in a group. In a typical group discussion, there are **8-10 participants** seated in semi circle or a U shaped arrangement. Occasionally there might be a round table for a group discussion. The panelists sit in front of the group or in the case of a round table, they may observe the group from a distance. **15-20 min.** is usually given for a group discussion. Some Corporate / Institute conduct the group discussion for an hour. There are a number of **roles** that a candidate can play in a **GD such as Initiators, Data Giver, Criticizer, Supporter, Listener, Questioner, Traffic Policeman, Spectator and Leader (Coordinator)**. It has been observed that many candidates act or behave in a certain way or make their points in a particular manner. English is the most common language spoken everywhere. During the Group Discussion, the panel essentially **evaluates** the candidate's potential to be a leader and also his/her ability to work in teams. In today global Scenario, the engineering students and practitioners need to enhance not only their **English** communication skills, but also **soft skills**, in order to meet out the competition and to have a Edge Over the Competing corporate world. '**Be Different**' is the success in mantra in GD.

English Communication Skills

English communication skills are considered as '**Survival Skills**' in the modern 21st century. Communicating in English in our globalizing world allows us to be a successful person. It can allow us to understand people all over around the world, gain knowledge from new technologies. With the help of developing technology, English plays a major role in many Spheres of Knowledge sectors including medicine, engineering, and education, which, in our opinion, is the most important arena where English Importance is stressed.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are non-technical, interpersonal and communication skills required by an engineer to successfully solve problems and apply his technical skills. Soft skills are very important for all the students who need to develop their potential in different programs. Students should be motivated to be trained in soft skills in latest training methods using Information Technology and advising to read dedicated books, attending courses, joining groups to broaden their horizon, like debating societies. The best way is to incorporate soft skills training along with other subjects in the academics. Some of **soft skills are**: communication skills, critical thinking, Problem Sensing, Problem solving skills, creativity, team work capability, self responsibility, etiquette and good manners, etc..

The Importance of the Group Discussion

Most organizations today are aware of the skills and knowledge that they look for in a candidate while screening. Group discussion (GD) has become an integral part of the selection process, post the written tests, in top B-schools in the country. It is conducted not only by the IIMs (Indian Institute of Management), but also by other top B-schools — FMS, IIFT, IMT-Ghaziabad, MDI-Gurgaon, S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research, TAPMI and K.J. Somaiya Institute of Management. This was not the case a couple of years ago. Group Discussion has been a part of the Selection process for admission into most of the top Business Schools. Most of the other companies also used to conduct GD while selecting candidates for marketing related Posts. Today, almost every company, (including **TCS, SATYAM, WIPRO, INFOSYS, INFOTECH, ORACLE, CTS, CANBAY, POLARIS, etc**) both IT and non-IT companies has GD as part of their selection process. Earlier, some of the Pharmaceutical Companies **like Ranbaxy, Glaxo, Cipla, Lupin**, etc used to conduct Group Discussions as a part of their Screening Process for Selection of Medical Representatives. The skills that are usually assessed in a Group Discussion are:

Communication Skills

Interpersonal Skills

Leadership Skills

Motivational Skills

Team Building Skills

Tolerance to Ambiguity

Listening skills
Presentation Skills
Analytical / Logical skills

Tips for Students to Crack Group Discussion

Here are some important tips to crack GD:

- On the day of GD, wear formal clothes.
- Be confident but avoid being over- confident
- Talk sensibly. Avoid superficial talk
- Listen carefully and speak only at the appropriate time
- Be very sure of what you are speaking
- Use easy-to-understand English
- Speak loudly and clearly
- Do not be deterred by other members' aggressive or submissive behavior
- Accommodate diverse view points
- Put forth your points without being aggressive
- Give importance to others view. However, stick to the point you have made.
- Do not allow yourself to be diverted by other peoples points
- Do not be distracted. Your concentration should be solely on the discussion
- If you do not know something, keep mum.
- Don't get excited / aggressive during the discussion.
- Try to maintain a balanced tone throughout time.
- Try to contribute maximum throughout the discussion
- Try to be the first and the last to speak

Read as much as possible. Have good and sound knowledge on numerous topics. Watching documentaries on various topics will help here. Improve your vocabulary. This does not mean that the students use heavy and big words, but it means that the students will be able to understand the topic better and contribute effectively

Take care of your dressing as well. Don't wear flashy clothes while going for a group discussion or interview. Female candidates should also avoid cagey makeup or flaunt heavy jewelry. The clattering sounds of bangles sometimes act as a disturbing element in formal discussions. Be in professional attire and avoid loud colors.

Dos and Don'ts in Group Discussion

1. Keep eye contact while speaking.
2. Allow others to speak.
3. Speak Clearly.
4. Make sure to bring the discussion on track.
5. Listen carefully to others.
6. Don't interrupt in the middle.
7. Don't take the discussion personally.
8. You need to be assertive.
9. Be as natural as possible and don't try to be someone you are not.
10. Be alert always.
11. Never be rigid in group discussions.
12. Well, Nice, I do agree with the point, It would be better to add my suggestion such phrases can be used during the discussion.
13. Don't bluntly refuse others' points, Deny their points politely.
14. Keep cool and calm.
15. Body language shouldn't divert other participants attention.



Figure 1 : Students Participation in a Group Discussion

Participants' Roles in a Group Discussion

There are a number of roles that a candidate can play in a GD. It has been observed that many candidates act or behave in a certain way or make their points in a particular manner. Figure 1 shows the students participation in a GD. Let us discuss some of the roles that the candidates may choose to play:

The Initiator

The Initiator is one who Initiate the GD is a big plus. But keep in mind – Initiate the group discussion only when you understood the GD topic clearly and have some topic knowledge. Speaking without proper subject knowledge will bring bad impression about the Initiator. Do not think speaking in the beginning is enough. You need to participate actively throughout the discussion. The Initiator will get high score.

The Data Giver

The person playing the role of a data giver provides all the statistics and data relevant to the discussion. The student must try and go beyond and just giving data is not sufficient for GD. He seems to be a '**talking newspaper**' or '**talking journal**'. He will get medium score.

The Criticiser

Some participants play this role, in which they contradict or criticize the points that others make. These participants may not bring sufficient and impact points of his own. He merely responds to the points that others make. He unlikely to score well. If the Criticiser has brought sufficient and substantial points on his side he would get good score.

The Supporter

These participants play an opposite role to the Criticizer. Here, participants agree with or support the points that others make. Those participants do not make sufficient and impact points of their own. Hence, just like above, they are unlikely to score well.

The Questioner

Rather than make points of his own, the 'Questioner' asks others questions. The participant seems to almost play the role of an interviewer. Since he doesn't make substantial points of his own, the evaluation panel is not going to be too impressed .

The Traffic Policeman

This person behaves like a traffic policeman and tries to control the flow of other participants. He makes a number of gestures with his hands, trying to stop someone from speaking. Do not stop others from speaking by raising your hands. These participants are unlikely to score well.

The Spectator / Audience

He/she does not make any contribution, except nodding their heads or saying 'Hmm' almost to themselves and they will not open their mouth. Such participants unlikely to get selected..

The Leader

This is the role that the participants should try and play. Keep in mind that if a participants wish to be recognized as the group leader, then he must try to initiate the discussion and provide a structure to the discussion for GD. The Leader may try and lay the framework or boundaries of the discussion. The Leader must give adequate examples to support his views and could try and manage the 'flow' of the discussion. In the end, the 'leader' may try and summarize the discussion and review all the ideas discussed.

The Summarizer

GDs are left without a conclusion, and it isn't even essential that a group reach one. Remember that a GD is about getting to know one's personality traits and it is the process, even though not every GD is concluded, every one is still summarized. This person tries to summarize the discussion at the end. Remember that this could be a good strategy, but the participants also must participate during the course of the discussion. While summarizing no new points should be

taken up. The summarizer must not share his own point alone and he should not depend on one side. The summarizer should incorporate all the important points spoken and it should be brief and concise.

Evaluation Method

Group Discussion Evaluation sheet is prepared based on the data given below:

Date: 28.1.2016. **Time Slot :** 2.00 P.M. to 3.00 P.M. **Group :** D

Topic: Is Science a boon or a bane to Society ?

Evaluators: Dr.D.Nagarathinam & Prof. L.Lakshmanan.

PARAMETER	Weig htage	Cand 1	Cand 2	Cand 3	Cand 4	Cand 5	Cand 6	Cand 7	Cand 8
Content Subject knowledge	.25								
Creativity and originality	.10								
Voice Tone and pitch	.10								
Body language Posture Eye Contact	.05								
Analytical Ability	.05								
Fluency	.05								
Initiative	.05								
Leadership	.10								
Group Behaviour	.10								

Enthusiasm	.10								
Listening	.05								

GD Evaluation Sheet

Date: _____ Time Slot: _____ Group: _____
 Topic: _____
 Evaluator: _____

Rating

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
POOREST	POORER	POOR	NEUTRAL	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT

- 1. Contents:** Give details with examples, reasons and opinions.
- 2. Speaking English:** Use English as much as possible and give others a chance to speak, too.
- 3. Voice:** Speak with good pronunciation, good rhythm, good intonation, and a clear voice.
- 4. Body language:** Good posture, good eye contact, natural gestures, and appropriate facial expressions.
- 5. Participation:** Interact with others: *"I see." "Oh, really?" "How about you?" "That's interesting." "I have a question." "Could you repeat that, please?" "Pardon me?" "Me, too!" "I agree." etc.*

Candidate who does not speak anything in the GD will not be rated on any of the above-mentioned parameters. A candidate should be rated 1 or 7 only when s/he is exceptionally bad or good. Different parameters on which a candidate will be evaluated are mentioned in the sheet above. The weight ages allotted to them are mentioned in the first column for e.g. the weight age awarded to content is 25 per cent, creativity is 10 per cent, body language 5 per cent etc.

Conclusion

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Group discussions are common in Corporate, Multinational Companies and have a variety of purposes, from planning an intervention or initiative to mutual support to problem-solving to addressing an issue of local concern. A good group discussion leader has to pay attention to the process and content of the discussion as well as to the people who make up the group. The corporate sector's Group Discussion provides an opportunity to share the ideas in a positive environment which result in job opportunity. If the students are relaxed with well preparation, they will more likely to feel confident and they can enjoy group discussion and can present themselves in a successful manner. The reading habit and English communication skills among students will enhance their skills in group discussion. To conclude, the soft skills program is about enabling and empowerment. To conclude, the Group Discussion is about enabling and empowerment.

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