

Reflections 1: Team Development



Teamwork is the process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal... Teamwork means that people will try to cooperate, using individual skills and providing constructive feedback despite any [possible] personal conflict between individuals.

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Numerous books about teams and team functioning are published annually. Organisations spend millions in attempts to implement systems and processes for improved teamwork, or to develop team-based organisations. Organisations strive to understand and enhance employee engagement, involvement, loyalty or commitment to organisational goals

At the same time, organisations, even some with team-based structures, maintain recognition systems that focus mainly on the individual. This is similar to having a national sports team such as a rugby or soccer team and only recognising the players that scored!

Considering the definition of teamwork given above, it is clear that, at its core, teamwork is a philosophy where all team members see themselves as interdependent. In a team-based mind-set members of the team recognise that they can only achieve something as the result of work done by others. For a team to be successful, all members of the team must acknowledge each other as meaningful contributors to, or distractors from, the end-result.

Teamwork is fundamentally a collectivist rather than an individualistic perspective. Ultimately this also means that the whole team shares in the success of the team and not just one member. If team members do not feel that they are sharing in the successes, they can become disheartened, uninvolved and less committed to team goals. This one example makes it clear that implementing successful teams is not an easy or simple process.

Merely working together or working towards the same objective does not necessarily mean that you are a team!

It requires total involvement of the whole organisation, full understanding of the implications by all, and a consideration of all relevant policies and processes to successfully implement teams. In addition, it requires a high level of commitment and hard work by team members and leadership.

This document is a brief overview of some practical considerations during the development of teams.

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is a husband and wife team that supports Individuals, organisations and communities in their development.

Jan and Lyn bring together more than 70 years of experience. They share a passion for helping people, teams and organisations optimise their potential.

Although they work together at times, they each have their own unique strengths and consult individually under their own names.

Lyn supports organisations and individuals to bring social wellbeing and change through advocacy, mentoring, training and communication, while Jan works primarily to enhance understanding and support improvement through development/training and systems thinking.

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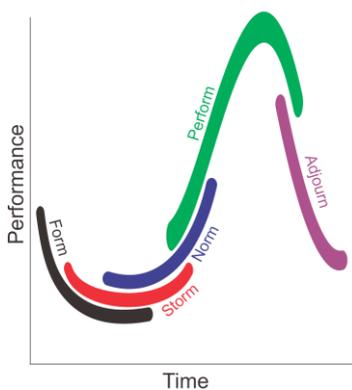
Team Development:

Bruce Tuckman, a psychologist, published a well-known theory on stages of group development in 1965. He identified four stages that teams go through during their “lifetime”. These are *forming*, *storming*, *norming* and, eventually, *performing*. In 1977, Tuckman and Mary Ann Jensen added a fifth stage namely ‘*adjourning*’. This is still one of the key models used when discussing team development, but - as with other good models - people often mistakenly perceive it as simplistic and self-explaining.

Yes, teams *form* and individuals meet, be it in formal or informal settings. The individuals in the team, being human, quickly try to position themselves in ways or roles that they see themselves fulfilling. This positioning could result in conflict or differences of opinion or *storming*. Whilst *forming*, and through *storming*, the team members already start to develop standards or *norms* on how they agree to behave or perform. Only once people are comfortable with each other, and with the rules, will they really be able to start working together and start *performing*.

Unfortunately, no team stays together forever and, at some future stage, its work is completed and the team *adjourns*. Anyone who has worked in a cohesive and effective team will be familiar with the loss one feels when the team eventually ends or adjourns. This sense of loss can be linked to the completion of a lot of work and effort, not just in terms of the team goals, but also in terms of how the team members started growing together in ways that could even be described as a ‘family’.

Unfortunately, this is where the simplicity of the model ends. It is not a linear process like climbing steps, as some make it out to be. The stages do not always manifest in the same way. There is also no ‘one size fits all’ list of actions that will take the team to the next stage. The team moves forward and backwards through stages depending on the circumstances. The stages are also not mutually exclusive, but very often have periods of overlap, as seen in the diagram.



Creating a high performing team requires hard work from the members, but exponentially more work from the leader. The leader must monitor and guide the team in the ways that the team needs at that time. Identifying team needs requires awareness and an absence of force. Ultimately, the leader must help the process unfold naturally while focusing on team needs. The leader must create an environment that will assist members to become motivated to be part of the team and committed to ensure team performance.

In the next few pages we will look at the attitudes and activities required from a leader while supporting team development.

The following sections highlights aspects that leaders and team members can consider, and work on, in order to develop the team. It is not a comprehensive list and the concepts may apply to more than one stage of development.

Forming

The selection and coming together of team members.

The forming stage can include the preparation for, and recruitment of, the team. Before starting teamwork, the leader must carefully consider the reason for forming the team, the pro's and cons of such teams and the expectations from them. It must also be clear that the team will not function optimally from the start and that progress will depend on experience and on team member's prior knowledge of, and familiarity with, each other.

A few points to consider are:

- Is the group goal defined?
- Has the goal been communicated to, and discussed by, all members?
- Are there sufficient resources?
- Have the developmental needs of team members been identified?
- Is time set aside for team members to interact "safely"?
- Is there an atmosphere of collective functioning?
- Can small tasks be given that;
 - o assist individuals to show their skills?
 - o show the need for working together?
- Are team members being empowered to take responsibility?

Storming

Role, contribution and personal need clarification

As the name implies, *storming* is perhaps the most difficult stage. During this stage individual differences come to the fore and conflict is not unexpected. Actually, conflict should be expected, and the leader must remain aware of any possible issues. Unresolved or escalating conflict could prevent the team from moving further.

A basic model of conflict resolution comprises a few steps

- Identify a safe place and time to talk
- Establish a common goal for both parties (Willingness so resolve conflict)
- Clarify individual perceptions involved in the conflict
- Practice taking an active and empathetic listening stance
- Clarify what the disagreement is
- Discuss ways to resolve the conflict / Generate options with the vision of a win-win outcome
- Determine the barriers to the resolution
- Agree on the best way to resolve the conflict
- Develop an agreement that works for all
- Acknowledge the agreed upon solution and determine the responsibilities of each party in the resolution

Norming

Accepted ways of functioning accepted by all

Although set out as an independent stage, this phase really starts from the first contact of team members and has a large invisible component. It includes unwritten norms, rules, interpersonal functioning, performance standards, roles, responsibilities and communication patterns. All these and more are required for any group to function.

Some authors and researchers refer to these aspects as 'culture'. Louis (1980) indicated that culture expresses the values or social ideals and the beliefs that organisation members come to share. Trompenaars (1992) defined culture as "the way a group of people solve problems based on the shared ways the groups of people interpret the world."

A few aspects that the leader can focus on are;

- Modeling expected behavior
- Delegating
- Facilitating decision making
- Coaching
- Building relationships

Performing

working together as interdependent unit to achieve goals

Once the team members share a goal, are comfortable with each other, acknowledge the contribution of each one and have a team culture, the team is ready to perform. At this stage the key aspects are to:

- Continuously emphasise the focus on the goal
- Ensure skill building / address skills shortage as needed
- Ensuring team member empowerment
- Facilitate sharing of learning / experiences.

A few aspects that the leader can work on are;

- Developing rotational ability-based leadership
- Develop team autonomy
- Recognize and celebrate small successes
- Give credit freely
- Act as resource.

And

- Manage self and ensure staying out of the way of the team

Adjourning

Winding down and separation.

The key aspects in this phase is to

- Acknowledge contributions
- Celebrate success
- Learn from challenges
- Record both challenges and successes for future learning
- Acknowledge and accept possible emotional reactions.

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