

Change tool linked to chapter 12

Beckhard (1969) describes a method for managing differences between groups (Change tool 12.3).

Change tool 12.3 Beckhard's process for improving intergroup relations

- 1 The first step involves the leaders, or the total membership, of two groups meeting to agree to commit some time and effort to working together to develop a joint understanding about the issues causing friction.
- 2 The two groups meet in separate rooms. Their first task is to develop a list that summarizes their attitudes and feeling about the other group, which might include their perceptions of what the other group is like and the way members behave. They do not have to reach a consensus about the items on their list.
- 3 Their second task is to develop another list that summarizes what they think the other group might be saying about them.
- 4 The groups then come together to share their lists. They start by sharing their first list – what they think about the other group. They have to listen to each other without comment at this stage. They then share their second lists – what they thought the other group would write about them.
- 5 The groups return to their separate rooms to discuss their reactions to what they have heard and to prepare a new list of issues they think both groups should work on. Beckhard reports that, in this meeting, group members discover that at least some of the issues on their first list reflected misunderstandings that were cleared up by simply sharing information. Their lists of key issues for attention are usually much shorter than their original lists.
- 6 The two groups then meet, compare their lists of issues and make one joint list that reflects their agreed views about importance and immediacy. They then begin working together to agree what needs to be done.