

## Tuckman's Stages of Team Development



### Forming

When a team is forming, members cautiously explore the boundaries of acceptable group behavior. This is a stage of transition from individual to member status, and of testing the leader's guidance both formally and informally.

Forming includes these feelings:

- Excitement, anticipation and optimism
- Pride in being chosen for the project
- Initial, tentative attachment to the team
- Suspicion, fear, and anxiety about the job or if they will be accepted by others.

Forming includes these behaviors:

- Attempts to define the task and decide how it will be accomplished.
- Attempts to determine acceptable group behavior and how to deal with group problems.
- Decision on what information needs to be gathered.
- Lofty, abstract discussions of concepts and issues; or, for some members, impatience with these discussions.
- Discussion of symptoms or problems not relevant to the task; difficulty in identifying relevant problems.

- Complaints about the organization and barriers to the task.
- Posturing, external or internal behaviors.

Because there is so much going on to distract members' attention in the beginning, the team accomplishes little, if anything, that concerns its project goals. This is perfectly normal.

## **Storming**

Storming is probably the most difficult stage for the team. They begin to realize the task is different and more difficult than they thought, they are having control and fit difficulties, they become testy and challenging, confrontational or they may withdraw.

Storming includes these feelings:

- Resistance to the task and to suggested approaches different from what they know
- Sharp fluctuations in attitude about the team
- Powerlessness.

Storming includes these behaviors:

- Arguing among members even when they agree on the real issue.
- Defensiveness and competition; factions and "choosing sides."
- Questioning the wisdom of those who selected the project and appointed the other members of the team.
- Establishing unrealistic goals; concern about excessive work.
- A perceived "pecking order", disunity, increased tension, and jealousy.

Again, these many pressures mean team members have little energy to spend on progressing towards the team's goals. But they are beginning to understand each other.

## **Norming**

During norming, members reconcile competing loyalties and responsibilities. They accept the team, team ground rules, their roles in the team, and the individuality of fellow members. Emotional conflict is reduced as previously competitive relationships become more cooperative.

Norming includes these feelings:

- A new ability to express criticism constructively
- Acceptance of membership in the team
- Relief that it seems everything is going to work out.

Norming includes these behaviors:

- An attempt to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict.
- More friendliness, confiding in each other, and sharing of

- A sense of team cohesion, a common sprit and goals.
- Establishing and maintaining team ground rules and boundaries (the “norms”).

As team members begin to work out their differences, they now have more time and energy to spend on the work. Thus they are able to at last start making significant progress.

## **Performing**

By this stage, the team has settled its relationships and expectations. They can begin performing, diagnosing and solving problems, and choosing and implementing changes. At last team members have discovered and accepted each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and learned what their roles are.

Performing includes these feelings:

- Members having insights into personal and group processes, and better understanding of each other’s strengths and weaknesses.
- Satisfaction at the team’s progress.
- Close attachment to the team.

Performing includes these behaviors:

- The team is now working effectively as a cohesive unit. You can tell when your team has reached this stage because you start getting a lot of work done.

## **Adjourning**

Adjourning is about completion and disengagement, both from the tasks and the group members. Team members will be proud of having achieved their goals and glad to have been part of such an enjoyable group. They need to, celebrate and recognize each other and what they have done and consciously move on. Some describe this stage as "Deforming and Mourning", recognizing the sense of loss felt by group members.

Bruce W Tuckman is a respected educational psychologist who first described the (then) four stages of group development in 1965, soon after leaving Princeton. Looking at the behavior of small groups in a variety of environments, he recognized the distinct phases they go through, and suggested they need to experience all four stages before they achieve maximum effectiveness. He refined and developed the model in 1977 (in conjunction with Mary Ann Jensen) with the addition of a fifth stage.