



# BIG IDEA

## Groupthink

I know, thinking seems to be the last thing that most of the groups you have been in seem to do, and actually this curious term does carry elements

of that meaning. It was coined by Irving Janis from his analysis of policy fiascos, most famously the Bay of Pigs. Surrounded by 'mindguards', President Kennedy let himself be swept along by the delusional consensus of his advisers and backed Cuban refugees in a disastrous invasion of their former homeland. Political and corporate examples abound of bad team decision-making, where galloping consensus crushes independent thought. The causes lie in our supremely social motives. We care more about being on the right side and agreeing with others than

about risk and error. We congratulate ourselves in groups for how efficiently we can smash an agenda, rather than whether we have confronted schisms and difficulties. One could say that our sociality makes decision-making the worst thing groups undertake. So if we insist that groups do govern the process, we need firm disciplines and strong facilitation to ensure that truth and justice survive our instincts.

➔ To see Nigel Nicholson's book, *The 7 of Leadership: Strategies for seeing, being and doing* (Jossey-Bass, £18.99), go to [ioleadership.com](http://ioleadership.com)