

The Four Stages of Team Development

Part Five of Six

James L. C. Taggart

This article looks at the four stages of team development (B.W. Tuckman, 1965) and incorporates the four team player styles that were presented in the fourth part of this series on teams.

1. Forming

This occurs when people are first brought together to form a team. They begin to get to know one another and set out to establish the appropriate rules and behaviors that will govern the team. The members look to the team leader for direction. Interactions among the members are somewhat formal and polite during this phase.

During forming, the *Doer* wants to know where he fits in and his specific role. He can be helpful by being a catalyst to action and getting the team to move ahead. The *Visionary* helps by encouraging the members to share their visions and to set goals. The *Feeler* wants to be accepted by the others and to help people to get to know one another. Moreover, she wants the team to understand its diversity. The *Boat Rocker* wants openness and the team to have a clear purpose and direction.

2. Storming

The members are getting comfortable with one another. They start disagreeing and challenging each other. If this stage is missed, the team won't be as strong because it hasn't yet learned how to deal with conflict.

The *Doer* is getting impatient because he wants results. He can help the team by urging it to move ahead. The *Visionary* worries that the team is getting distracted from its goals. She can assist by promoting the common good and being open to ideas. The *Feeler* functions best during this stage. He wants to help his teammates be productive by using effective listening skills. And the *Boat Rocker* thrives here because it involves high energy. She can help by showing the proper way to challenge people and when to put an issue to rest.

3. Norming

The members know each other and have developed rules of conduct. They want the team to be successful. Trust is being established, and the members are having fun.

The *Doer* in this stage is excited because the team is getting down to real work. He plays a key role here. He can help the leader set standards (e.g., quality) and promote accountability and the effective use of resources. The *Visionary* wants to be reassured that the team is moving towards its goal. She may be concerned with camaraderie. The *Feeler* is happy that the team has reached this stage, but wonders if all the baggage has been discarded. He encourages the team to do some

reflection. And the *Boat Rocker* becomes concerned that members are getting complacent and not challenging one another.

4. Performing

In this final stage, the team has a clear, common purpose and direction. The members appreciate their diversity and are building on it. Synergy is taking hold.

The *Doer* is worried about the team not being aware of external changes. He can be a catalyst to setting new standards. The *Visionary* becomes bored and wants the team to seek out new challenges. She can help by encouraging the generation of new ideas. The *Feeler* is happy with the team's progress and wants to celebrate. But he's concerned with the potential for regression. He can help by encouraging the team to celebrate and to air problems. The *Boat Rocker* thinks that the members are not challenging each other enough. She can help the leader by raising external changes that may affect the team.

What is important to remember is that a team will typically move back and forth between certain stages as it develops. This is normal and should be expected.