

# GROUP DISCUSSIONS

## Procedure

The Group Discussion (GD) procedure involves summoning of the candidates of approximately same age, educational and experience level, competing for the same job or opportunity and subjecting them to a GD Test. In this group there are six candidates who are seated in a closed circle, which enables each to observe the other members of the group without any hindrance. Each candidate has been assigned a roll number, also called as chest number, since the number printed on a cloth is worn on the chest. Thus, not only the candidates, but also the examiners can readily recognise who is doing what in the group. During the test, each member of the group is addressed by this chest number. For the GD Test, none from the group is designated as chairman, president or leader. On the other hand, the candidates have been informed that it is only an informal friendly chit-chat and they can carry on the discussion in whatever way they want. The group is given 25 to 30 minutes to complete the exercise.

## Presentation

We present here the tape-recorded version of a 'live' Group Discussion conducted at the Competition Success Institute. The expert examiners of the Institute have given their comments at appropriate places which will help our readers to appreciate correctly the various aspects of the Group Discussion Test and understand the exercise better.

The examiner, after explaining the task, the *modus operandi* and subject for the discussion, withdraws to the background leaving the group completely free to carry on with the discussion on its own. Though not visible to the group, he is able to observe and listen to the group deliberations from his seat behind the smoked glass screen.

## Progress

As soon as the back of the examiner is turned, the candidates feel a bit free. The tension is eased and they start talking in low murmurs with their neighbours. While one or two remain silent, there are others who indulge in whispered conversations, asides and cross-talks. Soon the tempo of these asides and conversations increases and the volume of the noise goes up leading to confusion as all seem to be talking at one and the same time. At this stage, we find No. 3 raising his voice to the extent he could be heard by all in the group and addressing the entire lot.

**No. 3 :** *(Displaying a friendly, disarming smile and sincere warmth)* Friends, may I seek your kind attention for one moment please. Pardon me for my interruption, but I have something important to say. And, of course, it concerns all of us.

*(The confident and assured manner in which No. 3 addresses others and his pleasant, friendly approach bring immediate silence and order in the group. The asides, whispers, cross-talks, etc., cease and all eyes are turned towards No. 3. Since he mentioned that he had something of interest to speak about, the curiosity of all is aroused.)*

**No. 1 :** Yes No. 3. You said that you had something of common interest to tell us. Pray, go ahead.

**No. 3 :** Well, dear friends, we have been given a task in this test, which is to discuss the subject : "To Become A Superpower India Must Urgently Achieve Total Self-sufficiency In Nuclear And Economic Spheres". Our success in this test will greatly depend on our ability to complete this task, that is, the group discussion on this subject within the time-limit set by the examiner. You all know that he has given us half-an-hour to complete the discussion. I am afraid, already five minutes are over and we are yet to begin the discussion. Let us rush things a bit to complete our task in time.

**No. 1 :** No. 3, What is your problem ? We have already been discussing the

subject. I mean, each one with his neighbour before you interrupted. At least I was talking about it to No. 6. I also saw others talking to one another, but I do not know what they talked about. You can be sure most of us have been discussing the subject only. Now, you are holding up our discussions.

**No. 3 :** *(Smiling)* I do agree with you, No. 1. Most of us have been talking to our neighbours, friends. As you said we have been talking in asides and cross talks. But, as you would all readily agree, that is not a Group Discussion.

**No. 2 :** All right man, do not talk in riddles. For heaven's sake, tell us plainly what you want us to do.

**No. 5 :** Why ask No. 3 ? I suggest we elect a leader. He can conduct the discussion and tell us what to do.

**No. 3 :** Thank you, No. 5. I suppose it will be a good idea to have a chairman. But I got the impression that the examiner did not favour our electing a chairman. Now, No. 1, will you agree to act as the chairman ?

**No. 1 :** No, no, not me please. You say the examiner didn't favour the idea. Then why do you ask me to be the chairman ? Do you want me to get blacklisted ?

**No. 5 :** Well, I did not hear the examiner telling us not to have a chairman. I thought he gave us full freedom.

**No. 4 :** You are very right No. 5. The examiner did not spell it out in so many words. But, if you all remember, he emphasised that this is only a friendly chit-chat and not a formal debate. He clarified that anyone can say anything as and when he feels like. There is no need for voting, etc. But all the same everything was left to us. Therefore, if we wish to have a chairman, we can certainly have one. Now that No. 1 has declined to act as chairman, what about you No. 5 ? Would you like to be the chairman please ? If there are other contestants or volunteers, then we can go in for an election.

**No. 1 :** You can ask No. 6, who is my neighbour here. Earlier, he was telling

me that he was the college union president.

**No. 3 :** Let us first ask No. 2. It is his idea that we should have a leader.

**No. 2 :** No, thank you. I don't want to be the president. It looks to me that No. 3 is right after all. A friendly chit-chat and a formal president who will conduct a debate do not go together.

**No. 3 :** Okay, No. 6. That leaves you as the sole volunteer to act as president. You can take charge and proceed further. You have to hurry as we might have already eaten up five minutes by now.

**No. 6 :** What is the point ? You all have said that a president is not necessary. No. 2 has himself changed his mind.

**No. 2 :** Hey No. 5, as I said in the beginning, you can tell us how we could go about the task and complete it successfully. Come on. Let us hurry, please.

**No. 3 :** Friends, I submit that each one of us talk on the subject for two minutes in the first round. Or, shall I say, for not more than two minutes, please. Thus, every one of us will get a chance to place his views before the group. After one round is over, we can have another round to counter the arguments or answer criticism.

**No. 5 :** Who will start the ball rolling ? Also who are to be Nos. 2, 3, 4 and so on speakers ? We have to decide those things also.

**No. 2 :** Why don't you be the first speaker No. 5 ?

**No. 5 :** Why not you, No. 2 ?

**No. 1 :** What about those who should speak for the motion and those against it ? We must know who is going to be on which side. Then only the order and sequence of speakers can be decided.

**No. 3 :** One minute, please. Although, what No. 1 says would be

ideal, we do not have time for all these. Secondly, these are not required for a friendly chit-chat. All that is required here is for everyone to express his views to the group on the subject. No. 1 said that No. 6 is a good speaker. Let us then start with him. Thereafter, we go in clockwise fashion, which means after 6, it would be No. 1, then 2, 3, and so on till we finish the round with No. 5. After the first round, we can repeat the process for the second round. Now. No. 6, please go ahead.

**Comments :** *Since no leader was designated, initially we found some delay, suspense and confusion in the group activity getting started. There were only asides and cross-talks in the beginning. At this stage, No. 3 displayed initiative, assumed responsibility and becomes the natural leader. He cleared the ground and asked the group to come to grips with its task. After posing some challenge to No. 3 in the opening phase, No. 2 extended good support to No. 3. When there was strong opposition from No. 5, the situation was handled with tact and imagination by No. 3. The opportunity to act as chairman was offered by No. 3 to Nos. 2, 5 and 6, but all declined the offer. Thus, No. 3 stood fully vindicated in his views and stand. Again it was left to him to find a workable solution and he ably motivated No. 6 to start the discussion. We find all those, including No. 5 and No. 1 who voiced some opposition to No. 3, ultimately becoming his ardent and willing followers. Besides No. 3, Nos. 2, 5, 1 and 4 have participated actively and on their own during the preliminary phase. No. 6 has remained as mere spectator and no active contribution was made by him. He did not speak or express any opinion. He did not volunteer to be the chairman or the opening speaker. As a consequence, he has been ignored by the active participants. However, No. 3 as a good leader, has seen*

*to it that they had their due share of opportunity to express their views and play their part in the group task. Thus, No. 3 has emerged as the natural and able leader with ideas and resourcefulness. Nos. 2, 5 and 6 have followed suit and given support to No. 3. But they did not display enough dash and enterprise to capitalise on the opportunities offered to them. None of them agreed to be the leader. No. 3 being the natural leader did not require any official mantle. Further, we find that No. 3 has always placed the interest of the group and those of others ahead of his own. Thus, he did not volunteer to be the official chairman or the first speaker. Unofficially, he has been both and that is the secret of his success.*

**No. 6 :** Gentlemen, I wish, first of all, to No. 3 and of course, everyone else also in the group for giving me the honour and privilege to be the opening speaker in this Group Discussion. I feel honoured because this is a very distinguished and elite gathering. All of you are graduates and post-graduates of distinction, each one a scholar and a specialist in his field and in his own right. To be frank, I feel diffident to face such an august gathering and that is the reason I did not venture on my own to covet the honour of being the individual to inaugurate the proceedings, despite the good natured promptings made by my esteemed friend, No. 1 (*Turning to No. 3*), Mr. Chairman, Sir you are the Chairman in fact, indeed, the *de facto* leader, President and Chairman. Like an uncrowned, but most beloved monarch, you are, Sir, our dearest Chairman. The second reason is my personal weakness. Well, my dearest friends, I am not overstating the fact when I tell you that this may be the 1000th time that I am addressing such meetings. But, I have never addressed a gathering till date which did not have

## WINNING THE FIRST IMPRESSION

Remember, you may not get a second chance to create a first impression. You can impress people even before you say a word. Your inner mind should glow, which must be reflected on your face. Your movements and posture must be active, positive, alive and responsive to make you acceptable immediately to the group, as also to your examiner who is behind the curtain and is watching every movement of yours. Your body language should reflect your confidence, openness, readiness and cooperation; your eyes should radiate sincerity, friendliness and positive ideas; your voice should reflect your warmth and the depth of your knowledge, so that you can draw everybody's attention the moment you initiate your presentation. Be a problem-solver rather than a problem-creator. Lead the discussion to a positive end.

a Chairman or President. Since I am addicted and accustomed to address the honourable Chairman, it is but natural that I cannot overnight talk to a gathering without a Chairman, all the more so, when we are privileged to have a born President in our midst.

**No. 3 :** *(At this stage No. 3 tactfully interrupts him)* Thank you No. 6. As an opening speaker you have done an admirable job. Now the time is over. We all will be eagerly looking forward to hear you again during the second round. Now No. 1, your turn please.

**Comments :** *No. 6 has got the gift of the gab and possesses fluent and powerful expression. But he is not realistic, rational or logical. He lacks organisational sense. He beats about the bush all the time and has not referred to the subject even once. May be he is shallow and lacking in ideas. He tries to impress the group by praising No. 3 and using bombastic and flowery language. A humbug.*

**No. 1 :** Gentlemen, having heard the wonderful opening speech of No. 6, I really get nervous to stand up before you and make a speech. To be frank, I am no match to No. 6, or for that matter, I can't even rate myself as a patch on the subject, Mr. President. *(He looks up to No. 3)* Well, Sir, since No. 6 has named you as President, I am duty-bound to follow his tradition. *(At this stage, No. 2 slowly whispers to No. 1).*

**No. 2 :** No, the subject is "To Become A Superpower India Must Urgently Achieve Total Self-sufficiency In Nuclear And Economic Spheres."

**No. 1 :** *(No. 1 hastily adds)* Well, No. 2 you can speak louder. I want to be correctly informed about it by the President, I mean No. 3. Never mind. As No. 6 has demonstrated, we can speak on any subject equally well. Our esteemed Chairman said that this is a friendly chit-chat and everyone has full freedom to express his honest and humble opinion. Sorry No. 2, I will also

talk about the subject proper during the second round. I would like to hear the views of No. 6 and also our President first, before I offer my own. *(Turning to No. 3)* Yes Sir, you are looking at the watch. The time is up and I stop now.

**Comments :** *No. 1 is just an imitator and lacks originality. He is also devoid of ideas as he avoids the subject even after being told about it. Further, his forgetting the subject itself indicates his lack of interest and enthusiasm. He did not volunteer to speak when the opportunity was offered to him. Instead he passed the baby on to No. 6. he will be of no use to the organisation.*

**No. 2 :** Well, thank you all. I want India to have nuclear bomb. India must be like America, China and Russia. Then we don't have to go to foreign countries. We can get everything here. We have got many scientists. We can do better than Pakistan. I vote for the proposition.

**Comments :** *Candidate No. 2 is talking in fits and starts in and incoherent manner. His ideas are limited and hazy. He is unable to analyse the problem in depth, arrange his ideas according to their importance and priority and argue his case in an analytical and objective manner. As this candidate is confused and lacking in organising ability, his chances of becoming a successful leader are remote. At best, he could serve as a follower and be useful when able guidance is available to him.*

**No. 5 :** Friends, one of the most hotly debated issues today is whether India can emerge as a full-fledged nuclear power or not. Following the civil nuclear deal between India and the US, the debate has assumed greater significance. The most critical question that has arisen from this debate is about the autonomy of our nuclear capability. While critics of the deal dub it as a blatant assault on our hitherto independent nuclear policy, its supporters articulate the view that the deal is the outcome of a fairly pragmatic thinking and is bound to infuse more

validity in India's claim to be a nuclear state. My honest opinion on this issue is that it is still not plausible to praise or lambast the deal until the Agreement 123, the decisive and final step in that direction, gets the nod of the American Congress and the President. However, I wish to say categorically that self-sufficiency in nuclear power generation alone can lead to our autonomy, which precisely implies a policy free from the intervention of the US or any other global power. And unless we have an independent nuclear and defence policy, it cannot be possible to attain the superpower status. Simultaneously, we should also keep it in mind that economic self-sufficiency is inextricably linked to, or say, complementary to nuclear self-sufficiency until we develop the strength and prowess of evolving an indigenous model of development and keep looking forward to Western aid in different spheres, we shall be bound to remain dependent on the US and other developed nations. In that situation, the possibility of economic self-sufficiency will be seriously impeded. That may, in turn, stymie our progress on the path of nuclear self-sufficiency as well. The relationship between the two is quite evident. In fact, without economic self-sufficiency, we cannot master the best and most advanced technologies, which are very cost-intensive and warrant an impeccable system of maintenance. Here, it should also be kept in mind that attaining the status of a global super power certainly implies for us nothing short of competing with the US. Now, China is also surging on that track with giant steps. So, it is even more imperative today to realise that if we are really keen to emerge as a global superpower, we must adopt policies that may effectively realise the twin goals of economic as well as nuclear self-sufficiency. We can't forget that it was the denial of nuclear technology by the US in the past that

## group discussion

In a formal debate the chairman or the president acts as the leader, sets the ball rolling, functions as an arbiter and gives decisions. In a formal selection or interview, the chairman and the members of the interview board function as leaders. They decide the questions to be asked and the candidate has to follow the lead set by them. On the other hand, in the Group Discussion Test, the examiner does not act as the leader. He totally withdraws to the background, once the subject is introduced and stays behind as a silent observer. The group starts discussion on its own. It is here that the candidate is called upon to prove his mettle among his equals, who, incidentally, are also his competitors, and emerges as the leader, successfully.

gave us chance and determination to develop our own nuclear technology and weapons. And the year 1998 proved to be a watershed in that regard when we successfully conducted a series of nuclear tests. Subsequently, defying all sanctions imposed by the US and other countries in the wake of the 1998 nuclear tests, we tirelessly kept working for the peaceful and non-abusive uses of nuclear technology. This factor has forced the US to re-orient its thinking which was reflected in the agreement upon the 2006 civil nuclear deal between the two countries. The strategic indispensability of this deal was discussed and further re-asserted by the two sides during bilateral talks between Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Mr. George W. Bush on the sidelines of the G-8 summit at Heilingendamm (Germany) on June 6, 2007. While we can't outrightly reject the possibility of some 'compromise' on our part, we should not lose sight of the positives that the deal entails for us. So, it is high time we should start evolving a broad, futuristic perspective to capitalise on the possible advantages accruing from the deal instead of being too much hypercritical.

**Comments :** *No. 5 reveals excellent grasp over the subject. His views are highly matured and realistic. He has been very successful in creating a strong as well as favourable impact on the group by his positive and dynamic approach. A positive leader with proven capacity.*

**No. 4 :** Friends, there are many countries today which have either acquired or are likely to acquire nuclear capabilities in future. It implies that the ability to produce nuclear weapons is no longer the monopoly of only the world's so-called big powers. As mentioned by No. 3, besides India and Pakistan, Israel and Iran too seem to have gained nuclear capability. Canada, Australia, Libya, Spain, North Korea, and some South American countries are also said to possess nuclear capability. However, even as these countries are hell-bent on giving palpable shape to their nuclear ambition, there is a growing realisation that arms race cannot solve any problem but only create more problems. So, it is being stressed that the basic objective of developing means for nuclear power generation should not be to turn the

world into a battlefield but to establish peace by using its untapped potential for development. Moreover, with so many countries heading for acquiring nuclear capability, it will automatically become redundant as is the case with poisonous gases and chemical warfare. Also, with the fast proliferation of nuclear capability by many countries, the acquisition of nuclear strength would act as a deterrent rather than for an attack. It is crucial, therefore, to lay emphasis on making use of nuclear power for the development in different sectors. One great advantage of nuclear power is that it can be a much more cost-effective and enduring means of energy than various other exhaustible sources on which we depend today. It can spur all-round development and reduce the burden of poverty by facilitating power consumption at a cheaper rate. We are still far behind western countries in developing advanced technologies and means for the production of nuclear power for peaceful means. But our policy makers should consistently strive towards that goal without sacrificing our national interests on the chessboard of global diplomacy. Unless we do so, it will be impossible to have both economic and nuclear self-sufficiency.

**Comments :** *No. 4 has spoken well and argued a difficult case with remarkable imagination and persuasion. He has been quite successful in creating a very favourable and strong impact on the group with his performance. He has plenty of ideas and his arguments are rational, methodical and with training his mildness can be easily overcome.*

**No. 3 :** Friends, our friend No. 4 has brought out some new points and I think it is important that we take a closer look at some of them. As you would appreciate they are not only controversial but have a vital bearing on the security and defence aspects of our country. To be brief, the theme of No. 6's presentation is that India should not aim to go nuclear. His hope is that since poison gas has gone out of use, nuclear weapons will also go out of use. In my considered view, this is not a correct comparison. In the case of poison gas, it was meant for the front-line troops and subject to wind and other climatic conditions. It could cause more damage

### WINNING STRATEGY

It doesn't matter, if you don't always hit the bull's eye. The other rings in the target score points too.

to the user and his civil population. But atom or nuclear bomb can be dropped on major cities and industrial centres as was done in Hiroshima and Nagasaki of Japan. If we have no capacity for nuclear retaliation then Pakistan and its ally China can blackmail us. Secondly, we cannot depend on the goodwill of the Big Powers. They will put their own interests before ours. What is worse, to get their protection, you have to become a satellite of the superpower, mortgaging your independence and sovereignty. No. 6 also spoke of economic and social problems. But I wish to emphasise that national security and survival take precedence over everything else.

Since power shortage is the big bane to our economic development, I appreciate Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's recent deal with the US President, Mr. George W. Bush which will ensure the latest technology and supply of reactor fuel uranium exclusively to generate power.

However, on military side, we should never compromise. Even in the civil nuclear deal between India and the US, India has been successful in keeping its strategic nuclear programme i.e., its weapons programme, out of public eye. It has also retained the power to decide the status of all its future nuclear reactors – whether civil or military. In this context, we should not have agreed to open even our civil nuclear facilities to IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) inspections since it would cap Indian nuclear arsenal by separating military and civil reactors. Further, separating the civilian reactors from the military, according to some experts, may be a quite difficult, if not impossible task.

**Comments :** *No. 3, who has been displaying initiative and taking part in the group's deliberations from the early stages, has now demonstrated that he has the resources and ability to stand up to stiff competition and challenge and turn the tide in his favour. He has a good and firm grip on the subject. His ability to persuade and motivate others, especially under adverse circumstances is very high.*