

Module 6: Stages of Team Development

Module 6

Stages of Team Development

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify the four stages of team development and characteristic behaviors associated with each
- Describe actions leaders can take to assist teams in each stage of development

10/95 Team Skills and Concepts - Module 6, Viewgraph 1

Module 6: Stages of Team Development

For process improvement teams, whether they are ESCs, QMBs or PATs, to solve problems and make decisions that continuously improve processes, the team members must work together effectively. Teams are not created simply by bringing a group of people together. As we have learned, specific elements such as leadership and common goals must be in place to make a group into a team.

How does a group of individuals become a successful and productive team? To understand this, we need to look at the moment when the group first comes together. At that instant they may share some of the same hopes (that the group will be successful) and concerns (that it might not). Their hopes impel them toward success, but their concerns may hold them back. The solution is to lessen the concerns and to provide them with skills so that the group can move naturally toward success.

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- **Identify the four stages of team development and characteristic behaviors associated with each**

In becoming a successful team, a group goes through four fairly predictable stages. Teams, like individuals, grow and develop into maturity. Participants' concerns, needs, and behaviors change in each phase of team development. Every team spends a different amount of time in each developmental stage, and sometimes new situations or tasks cycle the team back to a previous stage. We are going to look briefly at each of these stages so that you will be able to recognize the characteristic behaviors found in each stage when you observe them in your team.

Some of the material we are going to cover is in *The Team Handbook* beginning on page 6-4.

- **Describe actions leaders can take to assist teams in each stage of development**

To help teams progress through the stages of development, team leaders and quality advisors should adjust their behavior according to the teams' needs. We will outline some suggestions for how to do this.

Overview of the Stages of Team Development

Stage	Group Structure	Team Activity
Forming	Testing and dependence	Orientation
Storming	Intragroup hostility	Emotional response to task demands
Norming	Development of group cohesion	Expression of opinions
Performing	Functional role relatedness	Emergence of solutions

10/95 Team Skills and Concepts - Module 6, Viewgraph 2

Overview of the Stages of Team Development

Over the last 50 years, quite a few researchers and other experts in group dynamics have sought to describe and explain how teams develop and mature. The seminal work in this area was a 1965 research paper by Bruce Tuckman of the Naval Medical Research Institute at Bethesda. In the years that followed, various authors have suggested models ranging from two to seven or more stages, and using a variety of different names for the stages. But most have centered on the four basic stages hypothesized by Tuckman. The four stages we will describe here are based on Tuckman's original work.

Tuckman recognized that, in talking about how small groups develop, you have to consider two aspects of the four stages: the interpersonal (group structure) and the task behaviors. As we discuss each of the four stages, remember that these two aspects are very different, yet so closely integrated that you can't address one without the other.

■ **Forming**

During the first stage, forming, teams are testing out group norms and trying to define the boundaries of their task.

■ **Storming**

In the Storming stage, there is friction and jockeying for position among members which may produce emotional responses. (Tuckman found, however, that *extreme* emotion about the task itself is rare if the tasking deals with impersonal work issues.)

■ **Norming**

The third stage represents a time of change in which interdependence develops within the group and members become more willing and able to express opinions and ideas constructively.

■ **Performing**

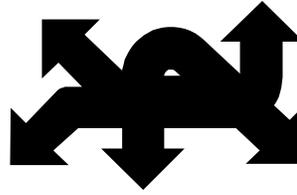
In the final stage, performing, group members begin to apply their "oneness" to the task at hand, developing solutions and making real progress.

Now that you have a brief picture of the four stages, let's take a closer look at each one, and see what you can do as the team leader or facilitator to help the team progress from one stage to the next.

Stage 1 - Forming

- **Members may feel:**

- Excited
- Anxious
- Dependent



- **Issues:**

- Testing authority
- Inclusion
- Trust

- **Leaders can help by:**

- Adding structure
- Encouraging learning
- Balancing participation

10/95 Team Skills and Concepts - Module 6, Viewgraph 3

Stage 1 - Forming

"Forming" is a word used to describe the first stage of the team's development. In this stage, the group is first coming together and begins to become a team. Team members' behaviors, prompted by their feelings of excitement, anxiety, and dependence, raise certain issues, which must be resolved if the team is to mature.

- **Members may feel:**

- **Excited**

They may be eager to participate and look forward to a new undertaking.

- **Anxious**

They may feel some anxiety about what the team will accomplish, about working in a team setting, or about working with people they don't know.

- **Dependent**

They may feel uneasy about relying on others or unsure about what they can contribute.

- **Issues:**

- **Testing authority**

How do members balance the desire to test authority figures with their dependence on these same figures to help the team get started?

- **Inclusion**

How do members feel about fitting in and meeting other team members' expectations?

- **Trust**

How do we get team members to feel comfortable and develop trust in their fellow team members, team leader, and the process?

Because of all of the turmoil at the group process level, teams in this stage usually do not make much progress on their charter assignment.

The team must address these issues openly and honestly. If there are significant problems, these need to be resolved. During this stage, the leader's and the quality advisor's guidance is tested and it's up to the two of them to channel the team's energy productively.

■ **Leaders can help by:**

● **Adding structure**

It is important during the forming stage to hold structured meetings which help to focus discussions, clarify tasking, and define roles.

● **Encouraging learning**

Members need to ask each other questions to find out about expertise within the group and differences or similarities in how each individual works. It may be helpful to put this information in the context of the Keirsey-Bates personality types.

● **Balancing participation**

As we learned in Module 4, balanced participation is an important aspect of effective teamwork. A team leader should set the pace for balancing participation by encouraging everyone to participate and by discouraging dominant behavior, especially in the first few meetings.

Stage 2 - Storming

- **Members may feel:**

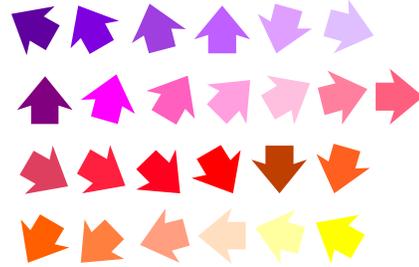
- Incompetent and confused
- Frustrated
- Negative

- **Issues:**

- Power
- Control
- Conflict

- **Leaders can help by:**

- Facilitating dialogue
- Helping with decision making
- Providing support



10/95 Team Skills and Concepts - Module 6, Viewgraph 4

Stage 2 - Storming

Now let's look at Stage 2 of the team's development. This stage is called "storming." Team members begin to realize the amount of work that lies ahead and start to panic. They may flail about like people who think they are drowning.

During this stage, members realize the task is more complicated than anticipated. They see a disparity between the hopes they felt for the team when it first formed and the reality of the work ahead of them. The aptness of the weather analogy implicit in the term "storming" will become apparent as we describe the characteristics of this stage.

- **Members may feel:**

- **Incompetent and confused**

They may not be sure they have the skills to do their task. They may be confused about how to proceed.

- **Frustrated**

They may feel frustrated by the requirements of the team situation, the time it takes to get things done, and other factors.

- **Negative**

They may have negative feelings about the leader and other team members.

- **Issues:**

- **Power**

Who can make it happen?

- **Control**

Who will be in charge?

- **Conflict**

How do we resolve conflicts based on differences of opinion?

The destructive behaviors often seen in the storming stage can seem unpleasant and unnecessary. However, much of it may be unavoidable since storming is a part of the natural evolution of teams. We will learn more in Module 7 about how to manage conflict effectively, sometimes even making it productive. For now, recognize that there are a few basic things team leaders and quality advisors can do to help teams through this stage of development.

■ **Leaders can help by:**

● **Facilitating dialogue**

As differences of opinion emerge, the team leader should encourage members to constructively state their ideas and feelings. Only by expressing what they think and feel can the group begin to understand each other's views and effectively resolve their conflicts.

● **Helping with decision making**

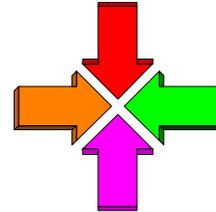
Groups in the storming stage need guidance in identifying how they will make decisions and solve problems. The quality advisor or team leader should help them explore alternatives and decide what will work best, then help them through the content of some decisions that will move them forward in their tasking.

● **Providing support**

The team is very vulnerable at this point because of the airing of emotions and differing points of view. To be effective, leaders must closely monitor group process and content issues that could derail the team. Support such as providing resources, reaffirming their purpose and capabilities, and running interference with outside groups is especially important now.

Stage 3 - Norming

- **Members may feel:**
 - Open to constructive feedback
 - Accepted by the team
 - Comfortable
- **Issues:**
 - Team harmony
 - Shared responsibility
 - Building confidence
- **Leaders can help by:**
 - Backing off
 - Expressing own ideas
 - Challenging the team



10/95 Team Skills and Concepts - Module 6, Viewgraph 5

Stage 3 - Norming

During Stage 3, referred to as "norming," members get used to working together. They start helping each other rather than competing. They have resolved some of the conflict they felt in Stage 2 and begin acting more like a team.

- **Members may feel:**
 - **Open to constructive feedback**

They are more comfortable with both giving and receiving feedback.

- **Accepted by the team**

Team members feel accepted by the team and begin to work together more effectively.

- **Comfortable**

Their anxieties about the task may start to subside.

- **Issues:**

- **Team harmony**

How do we develop trust, respect, and support on the part of all team members?

- **Shared responsibility**

How can team members learn to work together?

- **Building confidence**

How can the team develop full confidence in its ability to perform?

During the norming stage, the task of the team leader or quality advisor is to help the team adjust to their new-found identity and self-confidence.

- **Leaders can help by:**

- **Backing off**

As the team becomes more independent, it is time for the leader to begin delegating more responsibility to team members, encouraging them to run more of the meetings themselves, and to make decisions on their own. This is difficult for some people to do, so it is important to make a conscious effort to let go.

- **Expressing own ideas**

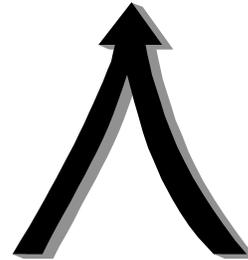
As groups become more self-assured, they are better able to hear others' issues and concerns. If the team leader has been holding off on stating personally-held thoughts about content or group process, this is the time to express them. This may provide the fresh perspective needed to keep the team out of the "groupthink" mode.

- **Challenging them**

"Norming" teams may need more challenging assignments to continuously improve their skills. Asking them to, for example, independently reach consensus on a high-stakes issue can be an important growth opportunity.

Stage 4 - Performing

- **Members may feel:**
 - Appreciative of each other's strengths
 - Accepting of each other's weaknesses
 - Satisfied with their progress on the task
 - Confident in their abilities as a team
 - Optimistic
- **Issues:**
 - Goal accomplishment
 - Maintaining momentum
- **Leaders can help by:**
 - Suggesting new goals
 - Testing assumptions
 - Developing self-assessment processes



10/95 Team Skills and Concepts - Module 6, Viewgraph 6

Stage 4 - Performing

The final stage is the "performing" stage. Team members have become comfortable with each other and their project. They are an effective working unit with everybody "singing from the same sheet of music." The concern of the team is success. At this stage, the team really begins to perform competently.

- **Members may feel:**
 - **Appreciative of each other's strengths**

Work performance is high as team members build on each other's strengths.

- **Accepting of each other's weaknesses**

Team members help each other accomplish their goal and support the efforts of all members.

- **Satisfied with their progress on the task**

The team feels positive about their successes.

- **Confident in their abilities as a team**

The team is now an effective, cohesive unit—a "winning team."

- **Optimistic**

The team is confident that they can accomplish tasks.

■ **Issues:**

- **Goal accomplishment**

How can we accomplish our goals?

- **Maintaining momentum**

How can we maintain momentum?

The primary task of the leader for teams in the performing stage is to help them develop group maintenance skills.

■ **Leaders can help by:**

- **Suggesting new goals**

As the team approaches completion of the original task with self-confidence, they need to start thinking about what lies ahead. They may require some gentle guidance to help them decide about future goals and opportunities.

- **Testing assumptions**

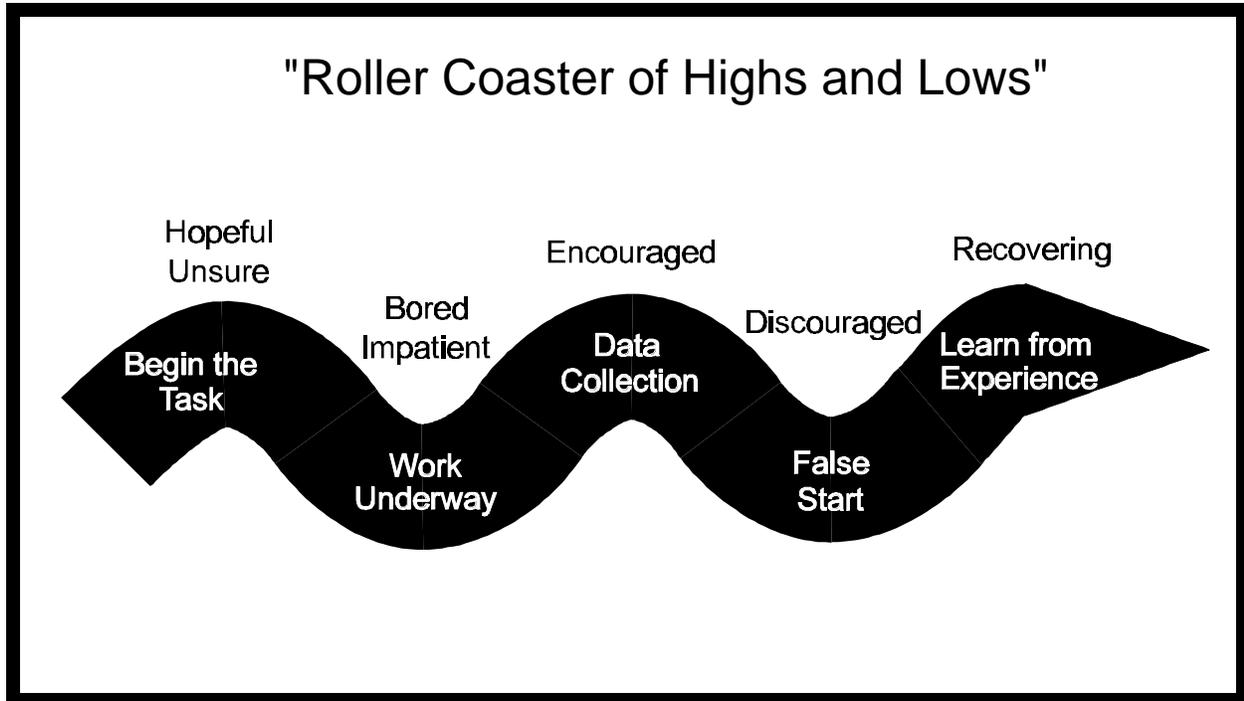
Team members in the performing stage typically develop such comfort in their ways of behaving and working together that they risk becoming complacent about their ability to function well as a team. This is a good time to question their assumptions about group norms or ground rules, and challenge them to determine if new or additional ones might be needed.

- **Developing self-assessment processes**

To become truly self-sufficient, a team must have in place a specific mechanism for ongoing self-assessment. The leader should suggest procedures, timing, and format for members to self-evaluate both individual performance as team members, and how they function together as a team.

Understanding these stages of growth will help you react effectively to the changing behaviors of the team. Be patient. It may take as long as four to six months to get a team performing well together.

Many factors can affect a team's progress—size of the group, mix of personalities, frequency of meetings, level and visibility of the task, experience level of the leader. The main thing to keep in mind is that virtually all teams eventually arrive at the performing stage.



10/95 Team Skills and Concepts - Module 6, Viewgraph 7

"Roller Coaster of Highs and Lows"

Turn to page 6-8 in *The Team Handbook*. Here it talks about the "Roller Coaster of Highs and Lows" that teams experience. Every team goes through cycles of easy times and difficult times. The duration and extremes of these highs and lows will vary for each team. A team's mood usually reflects its fortune. As the team's progress speeds ahead, falters, and takes off again, the team's mood will change too. Let's look at the natural highs and lows a team will experience.

The first three or four weeks are the "honeymoon." The team is **hopeful**, but **unsure**, as they begin the task. They become **bored** and **impatient** as the **work gets underway**. When they start **data collection**, team members may again feel **encouraged** that they are finally making progress. They may be **discouraged** to discover that they have had a "**false start**" by collecting the wrong data and have to start over. They **recover** as they **learn from experience**, make another attempt, and get good data.

The best way to deal with these ups and downs is to accept them as a natural part of teamwork and the stages of team development.



STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY APPLICATIONS EXERCISE NOTES

Summary

- The four stages of team development
- How team leaders can help
- Case study
 - Team stages
 - Leader actions

10/95 Team Skills and Concepts - Module 6, Viewgraph 8

Summary

To summarize, during this module we have looked at:

- **The four stages of team development**

We discussed these four stages and the characteristic behaviors associated with each.

- **How team leaders can help**

We learned the most appropriate leader behaviors for each of the stages.

- **Case study**

During our case study applications we had a chance to diagnose the **team stages** and decide on the most appropriate **leader actions**.