

The 5 Levels of Teams Explained

Forming: The initial forming stage is the process of putting the structure of the team together. Team members feel ambiguous and conflict is avoided at all costs because of the need to be accepted into the group.

Observable Behaviors	Feelings and Thoughts	Team Needs	Leadership Required
Politeness Tentative joining in Orienting with others personally and professionally Avoids controversy Cliques may form Need for safety and approval Attempts to define tasks, processes, and how it will be decided here Discussion of problems not relevant to the task	Many feel excited, optimistic, and full of anticipation Others may feel suspicious, fearful, and anxious working with others Pride in being chosen for the group What is expected of me? Why are they here? What is expected of me? Uncertainty Apprehension	Team mission and vision Establish specific objectives and tasks Identify roles and responsibilities of team members Establish groundrules Team membership Measurement and feedback Team member expectations Operational guidelines Effective meetings	Visionary, Director Provide structure and clear task direction Allow for get-acquainted time Create an atmosphere of confidence and optimism Active involvement Leader makes many decisions One-way communication from leader to employee

Storming: This stage begins to occur as the process of organizing tasks and processes surface interpersonal conflicts. Leadership, power, and structural issues dominate this stage.

Observable Behaviors	Feelings and Thoughts	Team Needs	Leadership Required
Arguing among members Vying for leadership Differences in points of view and personal style are evident Lack of role clarity Team organizing itself Power struggles and clashes Lack of consensus-seeking behaviors Lack of progress Establishes unrealistic goals Concern over excessive work Attacking the leader	Feel Defensive Confusion, loss of interest Resistance to tasks Fluctuations in attitude about the team Unsure if I agree with teams mission and purpose. Question the wisdom of others Increase in tension and jealousy Unsure about my personal influence and freedom in the team. Wonder what are the risks/benefits of being open/closed.	Interpersonal relationships Identify stylistic and personal differences Effective listening Giving and receiving feedback Conflict resolution Clarify and understand the team's purpose Reestablish roles and groundrules esp. how should we deal with violation of codes of conduct?	Facilitator and Teacher Acknowledge conflict Guide others toward consensus Get members to assume more task responsibility Teach conflict resolution methods Offer support and praise Actively involved Leader consults but makes final decisions Fair amount of clarifying, persuading and explaining

Norming: In this stage, team members are creating new ways of doing and being together. As the group develops cohesion, leadership is shared and team members find they trust one another.

Observable Behaviors	Feelings and Thoughts	Team Needs	Leadership Required
Processes and procedures are agreed upon Comfortable with relationships Focus and energy on tasks Effective conflict resolution skills Sincere attempt to make consensual decisions Balanced influence, shared problem solving Develop routines Sets and achieves task milestones	Sense of belonging to a team Confidence is high Many feel a new ability to express criticism constructively Acceptance of all members in the team General sense of trust Assured that everything is going to work out okay Freedom to express and contribute	Develop a decision making process Be prepared to offer ideas and suggestions Problem solving Utilizing all resources to support the team effort Management coaching Begin to take responsibility in leadership skills	Coach and Sponsor Give feedback and support Plan celebrations Allow for less structure Promotes discussion Asks for contributions from all employees Collaboration Observant for a big pitfall here: groupthink Encouraging others in making decision Continues to build strong relationships

Performing: True interdependence is the norm of this stage of group development. The team is flexible as individuals adapt to meet the needs of other team members and customers. This is a highly productive stage both personally and professionally.

Observable Behaviors	Feelings and Thoughts	Team Needs	Leadership Required
Fully functional teams Roles are clear, interdependence Team able to organize itself Flexible members function well individually, in subgroups or as a team Better understand each other's strengths and weaknesses and insights into group processes	Empathy for one another High commitment Trusting friendships Fun and excitement Lots of personal development and creativity General sense of satisfaction Continual discovery of how to sustain feelings of momentum and enthusiasm	Coaching and counseling Maintain flexibility Measure performance Customer focus Continue consensus process Complete action items and accountability Provide information Giving and Receiving Feedback Dialogue	Consultant and Sponsor Observing Inquiring Fulfilling Provides little direction and decisions Leader sets goals: team accomplishes Low amounts of two-way communication needed Give positive reinforcement and support Share new information

Adjourning: In this stage typically a team members is leaving and/or there is significant change to the team structure, membership, or purpose and the team is experiencing change and transition. While the group continues to perform at times productively they also need time to manage their feelings of loss and transition.

Observable Behaviors	Feelings and Thoughts	Team Needs	Leadership Required
Visible signs of grief, crying, withdrawn, anger Momentum slows down Picking up trivial projects Rehashing old issues Absence from meetings Restless Behavior Bursts of extreme energy sometimes followed by lack of energy	Sadness Humor (that to outsiders could appear cruel) Others feel frustrated at not being recognized Underappreciated Increased discontent General hilarity	Evaluate the efforts of the team Tie up loose ends and tasks Recognize and reward team efforts Acknowledge those who are leaving and recognize their individual contribution to the team Discuss future plans	Facilitator and visionary Help team develop options for renewal or termination Good listening Provide information in many different formats Offer direction to move group back through initial stages, if necessary Guide the process Create opportunities for communication Reflection and carry forth learning to next opportunity