



## The Stages of Team Development

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the stages of team development and how to help a team move through them
- ✓ Recognize the critical role communication skills will play in building and maintaining a team atmosphere
- ✓ Identify ways that team members can be involved and grow in a team setting

## The Stages of Team Development

As early as the 1970's, researchers were discovering that groups of individuals working together go through four distinct stages of development. The most famous representation of this model is Tuckman and Jensen's Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing model. Over time an additional stage has been added to reflect the natural end to a group: Adjourning. The stages are similar to human development: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

One of your roles as a team member or leader is to help the group grow and develop. Sometimes the team is together for a very short time, so you will try to move them to a productive stage as quickly as you can. Other times, the focus will be on relationship building.

Think of how you felt when you learned you were coming to this workshop. While that isn't a perfect example of the other stages of team development, you may see a resemblance between how you felt upon learning you would be in this workshop and how a new group or team member might feel.

### Stage One: Forming

#### At this stage, team members:

- May be anxious, adopt wait-and-see attitude, and/or be formal
- Have no clear idea of goals or expectations
- Need to get to know one another
- May not be sure why they are there

#### A leader can help by:

- Planning introductions and an orientation
- Using icebreakers
- Establishing ground rules
- Determining decision making methods

### Stage Two: Storming

#### At this stage:

- Team members are eager to get going and they may be impatient with delays
- Conflict can arise as people bring different ideas of how to accomplish goals
- People notice differences rather than similarities
- Some members may drop out mentally or physically

**A leader can help by:**

- Modeling appropriate behaviors
- Separating problems from people
- Enforcing ground rules and their role by maintaining control of the process
- Keeping in mind that conflict can be healthy

**To move to the next stage**, participants have to put the needs of the group ahead of their personal interests.

**Stage Three: Norming**

**At this stage, team members:**

- Begin to recognize ways they are alike
- Realize that they are in this together as a team
- Get more social
- May forget their focus in favor of having a good time

Many groups don't make it to this stage, where there is much more cooperation and understanding than previous stages.

During this stage, **the leader should:**

- Be observant of emerging group behaviors
- Encourage the team to express their differences positively
- Help the team to stay focused on their objectives

**Stage Four: Performing**

**At this stage, team members:**

- Are mature
- Understand their roles and responsibilities
- Want more input in processes
- Are self-motivated and self-trained

The transition to this phase happens as a demonstration of high levels of trust. However, the team can be susceptible to "group think," so a leader must help ensure that individual ideas are considered. The leader must avoid intervening in the process unless the group becomes stuck and begins to flounder, or they regress to a previous stage and erupt in conflict.

### Stage Five: Adjourning

At this stage, team members are:

- Winding down and saying goodbye
- Setting goals for future work independently and/or as part of new groups

Groups may adjourn because they finish a defined project or because they are no longer challenged. If there are new members, that can shift the group into a previous stage.

In this phase **leaders can support the group by:**

- Celebrating participants' participation
- Describing what's going on
- Looking for and encouraging contribution from everyone as the group winds down
- Encouraging continued productivity

### Forming an Effective Team

Not all of us will take the same approach to forming a successful work team, but success may hinge on taking all of the steps we just discussed.

There is a tendency to want to surround ourselves with people who are just like us. If you get to choose a team, you'll need to look at things carefully and create a team of people with a variety of strengths. For a team that is already in place, organizing may be more subtle. For example, you might call the team together to discuss what you want to accomplish (goals) and how everybody can help.

You will find that imposing goals on people doesn't work nearly as well as having them tell you what goals they will strive for. But setting goals is hard work. Too often they end up too unrealistic, too vague, impossible to measure, or stretching into eternity with no deadline.

As well, it is important to take time for reflection and evaluation. Was that last project as successful as it might have been? What could have been done differently? Make sure that you apply these lessons learned to your next project.

### Test Your Knowledge

How do you think you can create a positive team environment?

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**What environment do you like to work in?**

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**How can you apply this to your team?**

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## Team Building with TORI

Originally developed by Jack and Lorraine Gibb in 1978, the TORI principles of team building still hold true today.

- T is for **Trust**: Interpersonal confidence and absence of fear.
- O is for **Openness**: Free flow of information, ideas, perceptions, and feelings.
- R is for **Realization**: Self-determination, doing what you want to do.
- I is for **Interdependence**: Reciprocal influence, shared responsibility, and co-leadership.

**Scoring Sheet**

Criterion	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Distance of Flight					
Hang Time (Length of Flight)					
Visual Appeal					
Creativity					
Teamwork					
<b>Total</b>					

**Communication**

**Defining Communication**

What is communication?

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Here are you, the audience: here am I, the speaker. What kinds of barriers can come between us?

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One thing most people do is make a lot of assumptions about the people they come into contact with. Team members often assume they have interpreted others' comments correctly, and they assume that others understand perfectly what they are trying to say. They also assume that others will react as they would to different situations.

## Listening Skills

Two of the most powerful communication skills are our ability to listen and to ask questions.

**Good listening skills** are crucial to team building. Remember the saying, "God gave us two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we talk."

**Active listening** means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. **Active listening** can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

## Responding to Feelings

The content (the words spoken) is one thing, but the way that people feel really gives full value to the message. Responding to the speaker's feelings adds an extra dimension to listening. Are they disgusted and angry or in love and excited? Perhaps they are ambivalent! These are all feelings that you can reply to in your part of the conversation.

## Reading Cues

Really listening means that we are also very conscious of the non-verbal aspects of the conversation.

- What are the speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture telling us?
- Is their voice loud or shaky?
- Are they stressing certain points?
- Are they mumbling or having difficulty finding the words they want to say?

## Demonstration Cues

When you are listening to someone, these techniques will show a speaker that you are paying attention, provided you are genuine in using them.

**Physical indicators** include making eye contact, nodding your head from time to time, and leaning into the conversation.

You can also give **verbal cues** or use phrases such as “Uh-huh,” “Go on,” “Really!” and, “Then what?”

You can use **questions** for clarification or **summarizing statements**. Examples:

- “Do you mean they were charging \$4.00 for just a cup of coffee?”
- “So after you got a cab, got to the store, and found the right sales clerk, what happened then?”

## Tips for Becoming a Better Listener

- **Make a decision to listen.** Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.
- **Don’t interrupt** people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.
- Keep your **eyes** focused on the speaker and your **ears** tuned to their voice. Don’t let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.
- Carry a **notebook** or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.
- Ask a few **questions** throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.
- When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be **infectious**. If you want people to communicate well, you have to set a high example.

