

Stages of Team Development

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Look through this model with your leadership and management teams to locate where you think you are in your organizations’ stage of development. Next, use it to help you improve your leadership and management effectiveness.

Forming

The initial forming stage is the process of putting the structure of the team together. Team members enter with ambiguous feelings and attitudes. Conflict is avoided at all costs because of the need to be accepted into the group. Team members reflect not only on the tasks at hand, but also about each other.

<i>Feelings and Thoughts</i>	<i>Observable Behaviors</i>	<i>Team Needs</i>	<i>Leadership Style Required</i>
Excitement, anticipation, and optimism Suspicion, fear, and anxiety about the job ahead Tentative attachment to team Why am I here? Why are they here? What is expected of me? How much influence will I have? How much am I willing to give?	Politeness Guarded; Sporadic participation Attempts to define tasks and decisions on how it will be accomplished Attempts to establish acceptable group behavior Abstract discussions of concepts and issues Discussion of symptoms and problems not relevant to the task; difficulty in identifying relevant problems Complaints about the organization Decisions on what information needs to be gathered Impatience with discussion	Team mission and purpose Team membership Team goals and objectives Measurement and feedback Definition of roles and responsibilities Team member expectations Team operational guidelines and procedures Behavioral norms and values Effective meetings and facilitation	Directing: Telling Guiding Establishing High task and low relationship involvement Manager makes decisions, tells group what to do, when, where, how, with whom to do it Clear boundaries One-way communication from leader to follower

Storming

This stage is characterized by competition and conflict among team members. In the process of organizing tasks, interpersonal conflicts will begin to surface. Leadership, structure, and power issues dominate. The team must grow from this testing mindset to one of problem solving in order to progress in its development.

<i>Feelings and Thoughts</i>	<i>Observable Behaviors</i>	<i>Team Needs</i>	<i>Leadership Style Required</i>
Resistance to task	Arguing among members	Interpersonal relationships	Coaching: Provides guidance Clarifying Persuading Explaining High directing and supporting behavior High task and high relationship involvement Leader consults but makes final decision
Fluctuations in attitude about the team	Defensiveness and competition	Identification of style differences	
What are the job-related risks and benefits of sharing information?	Polarizations and pecking orders in team	Effective listening	
What are the risks and benefits of being open or closed?	Power struggles and clashes	Giving and receiving feedback	
Do I agree with the team's purpose?	Lack of consensus-seeking behaviors	Conflict resolution	
Do I agree with the team's approach to accomplishing the task?	Lack of progress	Leadership clarification	
How do I feel about my personal influence and freedom in the team?	Establishing unrealistic goals	What position does the team take when people don't get along?	
	Concern over excessive work	How should the team deal with violation of codes of conduct?	
	Attacking the leader	What should we do if team gets stuck?	
	Confusion, loss of interest; opting out		
	Code-of-conduct violations		
	Poor attendance		
	Questioning wisdom of other members of the team		

Norming

In this stage, team members are breaking from paradigms of preconceived ideas and opinions. As the group develops cohesion, leadership is shared and team members are trusting one another. Interpersonal conflicts give way to sharing of feelings and creative thinking. The group operates in cohesion and members are glad to be a part of the team.

<i>Feelings and Thoughts</i>	<i>Observable Behaviors</i>	<i>Team Needs</i>	<i>Leadership Style_Required</i>
Sense of belonging to team Personal accomplishments I understand how I contribute effectively I have freedom to be myself and express_my ideas I can trust my teammates and they trust me Ability to express criticism constructively Acceptance of membership in the team Relief that it seems_that everything is_going to work out	Procedures established and practiced in problem solving, leadership, resolving conflict Open, honest communication; practicing communication skills Effective conflict resolution Sincere attempts to achieve consensus decisions Free participation and risk taking Productive; steady progress Shared decision making Develop routines Unified mission and purpose Focused problem solving Sets and achieves task milestones Members honoring code of conduct Strong team identity Healthy balance of power	Decision making Problem solving Management coaching Leadership skills	Supporting: Committing Participating Encouraging Listening Collaborating High relationship and low task involvement Minimal influence in decision making Promotes discussion Asks for_contributions from followers

Performing

True interdependence is the mainstay of this stage of group development. The team is highly flexible as individuals adapt to meet the current needs of the team. There is high productivity in task and personal relationships. A team operating in this mode is unique and a value added to its organization.

<i>Feelings and Thoughts</i>	<i>Observable Behaviors</i>	<i>Team Needs</i>	<i>Leadership Style_Required</i>
High commitment Trusting; friendships Fun and excited High personal development and creativity Involvement with team inspires the best in me Understand other's strengths and weaknesses	Constructive self-change Flexibility, versatility, and midcourse corrections Tries new way of doing things Excited participation, enthusiasm, and volunteerism Attachment to team, connectedness and unity High level of mutual support Humor Satisfaction at team's progress; celebrating successes Expressions of pride in team's unique accomplishments Ability to work through group problems; confronting with support Ownership of results True consensus decision making Management and creative use of team's resources Momentum maintained Smooth task and process flow Purpose and mission basis for action Goal attainment	Coaching and counseling Measuring performance Customer focus	Delegation: Observing Monitoring Fulfilling Low relationship and low task involvement Provides little direction Leader sets goals; team accomplishes Low amounts of two-way communication needed

More on this topic of 4 Stages of Development and how Culture influences how one should Lead and Manage.

Organizations are very complex; not only in the products they produce and the services they provide but more importantly in how they collectively evolve, think and function as a living and breathing organism. How do people from different back-grounds, ages and

parts of the country come together to create a group with a common mission, often with its own unique set of overt and covert rules? And then, how does one learn how to lead, manage and effectively work within that group or “culture” as it constantly ebbs, flows and evolves on a daily basis? First let’s explore the work of Edgar Schein as he dissects the life cycle that companies go through from start-up, to mid life and then old Dinosaurs. Once that has been introduced, we will look at the work of Bruce Tuzman who has laid out a template to aid in managing teams that find themselves in various stages of development.

Start-ups or young and growing companies attempt to stabilize and build on the culture that it views as successful. The closeness of the people and how they succeed as a common group is their “culture” and is the main source of the organization’s identity and is clung to with a vengeance. Young organizations are typically still under the control of their founders, which means the culture is more or less a reflection of the founder’s belief’s and value’s. Leading, managing and creating adjustments or changes in this young “Forming” company need a totally different approach than one in mid life.

An organization moving through midlife, on the other hand, has evolved over time and experienced different generations of professional managers, has likely created multiple business units, based on function, products, markets, geographic locations etc and each of these units have created their own cultures and sub-cultures. Leading and managing an organization during midlife requires a totally different set of insights and skills compared to the young company we just touched upon. This midlife company may still be in “forming” or stuck in “storming.” In my experience, many companies stay stuck in “storming” and just figure this is as good as it gets, not fully understanding that they are simply stuck in a stage and if they can move through this stage the future gets so much brighter. Although Dinosaurs are in the twilight of their life cycle, they can be in various stages within their development. In other words, just because a friend of yours is 38 years old, doesn’t mean he or she is mature and makes wise choices. Sometimes just the opposite is true.

Similar to Dinosaurs, as company’s age, if they do not evolve, adapt, and change elements of their culture, product offering and how they view, lead and manage their people, they will grow increasingly maladapted and die out. Basically, the dinosaur organizations cling to whatever made it successful at one time. Paradoxically, the very leadership, management style and culture that once made it successful will be the undoing of this same organization if they do not perceive and then respond successfully to the changes in the environment. One way to help an organization grow and move through these stages in an effective manner is to consult a map and then follow it.

One such map was developed by Bruce Tuzman in 1965. **Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing** is a model of group development, which proposes that these phases are all necessary and inevitable in order for the team and/or organization to grow, to face up to challenges, to tackle problems, to find solutions, to plan work, and to deliver results.