Group Process— Working Together

This chapter deals with the way that groups form and how to maintain cooperation in the group and understand the ways in which decisions are made.

"All human actions have one or more of these causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reason, passion, desire."

ARISTOTLE

Group Process—Working Together

When you think of school groups, you probably think about student council, honor society, clubs, teams, legislatures, or committees. Most groups, however, are not as rigidly structured as these. Any collection of people, from two to two million, constitutes a group when the people in the group have:

- A common identity
- A common purpose
- Common goals

As a leader, you have both a tremendous influence and a responsibility to your group members. The types and extent of interaction among group members are often determined by your ability to perceive, understand, and influence their interactions. This can be a difficult task, because patterns of group interaction are not static. Groups are constantly changing and evolving.

MAINTAINING GROUP COOPERATION

Successful group action in solving problems and addressing the group's goals often depends on understanding some basic principles about the way people behave in groups and the kinds of behaviors you as a leader should encourage.

1. Identification with Other Members

Try to find out how the other person feels. Don't assume that what you want is what others want, too. Discovering common attitudes among group members is productive.

2. Participation

Encourage everyone in the group to take an active part. Consensus is much better than an unhappy minority. People participate in their own ways, so be tolerant and helpful in encouraging participation.

3. Democratic Climate

Democratic leadership involves more people than a dictatorship. Your job as a leader is to create an atmosphere of honesty and frankness. Keep things moving but allow the group to make the decisions when they are ready to do so.

4. Individual Security

People under pressure may call names, get angry, show prejudice, or behave in other ways destructive to group cohesiveness. Security comes as trust develops within a group.

5. Open Lines of Communication

Explain and listen. Make your messages honest and accurate. Encourage the flow of listening, talking, and responding.

6. Better Listening

Attempt to interpret both the literal meaning and the intention of each speaker. You need to hear what other people say, what they intend to say, and what they would have said if they could have said what they wanted to say!

7. Handling Hostility

Hostility in itself is not necessarily harmful to a group, or even to individual productiveness. People need freedom to express hostility within

a group (through channels) because inhibition will decrease the efficiency of the group members.

BUILDING A TEAM

A team is more than a group of assembled people. It is a collection of individuals guided by a common purpose, striving for the same goals. Because each member makes a unique contribution, a team represents a powerhouse of potential. That's why, with a good team, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

For a group of people to begin to develop into a team, it is important in the initial stages of group development that you be extremely careful to nurture positive group interactions. In order to do so, make sure that:

- Each contribution to the group is valued
- Everyone listens attentively
- Conflicts are handled without antagonism
- One subject is discussed at a time
- One person talks at a time
- Decisions are made after a thorough discussion of all aspects of an issue
- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- Everyone is encouraged to compromise
- Everyone is accepted, regardless of viewpoint.

Benefits of Team Building

Work on achieving a team approach if you're interested in these benefits:

- Team members share a sense of purpose or common goals, and each team member is willing to work toward achieving these goals.
- A sense of togetherness is fostered.
- Productivity is heightened by encouraging an atmosphere of cooperation.
- The team identifies its own resources and problem solving is more effective because the talents of a variety of individuals are used, depending on the team's needs.
- The team willingly accepts the influence and leadership of the members whose resources are relevant to the immediate task.
- Differences of opinion are encouraged and freely expressed. The team does not demand narrow conformity or adherence to formats that inhibit freedom of movement and expression.

- The team exerts energy toward problem solving rather than allowing it to be drained by interpersonal issues or competitive struggles.
- Roles are balanced and shared.
- Risk taking and creativity are encouraged by treating mistakes as sources of learning rather than reasons for punishment.

WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE TEAM MEMBERS AND LEADERS LIKE?

Cultivate the following qualities in yourself and the members of your group:

Characteristics of Effective TEAM MEMBERS

Effective team members:
- support, protect, and defend the team leader and help him/her succeed
- share ideas freely and enthusiastically
- ensure that all viewpoints are explored
- express opinions, both for and against
- act in a positive and constructive manner
- understand personal and team roles
- accept ownership for team decisions
- recognize that they each serve as a team leader
- participate voluntarily
- show loyalty to the team
- view criticism as an opportunity to learn
- give praise and recognition when warranted
- criticize ideas, not people
- avoid defensiveness when fellow team members offer criticism

Characteristics of Effective TEAM LEADERS

Effective team leaders:
- communicate
- are open, honest, and fair
- make decisions with input from others
- act consistently
- give the team members the information they need to do their jobs
- set goals and emphasize them
- create an atmosphere of growth
- give praise and recognition
- criticize constructively and address problems
- display tolerance and flexibility
- exhibit a willingness to change
- treat team members with respect
- set guidelines for how team members are to treat one another
- represent the team and fight a "good fight" when appropriate

WHAT CONDITIONS SUPPORT EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK?

1. Responsibility—a sense of ownership for the process and results.
   - moving from complaint to recommendations
   - moving from expectation to intention
   - moving from cynicism and resignation to action
2. Communication—the primary means of producing results
   - being responsible for communicating clearly what you mean
   - listening as well as speaking
   - directing communication to the person involved

Source: NLC Leadership Curriculum Guide NASSP, 1994

3. Common Purpose and Vision—an agreed-upon direction and focus
   - recognizing we are all on the same team
   - believing that the vision is possible
   - keeping the vision in mind as a guidepost for daily action
4. Commitment—the will to make it happen
   - being willing to do what it takes to produce the results
   - asking "what is the one thing more I can do?"
   - striving for personal excellence and supporting everyone else in being successful

DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES

Groups make decisions all the time, some of them consciously and in reference to the major tasks at hand, and some of them without much reference to group procedures or standards of operation. Start to observe how decisions are made in your group in order to determine whether the consequences of given methods are what the group members had in mind. Group decisions are hard to undo. Once someone says, "We decided to do it, didn't we?" opposition usually stops. You can only undo the decision if you can reconstruct it, understand how the group made it, and test whether the method was appropriate or not.

Some methods by which groups reach decisions (with or without formal proceedings) include:

- The Flop
  "I think we should introduce ourselves." (followed by silence)
- The Self-Authorized Agenda
  "I think we should introduce ourselves: my name is John Doe."
- The Handclasp
  "I wonder if it would be helpful if we introduced ourselves? I think it would. My name is Jane Jones."
- Consensus
  "Does anyone object?" or "We all agree . . ."
- Majority-Minority Voting
- Polling
  "Let's see where everyone stands. What do you think?"

Stages of Group Development

Model by Bruce Tuckman

Forming
- Excitement
- Anticipation
- Anxiety
- Optimism

Storming
- Reality sets in
- Frustration
- Dissatisfaction
- Adjustment anxiety

Norming
- Shared goals
- Team cohesion
- Coping
- Acceptance

Performing
- Teamwork
- Cohesiveness
- Leadership
- Performance

	Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing
General Observations	Uncertainty about roles, looking outside for guidance.	Growing confidence in team, rejecting outside authority.	Concern about being different, wanting to be part of team.	Concern with getting the job done.
Content Issues	Some attempt to define the job to be done.	Team members resist the task demands.	There is an open exchange of views about the team's problems.	Resources are allocated efficiently and processes are in place to ensure that the final objective is achieved.
Process Issues	Team members look outside for guidance and direction.	Team members deny the task and look for the reasons not to do it.	The team starts to set up the procedures to deal with the task.	The team is able to solve problems.
Feelings Issues	People feel anxious and are unsure of their roles. Most look to a leader or coordinator for guidance.	People still feel uncertain and try to express their individuality. Concerns arise about the team hierarchy.	People ignore individual differences and team members are more accepting of one another.	People share a common focus, communicate effectively and become more efficient and flexible as a result.

TUCKMAN'S STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Bruce Tuckman: Team Development Model

The Tuckman model of team development was first published in 1965.[1] Tuckman, a psychology professor, identified four stages of development that every team experiences, and suggested that all teams experience a relatively unproductive initial stage before becoming a self-reliant unit. The 'team growth model' also suggests that unless the issues of processes and feelings have been satisfactorily addressed, it is unlikely that the team will reach the most productive final stage.

Any team that stays together over a period of time will change and develop. Tuckman noted that there are three issues which determine how well teams perform:
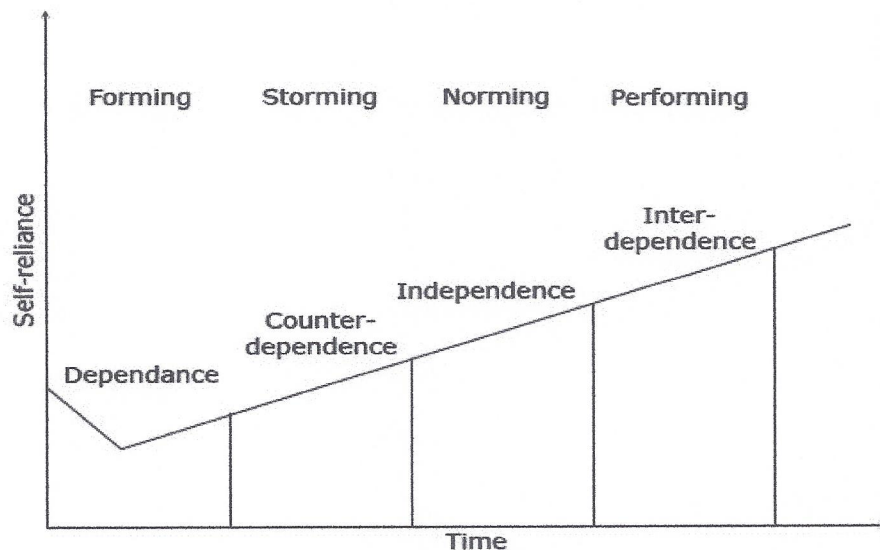
- content
- process
- feelings

In short, content relates to what the team does, process relates to how the team works towards its objectives and feelings applies to how team members relate to one another.

Tuckman found that most teams concentrate almost exclusively on content and virtually ignore process and feeling, which explains why teams which are strong on paper can under-perform.

Tuckman suggested that the life cycle of a team involves four stages. At each stage, the dynamics of the team change dramatically from periods of inefficiency and uneasiness through to a period of high performance.

These changes are summarised in the following diagram and table:

	Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing
General Observations	Uncertainty about roles, looking outside for guidance.	Growing confidence in team, rejecting outside authority.	Concern about being different, wanting to be part of team.	Concern with getting the job done.
Content Issues	Some attempt to define the job to be done.	Team members resist the task demands.	There is an open exchange of views about the team's problems.	Resources are allocated efficiently and processes are in place to ensure that the final objective is achieved.
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Feelings Issues	People feel anxious and are unsure of their roles. Most look to a leader or coordinator for guidance.	People still feel uncertain and try to express their individuality. Concerns arise about the team hierarchy.	People ignore individual differences and team members are more accepting of one another.	People share a common focus, communicate effectively and become more efficient and flexible as a result.

Following another period of research, Tuckman developed a fifth stage called 'adjourning'. This final stage involves the disengagement of relationships between team members and a short period of recognition for the team's achievements. Sometimes, concluding the operations of a team is disturbing for members, especially if they have worked together for long periods of time.

Tuckman highlighted a number of important observations from his research on teams and teamwork which still have resonance today:

Taken from Goodpractice.net

- A team will not be fully effective unless it reaches the stage of performing/ interdependence.
- Many teams accept storming as a normal way of operating, while a number of teams may never get beyond forming.
- Unless the process of norming is fully completed, teams may degenerate into storming.
- The amount of time taken to complete the cycle will vary tremendously between teams.
- Many factors determine how quickly a team will evolve towards effectiveness including: its size, geographical spread, frequency and duration of meetings, synergy of team types, stability of team membership, external influences and time pressures and the nature of its activities.

The flexibility of the model is underlined when applied to virtual teams. Virtual teams are increasingly used in today's business environment and they can be defined as teams that use technology to exist across time and cultural boundaries. Leading thinkers Lipnack and Stamps have modified the Tuckman model[2] to demonstrate the efficiency of virtual teamwork compared to traditional teamwork.

Lipnack and Stamps' virtual team model maintains the same structure as Tuckman's model, but the team endures a significantly shorter awkward first stage before reaching the performance stage. The model also includes two extra stages, which are comparible to Tuckman's adjourning stage, to allow for a testing and delivery of the team's final product.

Although other influential team development thinkers such as Charles Manz and Henry Sims[3] have suggested alternative modifications, Tuckman's theoretical foundation remains an influential foundation for modern thinking on teams and teamwork.

[1] B W Tuckman, 'Developmental Sequence in Small Groups', *Psychological Bulletin* 63, 1965.

[2] Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, *Virtual teams: Reaching across space, time, and organisations with technology* (John Wiley and Sons, 1997).

[3] See C. Manz and H. Sims Jr, *Business Without Bosses: How Self-Managing Teams are Building High-Performing Companies* (John Wiley and Sons, 1993). [1] B W Tuckman, 'Developmental Sequence in Small Groups', Psychological Bulletin 63, 1965.

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- Teamwork
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- Leadership
- Performance

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Taken from Goodpractice.net

Stages of Group Development

Stage One — FORMING
- Welcome Aboard
- Define Mission
- Orientation

CLIMATE: Cautious, Low-stakes, Feelings suppressed
GOALS: Low, Vague
LISTENING/SHARING: Minimal
DECISION MAKING: Decisions On Hold
REACTION TO LEADERSHIP: Dependent by leaders members, Accepted as leader by members

Stage Two — STORMING
- Clarifying
- Challenging
- Testing Boundaries

CLIMATE
GOALS: Misunderstood, Fighting over goals, One disagreement between groups
LISTENING/SHARING: Selected, listen in subgroups as the group as personal
DECISION MAKING: Dominated by a few
REACTION TO LEADERSHIP: Power struggle

Stage Three — NORMING
- Support and Involvement
- Focus
- Resolving of Difference

CLIMATE: Opening up, feelings, "Thinking if though"
GOALS: Appreciated for input, One by input, Based on group flow
LISTENING/SHARING: Better, acceptance of different viewpoints
DECISION MAKING
REACTION TO LEADERSHIP: General hassles, Individual differences acknowledged

Stage Four — PERFORMING
- Yes
- Continuing Success
- Ownership

CLIMATE: Open, Expressive, Shared Responsibility
GOALS: Committed as a group and purpose
LISTENING/SHARING: People and Ideas
DECISION MAKING: Consensus "Whatever is best"
REACTION TO LEADERSHIP: Leadership interest based on expertise

Stage Five — REFORMING