

# Stages of Team Development

When a group of people are first formed into a team, their roles and interactions are not established. Some individuals may merely act as observers while they try to determine what is expected from them while others may engage the process immediately. There are many models that describe team developmental progression. They are similar and suggest that the process occurs in four predictable stages. Each stage is characteristically different and builds on the preceding one. The implication is that all teams must develop through this predetermined sequence if they are to be fully functioning teams.

## Four Stages of Team Development

Stage 1: Forming

Stage 2: Storming

Stage 3: Norming

Stage 4: Performing

### Stage 1: Forming

The Forming stage of team development is an exploration period. Team members are often cautious and guarded in their interactions not really knowing what to expect from other team members.

- ◆ They explore the boundaries of acceptable behavior.
- ◆ Behaviors expressed in this early stage are generally noncommittal.

Some questions raised during this stage of development are:

- ◆ Do I want to be part of this team?
- ◆ Will I be accepted as a member?
- ◆ Who is the leader?
- ◆ Is the leader competent?

### Stage 2: Storming

The Storming stage of development is characterized by competition and strained relationships among team members. There are various degrees of conflict that teams experience but basically the Storming

stage deals with issues of power, leadership, and decision making.

- ◆ Conflict cannot be avoided during this stage
- ◆ It is the most crucial stage the team must work through.

Some questions raised during this stage of development are:

- ◆ How will I seek my autonomy?
- ◆ How much control will I have over others?
- ◆ Who do I support?
- ◆ Who supports me?
- ◆ How much influence do I have?

### Stage 3: Norming

The Norming stage of team development is characterized by cohesiveness among team members. After working through the storming stage, team members discover that they in fact do have common interests with each other.

- ◆ They learn to appreciate their differences.
- ◆ They work better together.
- ◆ They problem solve together.

Some questions raised during this stage of development are:

- ◆ What kind of relationships can we develop?
- ◆ Will we be successful as a team?
- ◆ How do we measure up to other teams?
- ◆ What is my relationship to the team leader?

### Stage 4: Performing

The Performing stage of team development is the result of working through the first three stages. By this time, team members have learned how to work together as a fully functioning team-

- ◆ They can define tasks.
- ◆ They can work out their relationships successfully-
- ◆ They can manage their conflicts.
- ◆ They can work together to accomplish their mission.

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