5 Stages of Team Development

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Organizations use work teams to complete work projects. These teams of employees work cohesively toward a shared goal by utilizing the diversity of the team members to bring creative ideas and solutions to the project.

Effective teams don't happen instantly. A highly functioning team requires the development of team members as well as the team as a whole.

Team development is a structured process of taking a group of people (employees, students, volunteers, committee members, etc.), teaching them to appreciate the differences each brings to the table and learning to work toward a shared goal.

Workgroups become a cohesive team when they learn to appreciate differences. This cohesion helps the group to meet goal objectives in an efficient way. Building strong teams is important because it fosters a healthy environment, where team members feel involved in how work gets done and valued as a member of the team.

Healthy teams foster creativity – a critical component to a thriving organization.

What Is a Team Sponsor?

Every team needs to have a sponsor. A team sponsor is a person who provides the team with the goal and the resources needed to accomplish that goal. Projects require funding and FTE manpower.

For instance, a team sponsor will ensure that the team has the budget and the staff hours available to support the project.

What Is a Team Leader?

The team also needs a strong team leader who helps direct and keeps the team to task. This team lead works with the group and develops them into a functioning work machine. Team leaders perform best when they master those leadership skills that help them manage team dynamics.

For instance, a team leaders' skill might be negotiation. The lead team member may need to use these skills when there are differing opinions and negotiation with team members is required.

Bruce Tuckman was a pioneer in group dynamics and developed the theory of team group development. What he proposed was that all teams go through natural stages of development that work toward finishing their assigned task.

Once teams go through the team development stages, they can perform at high levels because the group is cohesive and highly functioning.

5 Stages of Team Development

Stage 1 – Forming

In the first stage of **forming,** this newly chartered group of people meets and gets to know each other. This is a slow, more casual stage while members get to know and trust each other. This social aspect is important to the success of the team.

Team members learn their roles in the stage, the expectations for participation on the team, what the **ground rules** are, and the goal that the team is trying to accomplish.

A team leader may help team members understand the goal of the team as well as potential challenges. For instance, a team leader may explain the duration of the project and the desired outcomes in this stage.

Stage 2 – Storming

The 2nd stage of team development is called **storming**. This is when team members begin to feel comfortable with each other, learns how each operates in a team environment – and begin to share ideas and debate issues.

The stronger personalities will be evident during this stage. This is typically the most conflictive stage of team development. This conflict is healthy but needs to be managed appropriately.

An effective team leader helps the team learn to use **conflict** in a positive way and does not allow it to slow team progress. Team leaders need to make sure that the stronger personalities don't inadvertently dominate the team and its outcomes. All members should be actively participating before this stage is complete.

Stage 3 – Norming

The **norming** stage of team development is when the team begins to demonstrate team skills and to work as a cohesive group. They become accustomed to each other's differences and complement each other's strengths.

It is in this stage that the team begins to operate effectively and gains momentum in completing tasks towards accomplishing the team goal. In this stage team members are comfortable with each other and utilize their different perspectives to find workable solutions.

Stage 4 – Performing

Performing is the stage when the team has come together as a group and is operating at a high level of efficiency and accomplishing the task it was charged with. They have learned to work together and have some momentum in the team process.

This is when the team is at optimal performance and can accomplish tasks quickly because members flow through the process. When team members change, whether a member

leaves or new members join the team, the stages are often repeated. Take the time to allow the team to normalize to get back to the performing stage.

Stage 5 – Adjourning/Transforming

The final stage in team development is called **adjourning/transforming**. This is when the team has accomplished what it was charged to do and goes through the process of dismantling itself. This is a time of celebration and **recognition for a job well done**.

This stage can also mean a change in an **employee's job responsibilities** and expectations. For instance, if the team developed a new work process to improve the customer experience, one of its team members may now have responsibility for overseeing that new and improved process.

Organizations Are Only as Strong as Its Work Groups

Organizations are only as strong as the groups of people who help them accomplish objectives. This is why organizations put so many resources into team development. They understand the importance of cohesive work groups.

Team training and development are key to strengthening teams, so they are equipped to accomplish organizational goals.

How effective are your teams?