5 STAGES of TEAM DEVELOPMENT

FORM → STORM → NORM → PERFORM → ADJOURN
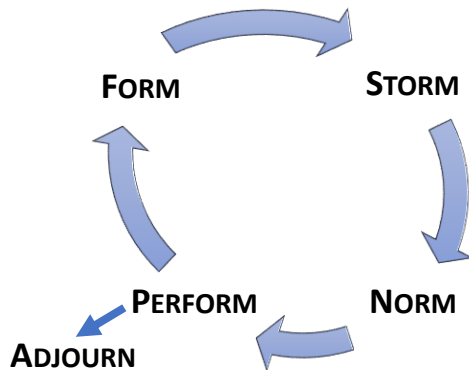
Overview

A team is composed of individuals working together to achieve a common goal. The individuals are interdependent for information, resources, knowledge and skills. They respect each other and create a safe space to combine their resources to achieve a common goal. The work product is a synergistic effort.

The model *Form-Storm-Norm-Perform-Adjourn* illustrates how individuals in a group transform into a cohesive team. Bruce Tuckman's model makes it easy to recognize what stage the team is in and recommends *actions that maximize team potential* to develop trust and move forward in a healthy, satisfying, productive way.

When new people and issues are introduced, Form, Storm, Norm, Perform will reoccur.

Teamwork requires effort from all members.

STAGE 1: FORM

Forming is the *Getting to know you* stage. Tasks include identifying expectations, goals and roles (assigned or assumed). Behaviors: most members are optimistic and polite. Getting to know each other contributes to team morale and cooperation. Individuals develop trust and learn to work together. Productivity is low because the team has no established processes. [Processes include safe environment, personal relationships, communication and problem solving.] The uncertainty of the Forming stage may cause some people to feel anxious and look for leadership guidance from someone with subject matter knowledge or experience.

Actions that maximize success:
- Foster discussions to identify each person's skills, experience, interests and how they can best contribute to achieve the common goal.
- Brainstorm about goals, timeline and ground rules. Agree on ground rules.
- Discuss and agree on how to manage conflicting opinions and goals.

STAGE 2: STORM

Storming, *conflict-leading-to-clarification* is the second stage of team development.

Members begin to see the intricate details and the big picture of the work involved. They know each other's skills and background. They feel comfortable to address principal issues related to tasks, scope, roles, responsibilities, rules, leadership, evaluation criteria and reward systems. Conflict, competition and frustration will surface because team members have different values, work styles, communication styles and opinions. Storming can feel like the worst thing in the world. Some members may compete for power especially if early leadership was compromised. Tuckman observed that *Participants form opinions about the character and integrity of the other participants and feel compelled to voice these opinions if they find someone shirking responsibility or attempting to dominate.* Decision making is complex because problem-solving skills and procedures have not been fully learned. Unmanaged conflict can cause people to feel threatened, intimidated, or anxious. In this stage, it is common for teams to create splinter groups around different methods of working or different overall goals. Due to conflicts, team productivity stays the same as in the Forming stage or it decreases. During the Storm stage, the team must develop skills to collaborate. It is important for the team to resolve all underlying issues so that it can improve productivity and avoid long-term problems.

PRODUCTIVE Storming REQUIRES THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

- Some people are comfortable when their suggestion or viewpoint is challenged because they see potentially valuable discussion and exchange of ideas. Some people view challenging their ideas as a personal attack.
- Respectful conflict offers opportunity for healthy exchange of ideas and opinions. This helps people develop deeper understanding, see things from different perspectives and generate more options.

Actions that maximize success: Manage conflicts instead of ignoring them. Identify the issues, tensions points and misunderstandings. Resolve issues to avoid getting mired down in conflict.

- Define communication rules that facilitate managing conflict. Members must feel safe to express ideas, opinions and feelings. All members must be heard. Listen to all sides of each conflict and facilitate a middle ground that allows the team to move forward.
  Active Listening includes the following behaviors
    1. Listen fully before you formulate your reply. Look at the speaker. Show that you're listening by nodding, saying yes or making appropriate facial expressions. Don't multitask.
    2. Restate (paraphrase) the message and get confirmation that you correctly heard the speaker's message.
- Review and refocus on the goals. Clarify roles, responsibilities and accountability.
- Major decisions are made by collaborative group agreement. Smaller decisions may be delegated to individuals or small teams within group. Some occasions require compromise to enable progress.
- Ask for help on tasks. This promotes trust and encourages people to support each other.

Storming is the most difficult of the five stages. When managed successfully, the team resolves most or all issues. They develop trust, unity, a working style and commitment and easily move into the Norming stage.

STAGE 3: NORM

Norming is the *values-and-process-agreement* stage. The team establishes agreements about core values, goals, leadership, division of labor, best practices for issue resolution and appropriate behavior. Because most issues are resolved, the team begins to standardize work practices and solidify roles. There are no more groups within the team; everyone works as a unit. The need for immediate and constant oversight decreases from its maximum in the storming stage. People make decisions through negotiation and consensus. The team develops a sense of confidence, momentum, and ease with their various duties and roles. The work is effective, efficient, and harmonious. A natural synergy often occurs and propels the team into the performing stage.

Actions that maximize success:
- Resolve issues quickly to avoid regression to the Storming stage.
- Nurture a safe environment where people feel included, valued, and fully engaged. This promotes cooperation and encourages individuals to stretch beyond their comfort zone.
- Social interactions promote inclusion and develop relationships among members.
- Celebrate accomplishments.

STAGE 4: PERFORM

High performance is the hallmark of stage four. Energy is focused on the task in a mutually satisfying, proficient way because the team has a bond of trust and support. Everyone is equally task-orientated and people-orientated (members care about each other). The team is organized because goals, roles and responsibilities are clear. The workload is optimally divided, and shared responsibility is flexible. Members collaborate and maximize output by using their complimentary skills because they capitalize on individual strengths. Loyalty and morale are high. The team is stable and equipped to adapt to change in membership, conditions, or objectives, without collapsing or succumbing to conflict. Results are synergistic.

Actions that maximize success:
- Create opportunities for individuals to share valuable information about the process.
- Create growth opportunities by occasionally rotating team roles. For example, ask someone else to run the weekly meeting to get an unfamiliar perspective and fresh ideas.

STAGE 5: ADJOURN

Adjourning, *say goodbye*, is the final stage of the team development. For teams that formed for a specific purpose, this final stage begins as the goals are accomplished. Sometimes this stage is stressful because of deadlines or associated projects.

Actions that maximize success:

Create a celebration and identify *lessons learned.* By doing this, people will be energized and motivated when they move to new projects.

Every Team Needs Ground Rules

Ground rules (behaviors) are powerful tools that significantly improve how the team solves problems and makes decisions that improve performance, working relationships, and individual well-being.

Procedural ground rules include being on time and prepared. Phones on vibrate.

Behavioral ground rules describe specific actions for desirable results. Examples include:

1. **Listen** attentively, with an open mind. Don't interrupt or have side conversations.

2. **Make** comments brief and relevant to the topic being discussed.

3. **Contribute**: Share ideas, relevant information and ask questions. Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean. Explain reason and intent. This helps members to understand how others reached their conclusions and identify differences.

4. **Share** time so that all can participate.

5. **Challenge** the idea, not the person.

6. **Close** a discussion before moving to a new topic. Make sure decisions are supported by the group. Note pending issues and schedule follow up as needed. This ensures that everyone is committed to moving forward together as a team.

7. **Clarify** assumptions and inferences to ensure that the team is making decisions with valid information. Example: some teams reduce off-topic conversation by directly saying, "*That's off topic*." Research shows that the speaker will keep raising the issue or will shut down for the rest of the meeting. The team may make a lower-quality decision because the person's contributions were not heard or because the person does not support the decision. A productive response is to ask the speaker to illustrate how the idea is related to the topic. If unrelated but important, the team can 'park' the subject for later discussion. This leads to a solid decision, improved working relationships, and reduced frustration for everyone.

8. **Identify** and resolve undiscussed issues that are hindering results.

9. **Agree** on the ground rules and what each one means. The team does not own ground rules until everyone on the team explicitly agrees to use them.

10. **Share responsibility** for honoring the ground rules. Effective teams will identify how individuals will intervene when others are not abiding by agreed-to ground rules.

11. **Reserve** 5-10 minutes at the end of the meeting to summarize accomplishments, behaviors that contributed to success, behaviors we want to change for more success at the next meeting.

Information in this document is distilled from the following resources:

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Shaw, James B. and Elain Barrett-Power. The Effects of Diversity on Small Work Group Processes and Performance (1998)

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