

Week 39 Focus – Team Development: Understanding How Teams Operate

Focus Question: What does your team need right now?

DESCRIPTION

In growing a team, it is important to understand the arc of team development. Teams naturally move through the process of what is commonly referred to as Tuckman's Model. This series of stages from Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. At different stages team and groups have varying needs.

Here's what I shared about the five stages of Tuckman's model in a Teams365 blog post:

The forming stage occurs when groups or teams are coming together, and/or are being joined by new group/team members. Key needs at this stage include safety, connection and understanding what expectations are. As coaches, it is important at this stage to encourage dialogue around expectations, group or team agreements (or "how we want to operate/get along") and connect people with each other as well as with you.

By the second conversation, groups are often into the Storming Stage where they are asking themselves "What? So, who are we? What's this all about?". This is where conflict starts to emerge and can be very overt (visible) or under wraps (i.e. people choosing not to engage and double-booking themselves). Conflict is a normal and healthy part of group development when they have the tools and skills to learn to work across differences. We can support groups and teams as coaches at this stage by supporting them with a process and tools that help them gain clarity about who they are and what it's all about.

As groups and teams move through Storming and start to create their own identity they move to the Norming stage. We may start seeing the group really start coming together in the second or third group coaching conversation, or even in the morning of a multi-day program. As coaches we can support the process by encouraging dialogue around roles, key goals they are working towards collectively and the purpose of the group or team.

The next stage in Tuckman's Model is Performing. At this stage, the group or team has everything they need and clarity around what they are doing so they can get the work done. As coaches, we can support teams and groups at this stage for pausing to reflect on what's working, what's not, what needs a tweak and what's going to support their results.

Groups and teams will end - whether it is a team member leaving, a project team winding down, or a group disbanding. In the Adjourning stage we want to create the space for people to acknowledge their achievements, learning and start looking at next steps.

ACTIVITY

Questions to consider:

- What stage is the group or team you are working with right now?
- What can you do to support them? What do they need from you?

I go into greater detail about Tuckman's Model in most of my books, given that the stages play out in both in-person and virtual teams.

CONNECTION TO THE WORKBOOK AND PLANNER

As you consider the different relationships you are in, what stages are you at?



"A five-minute focused conversation is better than speaking for twenty minutes with someone who is not "present"."
- Jennifer Britton