

Team Process

Learning to make teams work is not an easy task. HCG uses many tools to help ministry teams learn to work together effectively.

In 1965, Bruce Tuckman developed a simple four-stage model of team development that has become an accepted part of thinking about how teams develop. In his article, "*Developmental Sequence in Small Groups*," Tuckman outlines four stages of team development: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. A successful team knows which stage they are in, and manages transitions between the different stages adeptly.

The *Forming* stage involves the introduction of team members, either at the initiation of the team, or as members are introduced subsequently. Members are likely to be influenced by the expectations and desires they bring with them, and will be keen to understand how the group will operate. In particular, they will be keen to understand how the leadership is likely to operate, in terms of style and character. This is a stage of transition from a group of individuals to a team.

As team members grow more confident, the team are likely to enter the *Storming* phase. Team members will have different opinions as to how the team should operate. Particularly for a Christian team, which may be anxious about conflict arising, the storming phase is a difficult one for the team. The best teams will understand the conflict, actively listen to each other, and navigate an agreed way forwards. Other teams may disintegrate as they bolster their own opinions to weather the storms of the group.

As the teams emerge with an agreed method of operating, the team enters the *Norming* phase. Team members have signed up to a common working method, and everyone is usually willing to share in this. During this phase, team members are able to reconcile their own opinions with the greater needs of the team. Co-operation and collaboration replace the conflict and mistrust of the previous phase.

Finally the team reaches the final phase, *Performing*. The emphasis is now on reaching the team goals, rather than working on team process. Relationships are settled, and team members are likely to build loyalty towards each other. The team is able to manage more complex tasks, and cope with greater change. The performing stage can either lead onto :

- a return to the forming stage as group membership changes,
- a new "dorming" stage as the group gets complacent or
- "adjourning" as the group successfully reaches its goal and completes its work.

Let's explore the implications of each of the four stages for team leaders:

	Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing
Team Leader's Style	More directive approach, outlining how the process will develop and laying down a clear structure.	Leader needs to be supportive, actively listening to team members, and managing the conflict, generating ideas, and explaining decisions.	Leader acts as a team member, as leadership is starting to be shared. Leader helps to develop consensus.	Leader takes overview, but within the day to day running, the group is sharing leadership between members.
Reaction to Leadership	Team members take a tentative, wait and see approach. Leader will be allowed to lead, but that doesn't guarantee support.	Leader is under pressure from more vociferous team members.	General support for the leadership within the team. Mutual respect underpins this.	Personal relationships have developed which underpin the leadership relationship.
Team Process	Process is driven by the leader. Some people are reluctant to contribute openly.	Process likely to break down until conflict is resolved.	The core process should operate smoothly, although there is a danger of focusing on smaller process issues rather than core team work.	Process functions well, and is adjusted as necessary. Leadership is shared and tasks delegated.
Trust within the team	Individuals are not clear about their contribution. "Getting to know you" phase. Trust may start to be built.	Trust is focused into smaller groups as sub-groups and alliances form.	As roles are accepted and clarified, trust and relationships start to develop to a greater degree.	Team starts to operate on higher levels of trust as loyalty and relationships develop.
How Decisions are made	Nominated leader is expected to make decisions. Some more vocal members may dominate.	Decisions are hard to make. Members are unwilling to give way. Compromise is a frequent outcome.	Group is able to come to common decisions. Win-win is more likely than compromise.	Decision making is easier - some decisions are delegated to sub-groups or individuals.