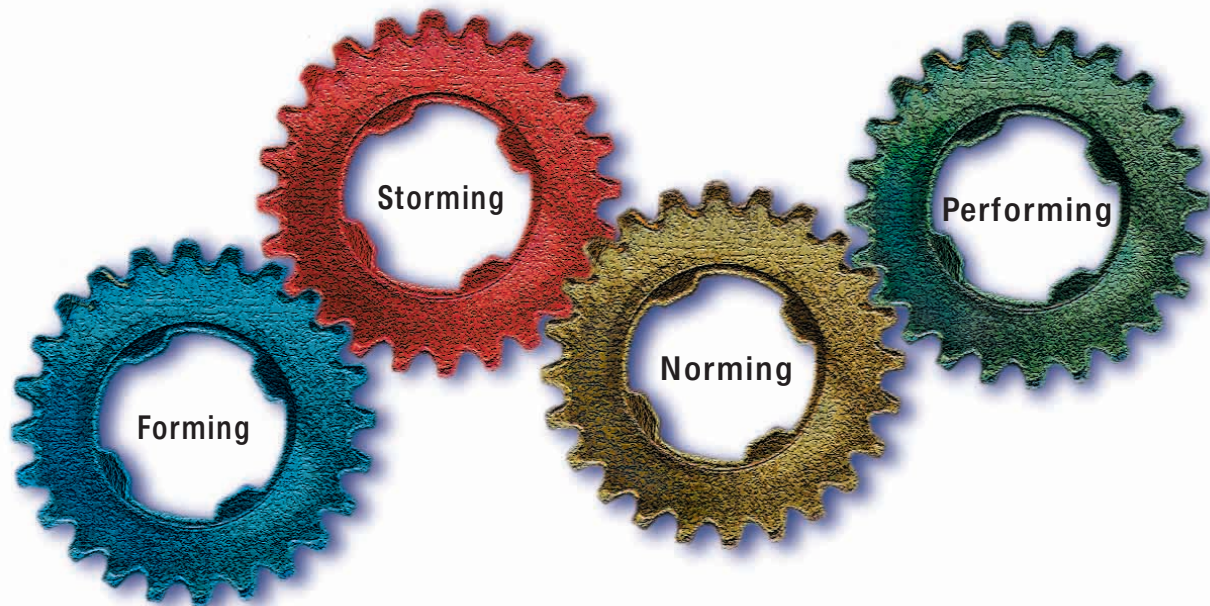


# Accelerating Team Development

## The Tuckman's Model



**M**embers of today's organizations are often faced with the challenge of transforming a team of diverse individuals into a productive, high-functioning team. The purpose of this article is to describe one of the most widely accepted, easy-to-follow models of team development. Understanding and applying the principles outlined in this model can dramatically help group leaders and participants increase the overall effectiveness of their team.

Since the late 1950's, a great many researchers and practitioners have studied the intricacies of group development. While each theory has unique characteristics, most agree on two things. First, that there are predictable stages every team goes through on its way to becoming a highly productive, efficient team. And second, that leaders and group members who are aware of these stages can improve the quality of their team's interactions during each stage.

Bruce Tuckman, in his highly-regarded 1965 article, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," simplified the existing theories by designating four stages of team development: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing.

A successful group is one that can move deftly back and forth between these stages as circumstances change. This guide will help team members and leaders to:

- Learn the basic characteristics of team development.
- Become astute observers of their team's process.
- Positively effect the quality of their team's interaction.
- Accelerate progress through the stages of team development.
- Improve the quality of their team's overall performance.

## Characteristics of Each Stage of Team Development

|   | FORMING   | STORMING   | NORMING   | PERFORMING   |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Style of Team Leader</b>               | Leader needs to be directive—providing structure for the team and clarifying expectations about how the team process will be initiated.       | Leader coaches the group by helping them focus on goals & expectations, managing process and conflict, generating ideas, and explaining decisions.           | Leader acts primarily as a facilitator providing encouragement, helping to build consensus, and giving feedback.  | Leader still facilitates team process, but tasks and objectives are delegated. Leader oversees and identifies when the group is moving to a different stage.   |
| <b>Purpose &amp; Goal Clarity</b>         | Members are discovering relevant parameters of the purpose and goals. There is little agreement or commitment to team mission.                | Options are generated and challenged as the group stretches parameters. There is increased clarity, yet some misconceptions linger.                          | Agreement from most; genuine commitment is forming. The group is moving toward unity.   | The whole team shares a commitment to overarching goals; a tangible vision for the team is accepted.   |
| <b>Decision Making</b>                    | Directed by the designated leader, although the process is sometimes dominated by the most vocal members.                                     | Decisions are hard to make; deadlocks are common. Process is usually dominated by power plays and fast and loud talkers. Compromise is the fall back tactic. | Major decisions are made by consensus, differences are negotiated, and some decisions are delegated to individuals or smaller groups.                     | Team makes decisions within agreed upon criteria; major decisions still made by consensus.   |
| <b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b>       | Individuals are not clear about roles. They privately hold opinions, but do not publicly state them.  | Roles and responsibilities emerge and become clearer. Members jockey for roles and power.  | Roles are clarified and accepted. There is open discussion about how to make the group perform tasks and work toward goals.                               | Group members are willing to challenge the nature of relationships within the group and adopt changes as needed.   |
| <b>Attention to Team Process</b>          | Process is usually ignored; it is noticed but avoided. Members test the waters and look for guidance from the designated leader.              | Team work doesn't seem justified for the effort required. Cliques form.  | Members generate team norms and develop mutual respect. However, can be sidetracked by process discussions and waste time focusing on unimportant issues. | Members are autonomous; not dependent on designated leaders. Everyone shares responsibility for initiating and discussing team process as needed.              |
| <b>Reaction to Leadership within Team</b> | Team members take a tentative, wait and see approach. They watch from a distance and remain dependent on a fixed hierarchy of responsibility. | Team members challenge the leader. Factions and cliques emerge. Power struggles and polarization often occur.  | General support for the leadership. Leadership is shared among the group.   | Discussions are open; disagreements do not lead to fear of rejection. Members feel highly supported. Leaders offer inter-personal support as well as guidance. |

# Guiding Questions for Identifying Stage of Development

## FORMING

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- Who initiated the formation of the team? Who are its sponsors?
- What set of circumstances surrounded the initiation of this team? What internal or external forces are influencing it?
- What is the team supposed to accomplish? What role are they supposed to play in the larger organization? To whom are they accountable?
- Is this team's purpose compelling to individual team members? Is it related to their developmental goals or personal motivations?
- Have members described their personal reasons for participating in the team? Have they talked about what they hope to achieve?
- Is it clear how individuals will be rewarded and recognized for participating in the team?

## STORMING

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- Is there a shared understanding of the overarching outcomes and purpose? Is the right mix of functional, technical, and interpersonal skills represented?
- Is there an open forum for members to discuss their feelings, thoughts, and ideas about the team purpose and goals?
- Are all options being considered for the plan to reach the goals? Are potential approaches being tested against an agreed set of criterion?
- Is the team willing to discuss topics that are potentially embarrassing or threatening to team members? Has there been a precedent set for how undiscussables are brought to the table?
- Does the team reflect on their tasks and interrelationships? Do they build operating agreements about how to best work together? Does the team reflect on how decisions are made and where individuals have authority?
- Is the team exploring deliverables and requirements with your customer?

## NORMING

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- Are the team goals clear, specific, and measurable? Do all members accept these goals and their role in achieving them?
- Do members discuss the purpose/mission energetically with others outside of the team?
- How similarly do members present the team goals and plan to others?
- Are team members clear about which responsibilities belong to them and which belong to team as a whole?
- Are there clear check points and formal feedback loops?
- Does the team have a formal method for communicating with its customers, suppliers and sponsors? Are there established channels for giving and receiving feedback?

## PERFORMING

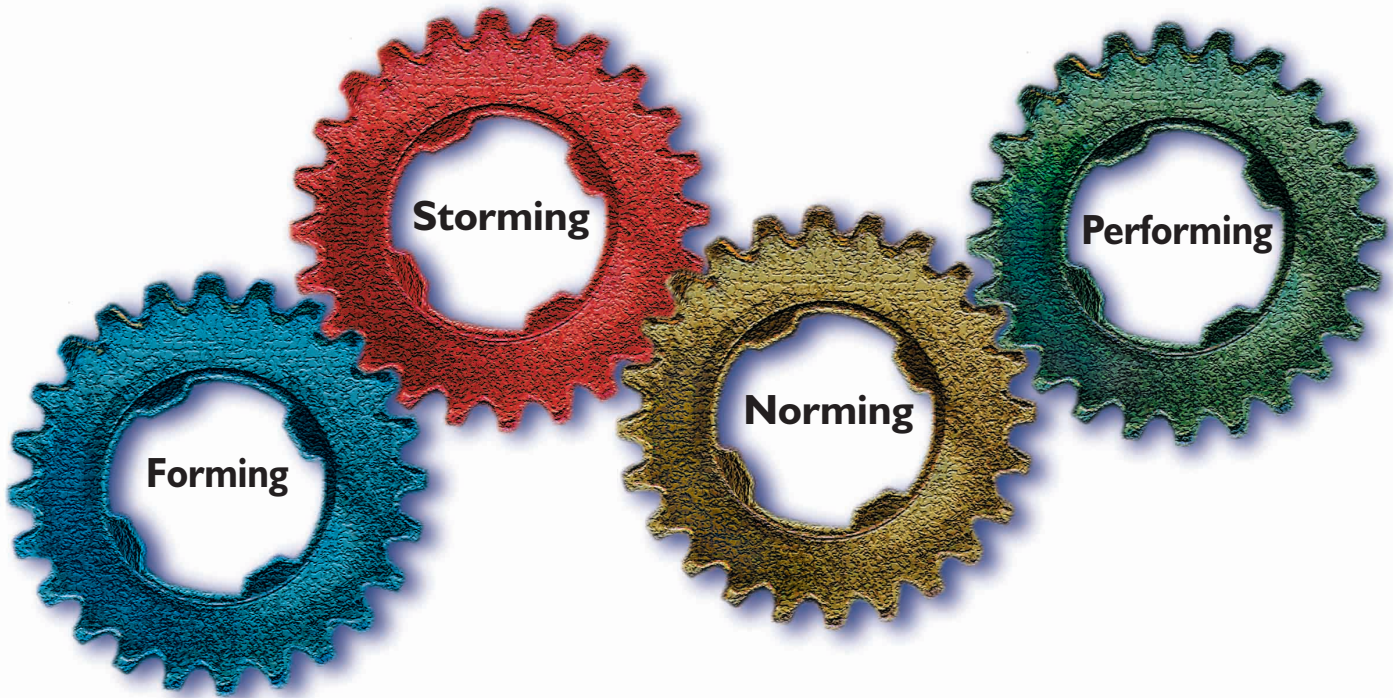
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- Does the team give itself high ratings in terms of effectiveness? Is there a comparable level of personal satisfaction among individual team members? Or is there a disparity between these ratings that needs to be addressed?
- Do all team members share responsibility for meeting the team's goals? Is leadership shared?
- Are new ideas being generated? Are new perspectives being sought?
- Is there a sense of team identity? Do team members feel they are "all in it together?"
- Are there periodic reviews using feedback data, internal measurements, and external analysis to assess progress and make refinements on the approach?
- Is the team flexible? Can it move easily in and out of the various stages?





# Tuckman's Model Behaviors & Tasks



## FORMING

### BEHAVIORS

- The purpose and goals for the team are unclear.
- Members feel varying degrees of commitment.
- Members are cautious, don't initiate and avoid responsibility.
- Communication is low and a few members often dominate.
- Members are dependent on directive leadership.

### TASKS

- Build a common purpose. Clearly establish the expectations of the customers or sponsors.
- Understand personal expectations and interests.
- Clarify accountability, recognition, and rewards.
- Assess resources; see who has what to contribute.
- Leader provides direction and drives the team process.

## STORMING

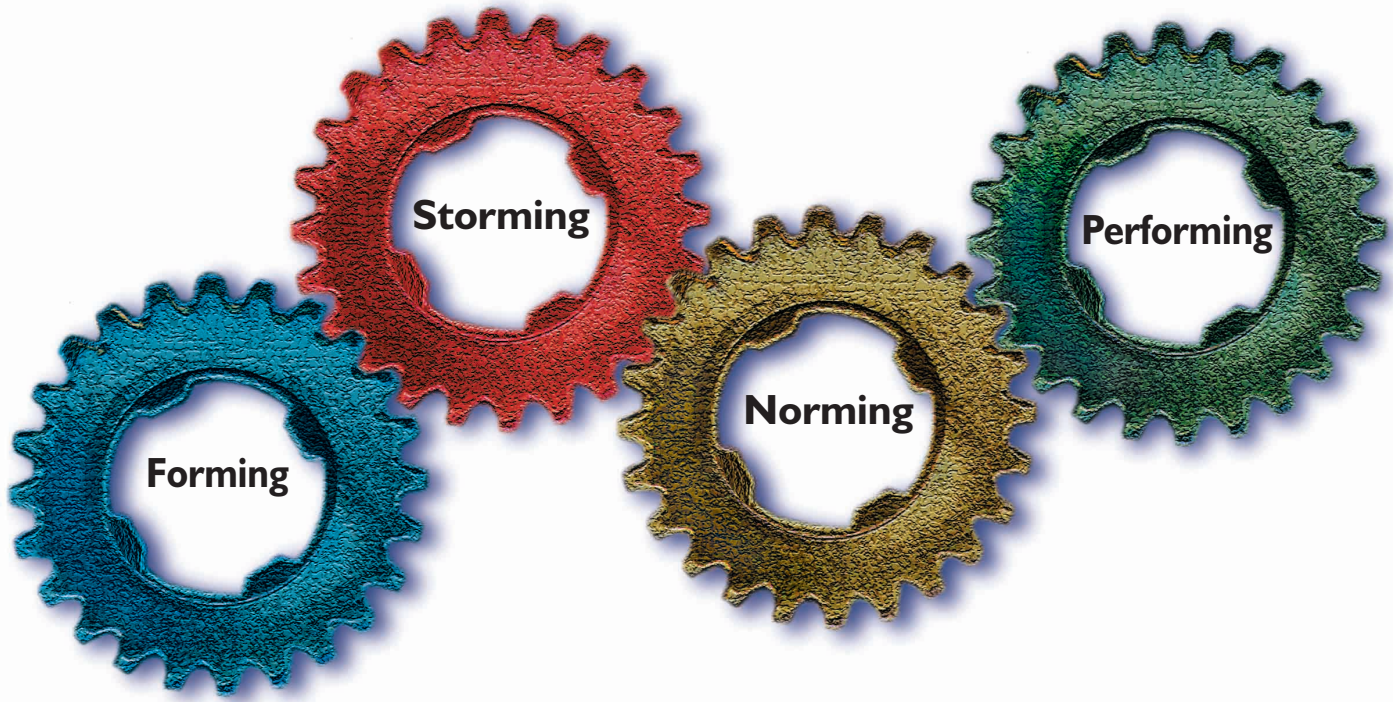
### BEHAVIORS

- Differences and confusion arise over goals and roles.
- Struggles erupt over approaches, direction, and control.
- Team members react toward leadership with counterproductive behaviors.
- Team is uncertain about how to deal with issues openly.
- Team wrestles with issues of communication.
- Members act from an independent stance.

### TASKS

- Involve everyone in the discussion.
- Inquire into differences; include all ideas and opinions.
- Seek further clarity about purpose and develop a common approach to meeting project objectives.
- Assess and test resource needs; make necessary adjustments.
- Define operational agreements (norms).
- Leader raises difficult issues and coaches team through struggles.

# Tuckman's Model Behaviors & Tasks



## NORMING

### BEHAVIORS

- Team gains confidence, feels a sense of momentum.
- "What," "How," "Who," and "When" become clarified.
- Team develops agreements on approaches, goals, communication, and leadership roles.
- Team builds relationships with externals (customers, key stakeholders).
- Members begin to relate interdependently.

### TASKS

- Develop processes for information sharing, feedback, and resource distribution.
- Have open forums on tasks and relationships, both internal and external.
- Build appropriate feedback loops with external relationships.
- Work toward consensus on overarching issues. Negotiate where appropriate.
- Leader uses a facilitative style to create the opportunity for others to lead.

## PERFORMING

### BEHAVIORS

- Members take full responsibility for tasks and relationships.
- Team achieves effective and satisfying results.
- Team takes the initiative to continually assess external forces.
- Team facilitates itself easily through the various stages.
- Members work proactively for the benefit of the team.

### TASKS

- Continuously seek to improve tasks and relationships.
- Assess and evaluate results against purpose and external forces.
- Celebrate successes—reward and recognize both team and individuals wins.
- Continuously test for better methods and approaches.
- Leader focuses on purpose, interdependent relationships, and conditions that shift the stages.

# Action Steps for Moving Through Team Development

## FORMING TO STORMING

- Build a shared purpose/mission and continuously clarify team outcomes.
- Create a sense of urgency and rationale for the purpose/mission.
- Select members based on resource and skill needs.
- Invest time getting to know each member's skills, experience and personal goals.
- Bring individuals together to work on common tasks.
- Define recognition and rewards, both individual and team-based.
- Work on personal commitment by linking personal goals to team roles.

## STORMING TO NORMING

- Build a common understanding by periodically communicating the team's purpose/mission.
- Acknowledge times when the team is struggling and take time to discuss ways to move toward "Norming."
- Set out to achieve a few performance goals and tasks.
- Encourage members to express their differing opinions, ideas, and feelings by asking open-ended questions.
- Make connections between divergent perspectives; acknowledge where there are differences.
- Build a set of operating agreements (rules for team behavior).
- Raise issues, confront deviations from commitments, and allow conflict to occur.

## NORMING TO PERFORMING

- Develop shared leadership based on expertise and development needs.
- Translate common purpose and team expectations into performance goals that are specified and measurable.
- Build consensus on overarching goals and approaches.
- Formally give and receive feedback within the team.
- Maintain focus on external relationships: commitments, requirements, feedback, and competitive realities.
- Take risks by setting stretch performance goals while simultaneously encouraging the disclosure of fears.
- Celebrate successes, share rewards, recognize team and individual achievements.
- Continue to evaluate team against performance goals.

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## References and Further Reading

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