

## Forming – Storming – Norming -- Performing

The **Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing** is a model of [group development](#), first proposed by [Bruce Tuckman](#) in 1965, who maintained that these phases are all necessary and inevitable in order for the [team](#) to grow, to face up to challenges, to tackle problems, to find solutions, to plan work, and to deliver results. This model has become the basis for subsequent models.

### **Tuckman's Group Development Model**

#### **Forming**

In the first stages of team building, the *forming* of the team takes place. The individual's behaviour is driven by a desire to be accepted by the others, and avoid controversy or conflict. Serious issues and feelings are avoided, and people focus on being busy with routines, such as team organization, who does what, when to meet, etc. But individuals are also gathering information and impressions - about each other, and about the scope of the task and how to approach it. This is a comfortable stage to be in, but the avoidance of conflict and threat means that not much actually gets done.

The team meets and learns about the opportunities and challenges, and then agrees on goals and begins to tackle the tasks. Team members tend to behave quite independently. They may be motivated but are usually relatively uninformed of the issues and objectives of the team. Team members are usually on their best behavior but very focused on themselves. Mature team members begin to model appropriate behavior even at this early phase. Sharing the knowledge of the concept of "Teams - Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing" is extremely helpful to the team.

Supervisors of the team tend to need to be directive during this phase.

The forming stage of any team is important because, in this stage, the members of the team get to know one another, exchange some personal information, and make new friends. This is also a good opportunity to see how each member of the team works as an individual and how they respond to pressure.

#### **Storming**

Every group will then enter the *storming* stage in which different ideas compete for consideration. The team addresses issues such as what problems they are really supposed to solve, how they will function independently and together and what leadership model they will accept. Team members open up to each other and confront each other's ideas and perspectives. In some cases *storming* can be resolved quickly. In others, the team never leaves this stage. The maturity of some team members usually determines whether the team will ever move out of this stage. Some team members will focus on minutiae to evade real issues.

The *storming* stage is necessary to the growth of the team. It can be contentious, unpleasant and even painful to members of the team who are averse to conflict. Tolerance of each team member and their differences needs to be emphasized. Without tolerance and patience the team will fail. This phase can become destructive to the team and will lower motivation if allowed to get out of control.

Supervisors of the team during this phase may be more accessible but tend to still need to be directive in their guidance of decision-making and professional behavior. The groups will therefore resolve their differences and group members will be able to participate with one another more comfortably and they won't feel that they are being judged in any way and will therefore share their own opinions and views....

*"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."*

Ronald. E. Osborn

Where Lean Thoughts can become Reality

## The Evolutionary Phases of Team Development

### **Norming**

At some point, the team may enter the *Norming* stage. Team members adjust their behavior to each other as they develop work habits that make teamwork seem more natural and fluid. Team members often work through this stage by agreeing on rules, values, professional behavior, shared methods, working tools and even taboos. During this phase, team members begin to trust each other. Motivation increases as the team gets more acquainted with the project.

Teams in this phase may lose their creativity if the norming behaviors become too strong and begin to stifle healthy dissent and the team begins to exhibit [groupthink](#).

Supervisors of the team during this phase tend to be participative more than in the earlier stages. The team members can be expected to take more responsibility for making decisions and for their professional behavior.

As team members get to know each other better, their views of each other begin to change. The team feels a sense of achievement for getting so far, however some members can begin to feel threatened by the amount of responsibility they have been given. They would try to resist the pressure and revert to storming again.

### **Performing**

Some teams will reach the *performing* stage. These high-performing teams are able to function as a unit as they find ways to get the job done smoothly and effectively without inappropriate conflict or the need for external supervision. Team members have become interdependent. By this time they are motivated and knowledgeable. The team members are now competent, autonomous and able to handle the decision-making process without supervision. Dissent is expected and allowed as long as it is channeled through means acceptable to the team.

Supervisors of the team during this phase are almost always participative. The team will make most of the necessary decisions. Even the most high-performing teams will revert to earlier stages in certain circumstances. Many long-standing teams will go through these cycles many times as they react to changing circumstances. For example, a change in leadership may cause the team to revert to *storming* as the new people challenge the existing norms and dynamics of the team.

### **Further developments ... Adjourning and transforming**

Tuckman later added a fifth phase, *adjourning*, that 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* business.

### **Norming and re-norming**

[Timothy Biggs](#) suggested that an additional stage be added of Norming after Forming and renaming the traditional Norming stage Re-Norming. This addition is designed to reflect that there is a period after Forming where the performance of a team gradually improves and the interference of a leader content with that level of performance will prevent a team progressing through the Storming stage to true performance. This puts the emphasis back on the team and leader as the Storming stage must be actively engaged in to succeed – too many 'diplomats' or 'peacemakers' especially in a leadership role may prevent the team from reaching their full potential