



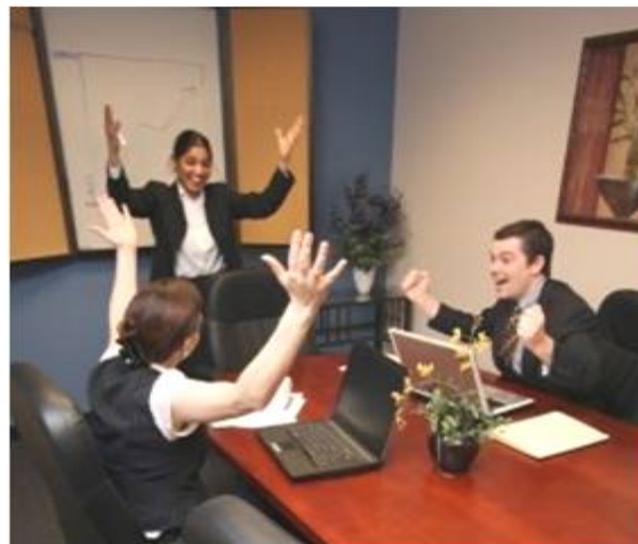
# KLC Associates

Chicago ■ New York ■ London ■ Köln

## GETTING EXCEPTIONAL RESULTS FROM TEAMS AND WORK GROUPS -- DESPITE "GROUP FLU"

Karen L. Cornelius  
President  
KLC Associates

Jeffrey T. Walsh  
Executive Vice President  
KLC Associates



# “Group Flu”

Work groups and teams often come down with their own version of the flu...



**Group flu cripples performance and productivity** as severely as an epidemic of the regular sort of flu

## 'Group Flu' – What is it ?

In your pairs or trios...  
identify some things  
you have seen **go  
wrong** in teams -- *you  
have either led or been  
of member of* -- **that did  
not produce desired  
results**



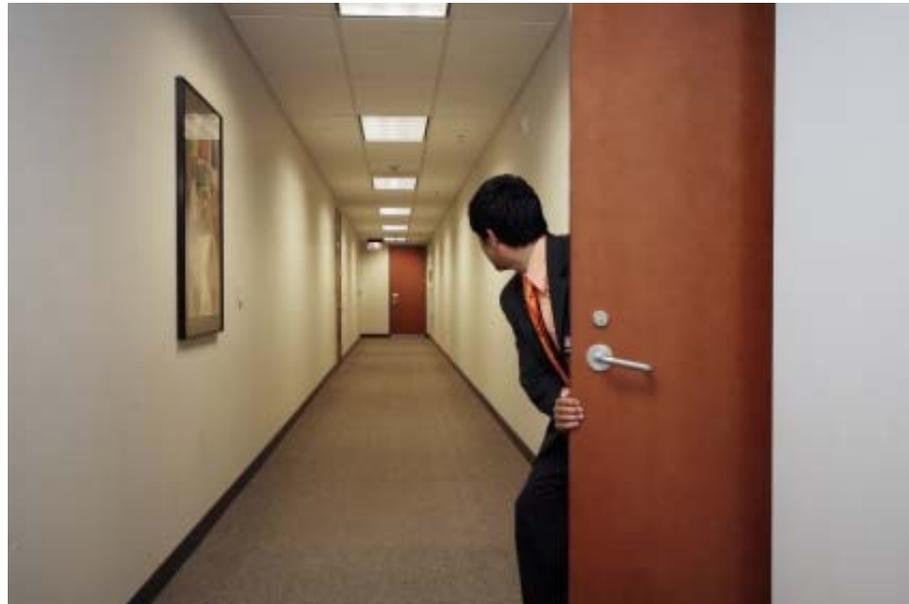
# 'Group Flu' – Common Symptoms



- Members arrive **late** for team meetings and **leave early**
- Dropping levels of **attendance**
- **Low energy** levels in meetings
- Members **argue** over details and **point fingers**
- **Nothing happens** – agreed decisions and actions evaporate
- Members take their issues outside the group and attempt to resolve them '**behind the scenes**'

## 'Group Flu' – What Happens?

In **voluntary groups**, members **'vote with their feet'**, and the group slowly dissolves or collapses



# 'Group Flu' – What Happens?



Within organizations, members don't have that option

...so they 'quit and stay'  
Creating a downward spiral of worsening Group Flu through:

- Delegating upward
- Waiting for direction
- Giving minimal effort
- Failing to take accountability
- Acting as if they are helpless
- Seeing insurmountable obstacles

# 'Group Flu' – What Happens?



The result: **De-motivated** and **poor performing** teams

...at a time when companies need **exceptional results** from everybody



*Let me give you some real examples of very sick teams*

# 'Group Flu' – Causes and Prevention

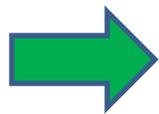
The good news is that the causes of Group Flu fall within three main areas. Preventing or curing it is a matter of attending to simple principles in these areas:

Purpose  
Leadership  
Group Process



# 'Group Flu' – Causes and Prevention

The good news is that the causes of Group Flu fall within three main areas. Preventing or curing it is a matter of attending to simple principles in these areas:



**Purpose**

Leadership

Group Process



# 'Group Flu' – Causes Purpose

Every work group/team  
must have a **clear purpose**



'Vision'

'Charter'

'Mission'

That members **understand**  
**in the same way** and feel  
**committed** to achieving

# 'Group Flu' – Causes Purpose

...So what **goes wrong**? The top causes of **Group Flu**:



1. Management gives the group **vague** or **no information** as to the **rationale, scope and boundaries** or **Big Picture context** for the project

... leading to demoralizing **"No, that's not right"** team reviews with their manager(s)

# 'Group Flu' – Causes Purpose



2. Management completely defines the purpose – sometimes giving the team a very **narrow technical objective...**

## 'Group Flu' – Causes Purpose

3. *Because they fear the team will go off-track and/or stray into sensitive political, strategic or policy related areas –*

Management completely 'pre-thinks' roles, work streams and sometimes even the solution in advance



## 'Group Flu' – Causes Purpose



4. One of the most frequent mistakes we see is the use of a **'Straw Man'** – assigning the group leader or an 'inner circle' sub-group to write a **draft purpose statement** to present to the full group

Management believes that this is a way to **involve the team** *AND* **an efficient use of everyone's time...**

# 'Group Flu' – Causes Purpose

*However what happens is this:*

Different members interpret the **same words** in **different ways**

**No one** but the authors ever **feels ownership of or commitment to** the sub-group's work...



## 'Group Flu' – Causes Purpose

*... Straw Men set all of the wrong process rules for the group:*



- They evoke **critical 'Find the Flaw'** rather than **creative** thinking
- They teach members that the **real work** is done **outside the group**

## 'Group Flu' – Causes Purpose

...and they teach members that a

- well presented
- bland,
- politically sensitive
- lowest-common-denominator document or solution

is the best way to win over a critical audience



## 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose



KLC's prescription for preventing Group Flu or restoring sick groups to full health involves:

➤ One key principle

➤ A simple three step launch or re-launch process

# 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose

The key principle:

Commitment can *only* be achieved through involvement

All group members need to be involved in the initial content discussions of purpose statements



## 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose



It is this process of **idea generation and dialogue** that builds **common understanding, alignment and commitment**

# 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose

---

## The Three Step Process

### I. Management puts **the right team** together:

- **Subject matter experts**
- People who **must implement the outcomes** and **make them work**
- People whose **processes will be impacted** by the team's work
- **A leader** with skills to organize, convene and participatively facilitate discussion and coordinate activities.



# 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure

## Purpose

2. Management provides the group with **sufficient information** to understand the **true scope** of the project:



- **Project rationale** – problem or opportunity and benefits to the company
- **Big Picture strategies** and **direction** into which the initiative fits
- **Scope** and **boundaries** – what's in/what's out
- Desired **outcomes**

# 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure

## Purpose

2. Management provides the group with **sufficient information** to understand the **true scope** of the project:



- Level of team **authority/empowerment**
  - What they can **decide** and **do**/what they **need approval** for
  - **Budget** under their control
- **Support system** that exists for the team
  - 'Champions'/'sponsors'
  - Who else they **can go to for help**

## 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose

3. The **group** creates a **statement of purpose** for their project, including :

➤ **'Design statements'** – what their **outcome /future state must be able to do or contain within it;** and or any key or **unique characteristics**

*(e.g., “ The financial cookbook must be accessible to and meet the requirements of all business units”;*

*“ The product must be perceived by our customers to be uniquely different from competitors’ “)*



## 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose

3. The **group** creates a **statement of purpose** for their project, including:



➤ **Values** that define how the project will be conducted and **how the group will operate**

## 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose

3. The **group** creates a **statement of purpose** for their project. This step should further include:

➤ Spending time to **surface and understand** any individual, functional, business unit or corporate **cultural differences** that could

- **de-rail** the group  
or
- **be leveraged** to enhance it's work



## 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose

3. The **group** creates a **statement of purpose** for their project. This step should Further include:

- Achieving **full agreement** on the group's
  - **goals**
  - **objectives**
  - and
  - **individual responsibilities**



## 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose

3. The **group** creates a **statement of purpose** for their project. This step should further include:

- Agreeing on **key internal processes** such as:
  - **Information sharing**
  - **Decision-making**
  - Meeting cadence
  - Managing attendance



# 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure Purpose

Added **benefits** from **involving** the team



In addition to building **common understanding**, **motivation and commitment** of team members,

involving the team usually adds **immense richness**, **depth and creativity** to the purpose statement

## Example:

*Compare the initial purpose statement of the founder of a successful equine veterinary practice who wanted something more:*



“ ...a regional equine veterinary center providing high quality diagnosis and specialized, state of the art treatment...”

## Example:

*... to the vision/purpose that he and his core team collaboratively developed:*



### **Our vision:**

#### **Equine Sports Medicine, Surgical and Reproductive Services**

- It is our practice to provide swift, responsive, high quality sports medicine and surgical care that will sustain the ability of our clients' horses to do their jobs at their optimum potential.
- We strive to improve the lives of both horses and the owners who rely on them.
- We believe that pain management and the comfort of the horse is essential to all medical cases
- Our medical care is based on proven, scientific medicine, utilizing advanced diagnostic equipment and therapeutic techniques. We make every effort to get to the root cause of the problem as quickly as possible

# 'Group Flu' – Prevention or cure

## Purpose

---

## Conclusion

Through investing the up-front time and resources in this **3 step launch process**, you can set the stage to create **motivated, high performing** teams that can and will **achieve exceptional results**

