

Every company has two organizational structures: the formal one is written on the charts; the other is the everyday relationship of the men and women in the organization.

Harold H. Geneen

Module Five: Tuckman and Jensen's Model of Team Development

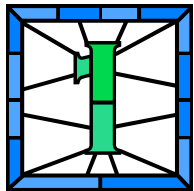
Groups are not stagnant entities; they change. Initial uncertainty and ambiguity give way to stable patterns of interaction, while relationship between members wax and wane. To be an effective facilitator, you must be sensitive to the changes happening within groups.



In this module, we will discuss one of the most widely-used theories of group development: Tuckman and Jensen's Model of Team Development. We will also discuss how a facilitator can best respond to groups depending on what stage of development they are in.

Stage One: Forming

The initial stage of group development is the forming stage. It is commonly referred to as the orientation stage or the "getting-to-know-you" stage, as group members still don't know much about each other or about the organization. If the organization itself is new, then there might not be any existing structure or rules in the group yet.



During the forming stage, members tend to feel tensions and uncertainties. After all, group members are dealing with people they hardly know, and this initial unfamiliarity may leave them feeling uncomfortable and constrained. Often, members are on guard, carefully monitoring their behavior to make certain they avoid any embarrassing lapses of social poise.

Without the benefit of a long and solid relationship with the group, involvement and commitment to the organization may be low. There may also be extreme dependence on leaders, dominant personalities and other group members.

The forming stage is characterized by many tentative and testing behaviors: explorations of the boundaries of both rules and tasks.

During the forming stage, it is important for the facilitator to:

- Establish rapport among group members
- Encourage members to be comfortable with one another
- Make everyone feel accepted in the group
- Establish rules and guidelines for both task and relational behavior
- Encourage the group to be comfortable with the organization

Stage Two: Storming

A natural offshoot of uncertainty and ambiguity is the need to clarify expectations, establish patterns, and put a structure into place. Clarity, patterns, and structure are what make a group stable. However with many different personalities and perspectives to reconcile, these things don't always evolve smoothly. The natural formation of sub-relationships within the group can also add to the pressure. Enter the second stage of group development: the storming stage.



The storming stage of group development is characterized by conflict, whether overt fighting or subtle tensions. This happens when at least two people disagree on a way of doing things or a way of relating. Conflicts in groups also occur when particular members assert control or dominance in some form, and other members resist. Coalition-building and fractionalization of the group can happen as members take sides on an issue.

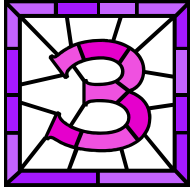
The emotional atmosphere in groups during the storming stage can be characterized by tension, anger, frustration, and discounting of other people's responses.

A facilitator guiding a team in the storming stage should remember that conflict is normal, even necessary element, in group development. Conflicts are signs that there are processes that need streamlining, or issues that require a definite response. When conflicts surface within groups, facilitators can help the group see an opportunity to set a structure (which is the next stage.)

During the storming stage, it is important for the facilitator to:

- Defuse tensions
- Promote positive communication in the group
- Identify problems areas
- Facilitate conflict resolution processes

Stage Three: Norming



The third stage of group development is the norming stage.

If the conflict areas during the storming stage are addressed properly, the result should be the establishment of norms.

Norms are rules or standards of behavior within a group. They can be explicit (such as a company policy) or implicit (unspoken expectations). Norms help groups to meet their goals. At the very least, norms help the group maintain some degree of stability so that tasks can be done.

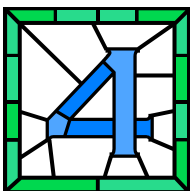
During the norming stage, group members develop greater cohesiveness and possibly intimacy. There is greater security in opening up to others and suggesting new ways of doing things. The norming stage is a period of clarity in terms of the group's identity, dynamics, and direction.

If you're a facilitator handling a group in the norming stage, it helps to:

- Practice skills in identifying possible solutions
- Define roles and expectations
- Manage change
- Help the group to reach a consensus

Evaluating new systems and protocols, and making revisions if necessary are also part of the norming stage.

Stage Four: Performing



When groups are able to successfully implement a new rule or system, they can begin a period of optimum productivity. With stability in place, there is room for creativity, initiative, stability, open relationships, pride, learning and high morale. Group energy is no longer taken up by set-up matters, and can be channeled fully to the work. The group goes into the height of task success: the performing stage.

The relationships among group members also become more relaxed and involved. Because the task details are already clearly defined, and there is no need for vicious power struggles, there is more room for closeness and deeper relationships among members.

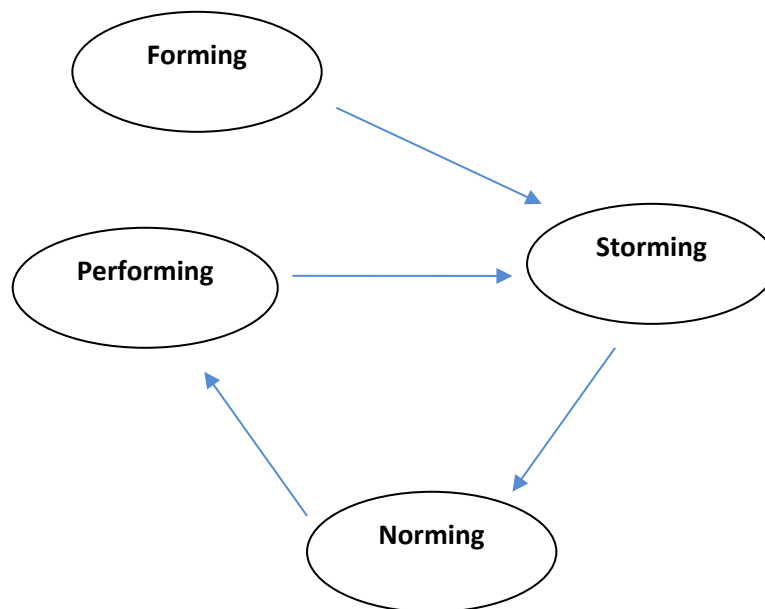
To get to the performing stage is the goal of all organizations. As a facilitator, your task is to guide the group towards this stage. One important thing to remember though is that optimal productivity often occurs later in a group's life, and a period of storming and norming are pre-requisites to it.

At this stage, the role of the facilitator is to help maintain the group in the performing stage. Tasks include providing support and motivation in each task, and reinforcing best practices.

What happens if the group gets new members or encounters new tasks? What if a new issue comes about threatening peak performance? In these cases, the group can go back to earlier stages. For example, if new groups members make pre-existing rules obsolete, or a new conflict area is spotted, then the group returns to the storming stage to hash out a new system. It is said that in the life course of a group, it will return to the storming stage regularly. See figure in the next page.

An effective facilitator can point out that that re-accomplishing developmental tasks characteristic of earlier stages (e.g. establishing rapport) may be needed to adapt to new changes.

An Illustration of Tuckman and Jensen's Stages of Team Development:



Case Study

Rick and Taylor couldn't believe their eyes. Their desks had vanished in thin air. Rick checked behind doors and walls and found nothing. Taylor tapped on shoulders and asked what had happened. No one knew. Rick decided they should high tail it into their bosses office and find out for themselves. Their boss, Marvin, delighted in their curiosity and laughed until his face turned a crimson red. He explained that they needed to be shaken up and learn to work with new people. The idea astonished Rick and Taylor. They'd never worked with anyone else. Soon, they found that change had its rewards and liked their new accommodations better and forgot all about the days of old. Everyone agreed that a shake up brightened everyone's day.