

Chapter 22 Analyzing the Group

Analyzing the Group: Interpreting group dynamics. Analyzing the group is about recognizing that values, rules, rituals, and internal politics play a role in every group. Emotionally intelligent leaders know how to diagnose, interpret, and address these dynamics.

Summary of Modules and Time Estimates

Module	Summary	Estimated Time
22.1: Peeling the Onion	This module asks participants to diagnose an organization or group according to levels of culture. Participants learn major characteristics of organizational culture and apply what has been learned to their lives.	30 minutes
22.2: Elements of Culture	This module challenges participants to identify the elements of an organization or group culture. Participants learn the major categories to consider and use to diagnose their institution's culture.	30 minutes
22.3: Get On the Balcony	This module reviews key questions that will help participants learn how to observe group dynamics that often occur in meetings. Participants review a core set of questions and then add to the proposed list. If possible, participants observe a meeting and discuss what they witnessed based on the guided observation questions.	30 minutes

Module 22.1: Peeling the Onion

Module Summary: This module asks participants to diagnose an organization or group according to levels of culture. Participants

learn major characteristics of organizational culture and apply what has been learned to their lives.

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

Number of Participants: Any

Outcomes

Participants will learn key characteristics of organizational culture. Participants will apply the lens of organizational culture to a group or organization that is familiar to them. Participants will learn a model for diagnosing organizational culture.

Materials Needed

Flipchart/markers, whiteboard/chalkboard, or computer/projector
Layers of the Onion activity (*Student Workbook*, 22.1)

Preparation Notes

Review the *Facilitation Notes* at the beginning of this volume. Put the definitional characteristics of organizational culture on a flipchart or slide:

- ◆ A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learns over time
- ◆ Basic assumptions about the world
- ◆ The values that influence the perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and overt behavior of group members

Familiarize yourself with the three levels of organizational culture so that you can speak comfortably about them, perhaps even giving brief examples from your own experience.

Explanation and Instructions

Part 1 (5 minutes)

Begin by sharing the module outcomes and defining the capacity of analyzing the group. Introduce the concept of organizational



culture by sharing the following ideas from Edgar Schein, retired professor of organizational behavior, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

- A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learns over time
- Basic assumptions about the world
- The values that influence the perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and overt behavior of group members

Ask the participants to consider a group that they know well (e.g., a club, organization, team) and write the name of the group at the top of the *Layers of the Onion* activity (*Student Workbook*, 22.1).

Explain that to understand the assumptions and values of an organization, we often have to begin by looking at the obvious demonstrations of culture, which is called the level of artifacts. Refer participants to the *Layers of the Onion* activity (*Student Workbook*, 22.1) and explain that the artifacts of the culture are like the outer skin of an onion—obvious to the eye. Ask participants to label the outer ring with the word “artifacts.”

Part 2 (20 minutes)

Ask participants to fill in the outer ring of the onion with examples from their organization or group of visible organizational images, practices, structures, and processes. Examples of artifacts include meetings (and meeting behaviors and rituals), symbols of the organization, and communication processes (e.g., emails, phone calls, social media posts). Give an example from your own life of some artifacts of a group you know well.

After 3–4 minutes, ask participants to look at the middle layer of the onion on their worksheet. Ask participants to label this ring “espoused values.” Explain that this middle layer of the onion is the second level of culture and includes not only the values

that the group or organization talks about and promotes but also its strategies and goals. These may be formally adopted (like in a strategic plan or action plan) or may be informally shared by the team (like unwritten rules or common language used by members of the group). Ask participants to write these in the second ring of the onion.

When participants have had 3–4 minutes to complete writing their second set of ideas, explain the following:

Just like the real center of an onion, the inner core of an organization is most difficult to get to. These are the “basic underlying assumptions” of the organization. This is the ultimate source of energy for a group—but this is also generally a set of values and beliefs that are not consciously held by the groups’ members and are believed by the group to be true. Some examples include: school tradition is so important that it can’t be changed, members should prioritize this organization over all other organizations, or the best employees are those who work extra hours without being asked.

Ask the participants to identify some “basic underlying assumptions” for their organization. Allow 5 minutes.

Talk for 5 minutes as a large group about why it’s worth trying to uncover the basic underlying assumptions of an organization or group.

Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Conclude with your own observations and include the following:

- When we know what group members care the most about, we can better understand what motivates them and what frustrates them.
- When we learn about basic underlying assumptions, we uncover the source of why group members think or feel the way that they do.
- For these and other reasons, we become more effective leaders when we learn the culture and the core of the organization.



Facilitator Tips and Notes

- Be sure to have an organization or group in mind as a reference point for examples. In particular, know your group or organization well enough that you can provide examples for the three levels of culture.
- Encourage participants to think creatively about the three levels of culture for their organization or group. The essence of this module is learning how to apply the model more than getting the right answer.

Module 22.2: Elements of Culture

Module Summary: This module challenges participants to identify the elements of an organization or group culture. Participants learn the major categories to consider and use to diagnose their institution's culture.

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

Number of Participants: Any

Outcomes

Participants will learn the four core elements of organizational culture.

Participants will diagnose their institution's culture using these four elements.

Participants will practice their diagnostic skills with a partner.

Materials Needed

Flipchart/markers, whiteboard/chalkboard, or computer/projector
Observing the Elements activity (*Student Workbook*, 22.2)

Preparation Notes

Review the *Facilitation Notes* at the beginning of this volume.

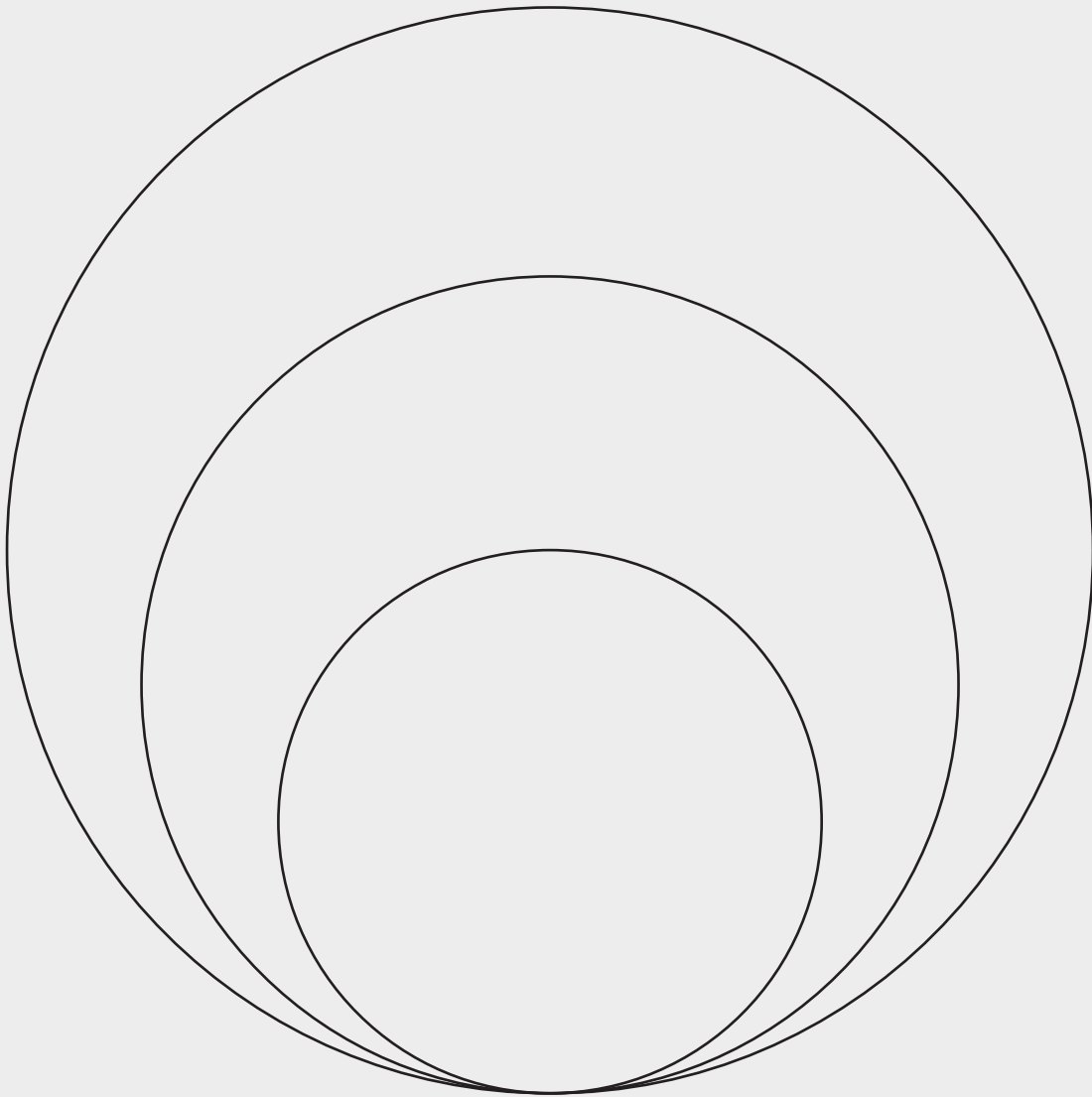


Activity 22.1: Layers of the Onion



Note: This activity accompanies the *Peeling the Onion* module in the *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership for Students: Facilitation and Activity Guide*. See your facilitator for additional instructions.

Name of Group: _____



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