

How to Form a Team and Keep it Developing

(Discovering the journey ahead)

 <p>Purpose</p>	<p>To raise the team members' awareness of the different stages a developing team progress through, and what they can do at each stage to encourage further growth.</p>
 <p>Application</p>	<p>This session can be used periodically throughout the team's life-cycle, to encourage the members to reflect on the stage they are currently in, and how their performance could be improved.</p>
 <p>What happens?</p>	<p>When used initially, the trainer introduces the main stages of team development, and briefly explains what the team can expect to happen during each one.</p> <p>Working individually, team members are then asked to consider their own behaviours, which they subsequently discuss with a partner. Finally, a brief plenary discussion pulls together the key learning points.</p> <p>When used as a follow-up session, the participants go straight to considering their current level of development, followed by discussions with a partner and their other colleagues.</p>
 <p>Resources</p>	<p>Overall time required: 1 hour 10 minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 minutes to introduce the stages of development • 20 minutes for paired-peer discussions • 35 minutes for plenary discussion and action planning. <p>Materials and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient copies of the Participant Questionnaire (<i>Team Development - Where are we Now?</i>) • Paper, Pens or Pencils for Participants • Flipchart Stands with Blank Pads, or a Whiteboard, with Marker Pens • Blue-tack, etc. • 'Post it' Notes
 <p>How do I do it?</p>	<p>Adapted from the theory of Bruce Tuckman (1965)</p> <p>HOW DOES A TEAM DEVELOP?</p> <p>You may wish to introduce the concept of team development along the following lines, using examples from your own working experience to illustrate the various stages.</p> <p>Teams do not form immediately or automatically when people meet. Teams gradually take shape and mature over a period of time, very much like individuals have a defined growth cycle.</p>

Traditionally, there are four main stages of team development:

- 1. Forming**
- 2. Storming**
- 3. Norming**
- 4. Performing**

In addition, there is another stage which can have a dramatic impact on the team's performance, but which is often ignored:

5. Mourning

So what are the main characteristics the team can look for at each stage? Briefly walk through the five stages, asking your participants for examples they can quote to 'flesh-out' the theory.

1. FORMING

The key features of the forming stage are:

- The team is not yet a team, but rather a set of individuals.
- There will be much discussion about defining their purpose, team membership, roles, leadership pattern and life-span.
- At this stage, individuals tend to want to establish a personal identity within the team, to make some individual impression.

2. STORMING

Most teams then progress through a storming stage, when:

- A degree of conflict abounds, and individuals and ideals are challenged.
- Many personal agendas are revealed, with a degree of inter-personal hostility being inevitable.
- Through skilful handling, new and more realistic objectives, procedures and norms can be established.
- Trust between team members can start to develop.

3. NORMING

The team now needs to establish norms and practices:

- When and how should it work?
- How should decisions be taken?
- What type of behaviour should it expect and tolerate?
- What level of work and degree of openness, trust and confidence is appropriate?
- At this stage, individual team members will be testing the temperature of the team, and measuring the appropriate level of commitment.

4. PERFORMING

Only when the three previous stages have been experienced and successfully navigated will the team be at full maturity, and therefore fully and sensibly productive.

Of course, the team will be achieving a degree of performance at all stages of development, but it is likely to be impeded by the other processes of growth, and by individual agendas.

If, for example, leadership issues or the objective or purpose of the team are not resolved early on, they are likely to be recurring topics that crop up in every meeting, in some form or other, with the potential for seriously hindering the true work of the team, if not resolved early.

5. MOURNING

Teams, like everything else in the world, do not go on for ever. Sooner or later the team either disbands, or individual team members leave for a variety of reasons. *(Imagine the example of a well respected leader who has managed this well oiled machine of a team for twenty years and then they retire and you come in and take over. You, a new person, with a different style and new ideas)*

So, like every other life-cycle, the team has a mourning phase, which does happen when either the team as a whole ceases to exist, or when individual members leave to go on other assignments. The effects on individuals can be very marked, often producing feelings of loss, and inducing stress very similar to bereavement.

It is important to recognise that the loss of a valued colleague changes the team membership and dynamic, and the team will, to a greater or lesser extent, need to go through the complete development cycle to incorporate a new member fully into the team.

Before moving on to the paired-discussions, ask the team for any examples they can quote, either from work or equivalent situations in their hobbies or interests.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Ask the team to participate in the following exercise (Worksheet 1) to establish which stage of development they are currently in.

Give everyone a copy of the questionnaire, and briefly go through what you are asking them to do. Once everybody understands the task, ask them to consider their own responses to the questions initially by themselves.

Once everyone has had, say, 5 minutes for personal reflection, suggest that people find a partner in the team with whom they can discuss their own responses.

	<p>Allow this discussion to continue until the general level of noise starts to fall, and then open a plenary discussion on the key points. Ask each partnership in turn for ideas, and record the key points on a flipchart.</p> <p>Encourage discussion about which stage they think the team is currently operating at. Ask people to give you specific behaviours which they can observe within the team to back-up their assessments.</p> <p>ACTION PLANNING</p> <p>Now the team has an overall view of the current and future states, this is a good moment to reform the paired-peer groups to allow time for individuals to consider what they can personally contribute.</p> <p>Ask the partnerships to discuss the key issues which have arisen from the initial discussions, and develop their own personal action plans.</p> <p>Once you can sense the discussions coming to a natural conclusion, bring the team back together again and briefly review the whole session.</p>
 <p>Note</p>	<p>The possibility of this session becoming emotive must be considered, particularly if there is strife or conflict currently at work in the team. The need to keep things professional and not personal cannot be emphasised enough. Therefore, close observation and a tight rein may be required in certain circumstances.</p> <p>Ideally, you will be progressing through a series of sessions with the team, each one adding to the range of skills and experience within the team.</p> <p>As happens the team will be moving naturally through the stages of team development, and you can use this session to conclude significant pieces of work.</p> <p>This session acts as both a focus on what has been achieved, i.e. what stage they are currently at, and also helps to keep their minds firmly fixed on the future, and what needs to be done next.</p>
 <p>When?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On taking over a new team as a 'temperature check' • Just after a long serving team member leaves • Reviewing a team's progress in relation to its targets and performance indicators



TEAM DEVELOPMENT - WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Please spend a few minutes reflecting on the way the team operates, and write down examples of specific behaviours which you can observe. Which stages of team development do you think they represent?

Then discuss your ideas with a fellow team member. Compare your responses - what similarities are there, and how does your colleague see things differently from you?

Finally, please be prepared to share your ideas with other team members in an open discussion. Write your ideas under the headings provided below.

1. Forming

2. Storming

3. Norming

4. Performing

5. Mourning

What stage do you think the team is currently operating at?

How can we encourage the team to grow and develop further?