

Tuckman's Theory

It was first believed, by Bruce Tuckman in 1965, that the key was to integrate individual learning into a group dynamic; but, asserted that phases are necessary and inevitable for teams to grow, face challenges, tackle problems, find solutions, plan work, and deliver results. Yet, the influence of a group can also pressure, overwhelm, and change behaviours in people. Individuals also tend to react to the group based on their connection to its' social structure, which can be an added layer and variable.



If we cannot end now our differences,
At least we can help make the world safe for diversity.
~ John F. Kennedy

Tuckman's Theory

Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing – Transforming

Forming – the first stage of team building is when forming takes place. Teams meet and learn about opportunity, challenges, decide on goals and begin to tackle tasks. Members tend to behave quite independently, may be motivated, but tend to be uninformed on issues and objectives. Members are on their best behavior but still focused on self. Some member's model appropriate behavior at this early phase, others may not.

Storming – the storming stage is where different ideas compete. Leadership models are being decided and there are challenges to ideas and perspectives. Some teams never leave this stage; often time it is the social and emotional maturity of the members that determines whether the team moves on or not. The storming stage is necessary to the growth of the team, but can be difficult on some members averse to conflict; people need to understand and be respectful of this. Tolerance and differences need to be emphasized, or teams will fail. This phase can become destructive, lower motivation, and function out of control, if not dealt with appropriately.

Norming – behaviour is adjusted, as work habits develop that make teamwork seem more natural and fluid. Members agree on rules, values, behaviors, methods, tools, and taboos. Trust is established and motivation increases as understanding of project develops. Be advised, creativity will diminish if groupthink is not reigned in. The team members can be expected to take more responsibility for making decisions and for their professional behavior.

Performing – teams will reach this stage if they function as a unit finding ways to get the job done smoothly without inappropriate conflict or need for external supervision. Members have become interdependent, motivated, knowledgeable, competent, and autonomous with handling the decision-making process. Dissent is channeled through means acceptable to the team. Long-standing teams often go through these cycles as they react to changing circumstances (i.e. leadership change can challenge existing team dynamic).

Adjourning or Transforming – adjourning involves completing the task and breaking up the team. Others call it the phase for mourning. A team that lasts may transcend to a transforming phase of achievement. Transformational management can produce major changes in performance through synergy and is considered to be more far-reaching than transactional management.