

# Free essay on how might groups both small and large learn more from each other to...

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



## **Problem Solving**

Today, societies are more global than they have ever been in human history. Currently, there is a major exchange of knowledge and culture among various different groups of people. Sometimes problems may arise which can cause problems for a certain group or groups of people. A problem such as the color of a person's skin can lead to racism and cause a split in society. Oftentimes, the solution to these problems can be found when different groups, both large and small, come together in order to exchange ideas on problem solving. In their essay, James Surowiecki's " Committees, Juries, and Teams: The Columbia Disaster and How Small Groups Can Be Made to Work," and Marshall Poe's " The Hive," Surowiecki and Poe give several explanations on how to run a group properly as well as how to get the best possible results from these groups. Moreover, Malcolm Gladwell examines the idea of " weak ties" and " strong ties" in his essay " Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted." He shows how " strong ties" and " weak ties" relationships can have an impact on an individual's determination and willingness to aid a cause. Both strong and weak ties are necessary to address problems within and between groups because each tie contributes to the progression of a society.

Even though society is becoming more global, and there is an exchange in cultural ideas and inventions, there are still some groups who refuse form ties with others. In his essay, Gladwell talks about ties that simply are connections a person make throughout their life. A person's connections are made up of weak ties and strong ties. These ties come in the form of family, friends, and acquaintances as well as strangers that people meet online or

<https://assignbuster.com/free-essay-on-how-might-groups-both-small-and-large-learn-more-from-each-other-to-solve-problems/>

offline. The strength of the ties people forms depends on well a person knows another and how strong their connections are with each other. Since the invention of the internet, people are becoming more connected than in the past. The internet is used by many for activism against people who seek to break the ties created between certain groups. However, Gladwell's example of weak ties is social media. According to Gladwell, "[t]he platforms of social media are built around weak ties." (Gladwell) Since people can use social media to keep track of acquaintances, Gladwell writes that it is not our friends but our acquaintances that " are our greatest source of new ideas and information." (Gladwell) He mentions that while " weak ties seldom lead to high-risk activism," the use of the internet allows for the exploitation of acquaintances. (Gladwell) Surowiecki states that " the influence of the people in the group on each other's judgment is inescapable." (Surowiecki) The ties that people form online lead to collaboration between groups of people. On the other hand, working in a group, small or large, can have a certain effect on how people collaborate and make decisions about certain issues. In a small group, it is more possible to influence a person's decisions or actions. In order to avoid a dictatorial situation within a small group, James Surowiecki explains that someone needs to be the group's mouthpiece. (Surowiecki) Such collaboration can be seen in how people so readily come together online to create an open encyclopedia known as Wikipedia. However, since social media does not have any organizational order, there is not one centralized authority. Instead, oftentimes people have to deal with multiple centralized authorities which allow the consensus to make a decision. Wikipedia is one example of how groups must work with

multiple centralized authorities. Poe points out that "[i]nstead of relying on experts to write articles according to their expertise, Wikipedia lets anyone write about anything." (Poe) In order to keep it updated and accurate, Wikipedia owners rely on " a legion of unpaid, unorganized amateurs scattered about the globe" (Poe) It is clear that the collaboration, consensus, and community all influence and shape the ties we have with one another. They all determine how weak or strong our ties are.

Before the internet and before social media became popular, groups depended on hierarchies. Gladwell argues that there is no apparent hierarchy within online social networking. He strongly believes that a hierarchy is necessary for the success of any movement. However, it is clear that Wikipedia goes against Gladwell's argument. Since Wikipedia is a free and open encyclopedia which allows anyone to add or change an entry, there is not a clear hierarchy. However, as Poe writes in his essay, Wikipedia " is consistently ranked among the most visited Web sites in the world."

(Poe) Such collaboration was probably unlikely in the past. " Back then we knew that people do not work for free; or if they do work for free, they do a poor job; and if they work for free in large numbers, the result is a muddle."

(Poe) On the other hand, allowing anyone to write an entry or correct an entry in Wikipedia has led to the abuse of the site. Since there is not a central voice overlooking each Wikipedia entry, the site owners rely on dedicated members of society to remove any false or unnecessary information. Marshall Poe had created a page about himself on Wikipedia. After a week, an active and trusted member of the Wikipedia community removed Poe's entry stating that there was "" No real evidence of notability,"

Alai cruelly but accurately wrote, " beyond the proverbial average college professor." (Poe) Like Gladwell, Surowiecki seems to believe a hierarchy is needed. There were studies conducted which had shown two ways that the shuttle Columbia could have made the reentry into Earth safely. Instead, the MMT did not look at these studies and simply concluded there was not much they could do about Columbia's situation. In order to prevent members of a group from falling into extreme decision, Surowiecki argues that there must be a central authority to bring reason into the decision-making process.

(Surowiecki) On the other hand, Surowiecki states " a small group has the opportunity to be more than the sums of their parts." (Surowiecki) However, this can be done only when working in a face to face setting rather than an anonymous setting such as on the internet. In the end, there are several good and bad things about working in a network or hierarchy. They are not always at odds with each other since it depends on the situation in which they are used.

While the disaster of the Columbia space shuttle shined a light on the danger of working in a small group, Facebook shows how there could be problems in larger groups due to the lack of engagement and real committees.

Depending on the situation, both large and small groups could be used to help with a problem solving. Finding a balance between small and large groups can be difficult. In order to find the right balance between the groups, people must first create a type of hierarchical organization. For instant, Gladwell argues that certain structures such as Wikipedia and other similar networks are " enormously resilient and adaptable in low-risk situations."

(Gladwell) Therefore, such networks or groups do not need to have anyone

particular hierarchy overseeing the operation of the group. Poe backs up this argument by pointing out that Wikipedia is one of the most successful website online. (Poe) However, as Surowiecki contends, groups do not necessary do so well without a centralized authority to oversee the operation and organization of the group. (Surowiecki) Furthermore, Surowiecki believes that a " successful face-to-face group is more than just collectively intelligent. It makes everyone work harder, think smarter, and reach better conclusions than they would have on their own." (Surowiecki) Surowiecki believes that for groups to work together in a professional environment rather than using the social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter. Gladwell seems to agree with Surowiecki assessment since he wrote that "[s]ocial networks are effective at increasing participation—by lessening the level of motivation that participation requires." (Gladwell) Moreover, Poe speaks about how Wikipedia, which allows anyone to post legitimate resources in their database, had and still have issues with people placing irrelevant information on their website. While Wikipedia is a worldwide collaboration that has people dedicated to keeping their website accurate, it is apparent that it still has someone to make an overall rule about what is acceptable content. (Poe) In order for both large and small groups to become a way to solve problems, there needs to be a stronger bond between weak ties. Furthermore, a hierarchy is needed because having a leader or leadership committee would give a voice of reason to problems when group decisions lean toward the extreme side.

In conclusion, small and large groups can learn from each other if they form strong ties. Hierarchies are needed within small and large groups that can

help make the problem-solving easier. Both strong and weak ties are necessary because each influence a person or society differently. Such ties become crucial to address problems since many people tend to look to others for motivation.

## **Works Cited**

Gladwell, Malcolm. " Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted."

The New Yorker. N. p., 4 Oct. 2010. Web. 1 Dec. 2014. .

Poe, Marshall. " The Hive." The Atlantic. N. p., 1 Sept. 2006. Web.

1 Dec. 2014. .

Surowiecki, James. " Chapter 9: Committees, Juries, and Teams: The

Columbia Disaster and How Small Groups Can Be Made To Work." The

Wisdom of Crowds. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2004. 173-191. Print.