



Stages of Group Development

As a group or team forms, it goes through certain predictable and observable stages, progressing from a loose collection of individuals to a cohesive group working together more or less effectively for a common cause. Each stage poses a challenge to group members and their respective leaders causing certain behaviors to appear. Mastering the behaviors that surface in one stage will allow the group or team to progress to the next stage.

FIVE STAGES OF GROUP/TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Stage 1 - To be or Not to be: The Forming, Orientation, or Familiarity stage

This stage is characterized by group awareness and relationship building. This stage involves the practical and psychological start-up of the team. The challenge of this group stage is to create team identity and make the team important to the group members.

- Personal relations within the group are characterized by dependency on the leader to provide structure, set goals, clarify values, and develop the group vision/mission.
- Major task functions concern the orientation of group members to the work they are being asked to do. The issues have to be specified.
- Common group member behavior at this point is questioning why we are here, what we are supposed to do, how are we going to get it done, and what are our goals?

Appropriate Leadership Style

Leader Directed

Since groups in this phase require definitions of their roles and goals they will need information from the leader about the group's agenda, deadlines, etc. The leader should provide as much structure as possible and become the emotional center of the team.

Specific Leader Actions

You should listen carefully, be visible, maintain open communication/ feedback channels for the team, offer support and reassurance, keep group members accountable for day-to-day results, and create team traditions.

Specific Group Member Responsibilities

Group members can help the team building process by accepting the new team identity, by learning the group's mission, and by getting to know one another.

Stage 2 - Here We Stay or Here We Go: The Storming, Confrontation, or Power Stage

This stage characterized by resistance, negativity, ambiguity, and confusion within the group. The varieties of organizational concerns that emerge reflect conflict over leadership structure, power, and authority. The challenge of this group stage is to let everyone be heard and express their feelings productively, to prevent factions from developing, and to foster creative communication within the team.

- Personal relations consist of conflict and confrontation among group members and/or the group leader because team members feel comfortable enough to disagree and express their feelings as they get in touch with their own power.
- It is important that strategies are implemented to help members move constructively from conflict toward renewed commitment to the group.

If this does not happen, members may isolate or even remove themselves from the group during this phase.

Appropriate Leadership Style

Leader Directed with a Coaching

Groups in this stage still require a high level of directive supervision, but also need considerable support. The leader must not only serve as mediator, but also as a teacher of group norms and values. The leader also needs to listen to group problems, manage conflicts, encourage participation, provide recognition, and build alliances.

Specific Leader Actions

You need to stay approachable; provide answers, answers, and more answers; repeat key information often; set short-term goals; restate mission, objectives, and priorities; and create opportunities for participation.

Specific Group Member Responsibilities

Group members must focus on the commonalties of the group and not the differences.

Stage 3 - Close to You: The Norming, Constructive, or Resolution stage

This stage is characterized by cooperation and integration within the group.

The challenge of this group stage is to channel the skills, energy, and independent spirit of the team members into coordinated work.

- Personal relations are marked by cohesion; people begin to experience a feeling of groupness. They begin sharing ideas, feelings, giving feedback to each other, soliciting feedback, exploring actions and sharing information related to the task.
- This stage becomes a period during which people feel good about being a part of a group, and there is a brief abandonment of the task and a period of play --the enjoyment of the cohesion that is being experienced.

Appropriate Leadership Style

Follower Directed with Motivating

Groups in this stage understand the goals and tasks more thoroughly and are willing to work hard to achieve these goals. The leader should work to make the members less dependent on his/her own leadership, but still focus on providing the support people need to mesh their activities productively.

Specific Leader Actions

You must continue to keep members focused and communication channels open, solicit participation, and encourage creative thinking. Be prepared to translate organizational goals into team goals.

Specific Group Member Responsibilities

At this point group members need to master the team skills and become interdependent by removing the leader from the center of everything.

Stage 4 - I've Gotta be Me: The Performing, Production, or Synergy Stage

This stage is characterized by productivity, autonomy, unity, and commitment within the group. A collective, interdependent organism is the final outcome of the group development process where the whole of the team is greater than the sum of its respective parts.

- Personal relations are characterized by interdependence where members can work alone, in any sub-group, or as a total unit. Group members are energetic, enthusiastic, and will often sacrifice for the sake of the team's performance.
- Group tasks are well defined with a high level of commitment to common activity and support for experimentation with solving problems.

Appropriate Leadership Style

Follower Directed with a Mentoring

Groups in this phase have worked through their adjustments and have become energized by the prospect of achievement. The leader can serve as ambassador/philosopher and take a less active role by allowing the group members to run the day to day business of the group.

Specific Leader Actions

You need to provide resources, remove obstacles, reward high performance, stimulate interaction, emphasize teamwork, and celebrate successes.

Specific Group Member Responsibilities

Group members can help by taking on more of the team's business and letting the team leader operate at the boundaries of the team.

Stage 5 - It's Hard to Say Goodbye: The Adjourning Stage

This stage is characterized by closure of the group/team process. When the team project has been completed or when turnover in an organization occurs due to elections or new member recruitment the group process will end and a new group/team building process will begin.

- Personal relations will be disengaged.
- Job tasks will be terminated.