

## 22.2: Reading- Stages of Team Development

### Stages of Team Development

Teams move through a series of stages, beginning when they are formed and ending when they are disbanded. Bruce Tuckman identified four distinct phases of team development: *forming*, *storming*, *norming*, and *performing*. Each has a primary purpose and a common set of interpersonal dynamics among team members. Tuckman proposed that all are inevitable and even necessary parts of a successful team's evolution.

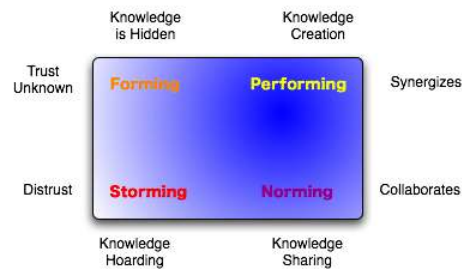


Figure 22.2.1: Stages of Team Building

#### The Forming Stage

The first step in a team's life is bringing together a group of individuals. Individuals focus on defining and assigning tasks, establishing a schedule, organizing the team's work, and other startup matters. In addition to focusing on the scope of the team's purpose and how to approach it, individuals in the formation stage are also gathering information and impressions about each other. Since people generally want to be accepted by others, during this period they usually avoid conflict and disagreement. Team members may begin to work on their tasks independently, not yet focused on their relationships with fellow team members.

#### The Storming Stage

Once their efforts are under way, team members need clarity about their activities and goals, as well as explicit guidance about how they will work independently and collectively. This leads to a period known as storming—because it can involve brainstorming ideas and also because it usually causes disruption. During the storming stage members begin to share ideas about what to do and how to do it that compete for consideration. Team members start to open up to each other and confront one another's ideas and perspectives.

Because storming can be contentious, members who are averse to conflict will find it unpleasant or even painful. This can decrease motivation and effort by drawing attention away from tasks. In some cases storming (i.e., disagreements) can be resolved quickly. Other times a team never leaves this stage and becomes stuck and unable to do its work. Patience and consideration toward team members and their views go a long way toward avoiding this.

#### The Norming Stage

Successfully moving through the storming stage means that a team has clarified its purpose and strategy for achieving its goals. It now transitions to a period focused on developing shared values about how team members will work together. These norms of collaboration can address issues ranging from when to use certain modes of communication, such as e-mail versus telephone, to how team meetings will be run and what to do when conflicts arise. Norms become a way of simplifying choices and facilitating collaboration, since members have shared expectations about how work will get done.

#### The Performing Stage

Once norms are established and the team is functioning as a unit, it enters the performing stage. By now team members work together easily on interdependent tasks and are able to communicate and coordinate effectively. There are fewer time-consuming distractions based on interpersonal and group dynamics. For this reason, motivation is usually high and team members have confidence in their ability to attain goals.

While these four stages—forming, storming, norming, and performing—are distinct and generally sequential, they often blend into one another and even overlap. A team may pass through one phase only to return to it. For example, if a new member joins the

team there may be a second brief period of formation while that person is integrated. A team may also need to return to an earlier stage if its performance declines. Team-building exercises are often done to help a team through its development process.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Teams move through a series of four phases—from when they are formed to when their work is complete.
- During the forming stage, a the team discusses it purpose, defines and assigns tasks, establishes timelines, and begins forming personal relationships.
- The often-contentious storming stage is the period when team members clarify their goals and the strategy for achieving them.
- The norming stage is when the team establishes its values for how individuals will interact and collaborate.
- Performing is the stage of team development when team members have productive relationships and are able to communicate and coordinate effectively and efficiently.
- While teams move through the four stages in sequence, the phases may overlap or be repeated.

### GLOSSARY

#### Performing:

The stage of group development when team members have productive relationships and are able to communicate and coordinate effectively and efficiently.

#### Norming:

The stage of group development when the team establishes its values for how individuals will interact and collaborate.

#### Forming:

The stage of group development when the team discusses its purpose, defines and assigns tasks, establishes timelines, and begins forming personal relationships.

#### Storming:

The stage of group development when the team clarifies its goals and its strategy for achieving them.

### Check Your Understanding

Answer the question(s) below to see how well you understand the topics covered in this section. This short quiz does **not** count toward your grade in the class, and you can retake it an unlimited number of times.

Use this quiz to check your understanding and decide whether to (1) study the previous section further or (2) move on to the next section.

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.com/assessments/210>

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