Teamwork for Transformation: Applying VIEW for High Performance

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Teamwork is an important concern whenever you expect small groups of people to work together collaboratively toward a common goal or outcome. Effective teams have mutual and shared accountability for their team's goal; their results may impact the evaluation of the individuals and the team as a whole. In order to be effective, teams must also be able to maintain their collaboration, effective communication, and positive interactions over a sustained period of time. When you are facing organizational change and transformation, you will often need to apply teamwork.

When you deploy teams there will be a number of challenges and opportunities. One of the most significant issues is helping team members understand, and deal effectively with differences. In this document we will explore the productive potential of using VIEW: An Assessment of Problem Solving Style to help deal with the key dynamics of teamwork, particularly teamwork for transformation.

When you are responsible for building or guiding teams, you can apply VIEW in several ways. VIEW can provide a common language or vocabulary for exchanging information about the similarities and differences among team members. This will help the team members to recognize and respect differences, rather than viewing others with differing preferences as "odd," "wrong," or "ineffective." Team members need to understand that "differences are not deficits."

Group members can also sustain their team's working relationship when they are able to celebrate each other's strengths and use their differences to complement each other.

Deciding to Use a Group

Many people who have attempted to use groups for problem solving find out that using groups is not always easy, pleasurable or effective. Using groups has both positive and negative aspects. The following table describes assets and liabilities of using groups, and has been developed by weaving together the work of numerous scholars.[1]

When considering the use of small groups the leader or facilitator needs to evaluate the liabilities and assets of using groups. The goal is to maximize the positive aspects of group involvement while minimizing the liabilities. For example, as the facilitator or group leader can increase the productive use of diversity the likelihood of individual dominance should decrease. In general, if there is a need to provide for participation to increase acceptance, then it may be worthwhile to use a group. It is also important to choose to use a group when information is widely held or there is a need to build on and synthesize the diverse range of experiences and perspectives. Another reason to choose to use a group is when it is important to develop and strengthen the group's ability to learn.

Table 1
Potential Assets & Liabilities of Using a Group

Potential Assets of Using a Group	Potential Liabilities of Using a Group
1. Greater availability of knowledge and information.	1. Social pressure toward uniform thought limits contributions and increases conformity
2. More opportunities for cross-fertilization; increasing the likelihood of building and improving upon ideas of others.	2. Group think: Groups converge on options, which seem to have greatest agreement, regardless of quality.
3. Wider range of experiences and perspectives upon which to draw.	3. Dominant individuals influence and exhibit an unequal amount of impact upon outcomes.
4. Participation and involvement in problem solving increases understanding, acceptance, commitment, and ownership of outcomes.	4. Individuals are less accountable in groups allowing groups to make riskier decisions.
5. More opportunities for group development; increasing cohesion, communication and companionship	5. Conflicting individual biases may cause unproductive levels of competition; leading to "winners" and "losers."

All Teams are Groups: But Not All Groups are Teams

Teams are one of the basic building blocks of every organization. After individuals, they may be considered the most important resource in any organization. Teams conduct so much real, day-to-day work within organizations. This explains the interest in high-performance work systems, electronic groupware, small-group facilitation skills, and a host of other strategies for improving the way groups work. One of the reasons that teams are so essential within organizations is the growing complexity of tasks. Increasingly complex tasks frequently surpass the cognitive capabilities of individuals and necessitate a team approach.

Before we continue, it would be helpful to explore what we mean by a team. Many people use the words group and team interchangeably. In general, the word group refers to an assemblage of people who may just be near to each other. Groups can be a number of people that are regarded as some sort of unity or are classed together on account of any sort of similarity. For us, a team means a combination of individuals who come together or who have been brought together for a common purpose or goal in their organization.

A team is a group that must collaborate in their professional work in some enterprise or on some assignment and share accountability or responsibility for obtaining results.

There are a variety of ways to differentiate working groups from teams. One senior executive with whom we have worked described groups as individuals with nothing in common, except a zip/postal code. Teams, however, were characterized by a common vision. Katzenbach and Smith, in the book on *The Wisdom of Teams*, described a team as:

 "...a small number of people with complementary skills who are mutually committed to a common purpose, a common set of performance goals, and a commonly agreed upon working approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."[2]

Characteristics Promoting Teamwork

Authors, researchers and practitioners have offered many suggestions for productive teamwork.[3] The following dozen characteristics of productive teams have been formulated from reviewing the work of numerous writers and researchers on creative teamwork.[4] The quotes come from a study we conducted on high performance teamwork.

A clear, common, and elevating goal. Having a clear and elevating goal means having understanding, mutual agreement and identification with respect to the primary task a group faces. Active teamwork toward common goals happens when members of a group share a common vision of the desired future state. Creative teams have clear and common goals. "The most important factor accounting for my team's creative success was, undoubtedly, each member's drive to attain the end goal, knowing the benefits that would be derived from the results." The goals were clear and compelling, but also open and challenging. Less creative teams have conflicting agendas, different missions, and no agreement on the end result. "Everyone did their own thing without keeping in mind the overall objective that the group was charged to achieve." The tasks for the least creative teams were tightly constrained, considered routine, and were overly structured.

You can apply VIEW to help clarify the various interpretations people hold regarding goals and tasks. VIEW can also help you identify each person's required individual approach to "buy into" the selected goals and tasks. Finally, VIEW can help you identify the unique ways each team member can contribute to obtaining high performance.

Results-driven structure. Individuals within high-performing teams feel productive when their efforts take place with a minimum of grief. Open communication, clear co-ordination of tasks, clear roles and accountabilities, monitoring performance, providing feedback, fact-based judgment, efficiency, and strong impartial management combine to create a results-driven structure.

Applying VIEW can help balance the need for a structure to achieve results and maintaining a positive team sprit. Engaging the diversity of styles can ensure that you develop shared rules and procedures; and obtain on-going feedback on their usefulness.

Competent team members. Competent teams are comprised of capable and conscientious members. Members must possess essential skills and abilities, a strong desire to contribute, be capable of collaborating effectively, and have a sense of responsible idealism. They must have knowledge in the domain surrounding the task (or some other domain which may be relevant), as well as with the process of working together. Creative teams recognize the diverse strengths and talents and use them accordingly. "Each individual brought a cornucopia of experience and insight.

All of this, together with the desire to meet the end goal was the key to success." Less creative teams have inadequate skill sets and are unable to effectively utilize their diversity.

VIEW does not measure competence, but it does provide useful information on potential contributions of diverse styles and preferred approaches to problem solving. You can apply VIEW to help achieve a clear understanding of each team member's role and how they might best contribute to your team.

Unified commitment. Having a shared commitment relates to the way the individual members of the group respond. Effective teams have an organizational unity; members display mutual support, dedication and faithfulness to the shared purpose and vision, and a productive degree of self-sacrifice to reach organizational goals. Creative teams "play hard and work even harder." Team members enjoy contributing and celebrated their accomplishments. "All team members were motivated to do the best job possible in reaching the end goal, so everyone was willing to pitch in to get the job done." There is a high degree of enthusiasm and commitment to get the job done. Less creative teams lack that kind of motivation. There is a lack of initiative, ideas, and follow through on suggestions. Less creative teams had a "lack of motivation and the inability to recognize the value provided by the end result."

VIEW can help you obtain a better understanding and appreciation of the unique needs and motivations different team members have. This allows you to create a pathway to high performance that may be different for each member of the team, but that clearly contributes to success.

Collaborative climate. Productive teamwork does not just happen. It requires a climate that supports cooperation and collaboration. This kind of situation is characterized by mutual trust...trust in the goodness of others. Organizations desiring to promote teamwork must provide a climate within the larger context that supports cooperation. Creative teams have an environment that encourages new ideas and allows the development of new ways of working. "No matter what the disagreements, we all knew that we had to bring our ideas together to get the job done." Everyone feels comfortable discussing ideas, offering suggestions because "…ideas are received in a professional and attentive manner…people feel free to brainstorm to improve others' ideas without the authors' feelings getting hurt.

In less creative teams new ideas are not attended to or encouraged because "…individuals place their own priorities before the team's." They are characterized by not being able to discuss multiple solutions to a problem because team members cannot listen to any opinion other than their own. In these teams, members were "…expected to follow what had always been done and finish as quickly as possible."

Applying VIEW can help you develop ways of working that help members with different styles understand how their differences can be leveraged to create better results. This means moving beyond seeing differences and deficits.

Standards of excellence. Effective teams establish clear standards of excellence. They embrace individual commitment, motivation, self-esteem, individual performance, and constant improvement. Members of teams develop a clear and explicit understanding of the norms upon which they will rely.

People hold different notions regarding excellence. You can apply VIEW to put those differences on the table, and then work together to create common and agreed ways of working.

External support and recognition. Team members need resources, rewards, recognition, popularity and social success. Being liked and admired as individuals and respected for belonging and contributing to a team is often helpful in maintaining the high level of personal energy required for sustained performance. With the increasing use of cross-functional and inter-departmental teams within larger complex organizations, teams must be able to obtain approval and encouragement.

VIEW can provide a common and constructive language for describing and discussing both similarities and differences – creating a constructive focus for communication. VIEW can also help you surface and deal with tensions that may arise.

Principled leadership. Leadership is important for teamwork. Whether it is a formally appointed leader or leadership of the emergent kind, the people who exert influence and encourage the accomplishment of important things usually follow some basic principles. Principled leadership includes the management of human differences, protecting less able members, and providing a level playing field to encourage contributions from everyone.

This is the kind of leadership that promotes legitimate compliance to competent authority. In creative teams the "… leader leads by example, encouraging new ideas and sharing best practices." Leaders provide clear guidance, support and encouragement, and keep everyone working together and moving forward. Leaders also work to obtain support and resources from within and outside the group. In less creative teams, the leader "…creates a situation where everyone is confused and afraid to ask questions." Leaders "tear down people's ideas," "set a tone of distrust," and "stifle others who have ideas and energy to succeed." They "…keep all control, but take no action."

Applying VIEW with your team promotes clear understanding of each team member's role that can promote interdependence. Understanding and appreciating style differences can help those with leadership responsibility remove barriers and enable maximum contribution and high performance.

Appropriate use of the team. Teamwork is encouraged when the tasks and situations really call for that kind of activity. Sometimes the team itself must set clear boundaries on when and why it should be deployed. One of the easiest ways to destroy a productive team is to overuse it or use it when it is not appropriate to do so.

Sometimes, a single team member has the highest potential by working alone. VIEW can help you spot the unique areas of motivation and energy that can "cover" the team for particular tasks.

Participation in decision-making. One of the best ways to encourage teamwork is to engage the members of the team in the process of identifying the challenges and opportunities for improvement, generating ideas, and transforming ideas into action. Participation in the process of problem solving and decision-making actually builds teamwork and improves the likelihood of acceptance and implementation.

The style differences assessed by VIEW provide clear indication regarding individuals' preferences for particular kinds of problem-solving tools and methods. You can use these insights to provide the right balance of process approaches to ensure each member can and will contribute.

Team spirit. Effective teams know how to have a good time, release tension, and relax their need for control. The focus at times is on developing friendship, engaging in tasks for mutual pleasure and recreation. This internal team climate extends beyond the need for a collaborative climate. Creative teams have the ability to work together without major conflicts in personalities. There is a high degree of respect for the contributions of others. Communication is characterized by "The willingness of team members to listen to one another and honor the opinions of all team members." Members of these teams report that they know their roles and responsibilities and that this provides freedom to develop new ideas. Less creative teams are characterized by an "unwillingness to communicate with one another because people do not make the effort to understand each other." There are instances of animosity, jealousy, and political posturing.

VIEW promotes the valuing of diverse ideas and perspectives. You can apply VIEW to better understand each other's strengths and needs. This helps manage disagreements and tensions more constructively and leads to improved commitment to collaboration.

Embracing appropriate change. Teams often face the challenges of organizing and defining tasks. In order for teams to remain productive, they must learn how to make necessary changes to procedures. When there is a fundamental change in how the team must operate, different values and preferences may need to be accommodated. Productive teams learn how to use the full spectrum of their members' creativity.

VIEW can help team members lever the diverse ways people prefer to define and manage change.

Challenges to Teamwork

There are also many challenges to the effective management of teams. We have all seen teams that have "gone wrong." As a team develops, there are certain aspects or guidelines that might be helpful to keep them on track. Hackman has identified a number of themes relevant to those who design, lead, and facilitate teams. In examining a variety of organizational work groups, he found some seemingly small factors that if overlooked in the management of teams will have large implications that tend to destroy the capability of a team to function.[5] These small and often hidden "tripwires" to major problems include:

Group versus team. One of the mistakes that is often made when managing teams is to call the group a team, but to actually treat it as nothing more than a loose collection of individuals. This is similar to making it a team "because I said so." It is important to be very clear about the underlying goal structure. Organizations are often surprised that teams do not function too well in their environment. Of course, they often fail to examine the impact of competition in their rating or review process. People are often asked to perform tasks as a team, but then have all evaluation of performance based on an individual level. This situation sends conflicting messages, and may negatively affect team performance. Teams include mutual accountability for agreed goals and working approach, something that may not necessarily be present in all groups.

Ends versus means. Managing the source of authority for groups is a delicate balance. Just how much authority can you assign to the team to work out its own issues and challenges? Those who convene teams often "over manage" them by specifying the results, as well as how the team should obtain them. The end, direction, or outer limit constraints ought to be specified, but the means to get there ought to be within the authority and responsibility of the group. Teamwork is often under-utilized because the desired ends are unclear and unspecified. As a result, teams are often given too much guidance on the means (the how) rather than sufficient emphasis on the ends (the what and why). Effective teams are given clear indications of what is the acceptable outcome and end goal and responsibility for working out how to get there.

Structured freedom. It is a major mistake to assemble a group of people and merely tell them in general and unclear terms what needs to be accomplished and then let them work out their own details. At times, the belief is that if teams are to be creative, they ought not be given any structure. It turns out that most groups would find a little structure quite enabling, if it were the right kind. Teams generally need a well-defined task. They need to be composed of an appropriately small number to be manageable but large enough to be diverse. They need clear limits as to the team's authority and responsibility, and they need sufficient freedom to take initiative and make good use of their diversity. It's about striking the right kind of balance between structure, authority and boundaries - and freedom, autonomy and initiative.

Support structures and systems. Often challenging team objectives are set, but the organization fails to provide adequate support in order to make the objectives a reality. In general, high performing teams need a reward system that recognizes and reinforces excellent team performance. They also need access to good quality and adequate information, as well as training in team-relevant tools and skills. Good team performance is also dependent on having an adequate level of material and financial resources to get the job done. Calling a group a team does not mean that they will automatically obtain all the support needed to accomplish the task.

Assumed competence. Many organizations have a great deal of faith in their selection systems. Facilitators, and others who manage or lead groups, cannot assume that the group members have all the competence they need to work effectively as a team, simply because they have been selected to join any particular organization. Technical skills, domain-relevant expertise and experience, and abilities often explain why someone has been included within a group. These are often not the only competencies individuals need for effective team performance.[6] Members will undoubtedly need explicit coaching on skills they need to work well in a team. Coaching and other supportive interventions are best done during the launch, at a natural break in the task, or at the end of a performance or review period. The start-up phase is probably the most important time frame to provide the necessary coaching or training.

One of the ways to help teams obtain many of the desired characteristics and avoid the trip wires is to consider how teams develop.
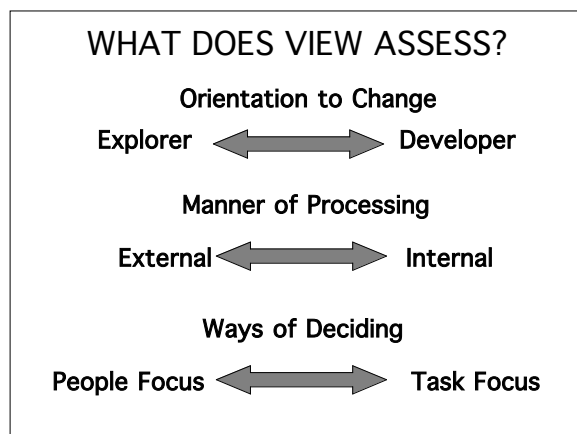
The next sections define problem-solving styles, team development, and how VIEW can be used to encourage productive teamwork.

Problem-Solving Style Differences

After more than three decades of research and development, we know that problem-solving style is an important dimension of creative productivity. Information from problem solving style assessments helps us to address problems that cut across all markets, functions and disciplines — especially the constant challenge of "doing more with less," and the always present need to anticipate, create, innovate, and manage change from both internal and external sources.

Problem solving styles are consistent individual differences in the ways people prefer to plan and carry out the generating and focusing of ideas, in order to gain clarity, or prepare for action when solving problems or managing change. VIEW: An Assessment of Problem Solving Style is an assessment tool that helps individuals and teams gain a practical understanding of these individual style differences, positioning them to leverage that understanding for competitive advantage.[7]

VIEW addresses three dimensions of style preferences that are crucial in understanding and guiding the efforts of individuals and teams to solve problems and manage change effectively. Each dimension involves two contrasting styles. We will describe the three dimensions and six styles below.

WHAT DOES VIEW ASSESS?

Orientation to Change

Explorer ⟵⟶ Developer

Manner of Processing

External ⟵⟶ Internal

Ways of Deciding

People Focus ⟵⟶ Task Focus

Orientation to Change

Orientation to Change focuses on a person's preferences for managing change and solving problems creatively. How someone perceives opportunities and challenges surrounding change is based on three main issues. First, what kind of novelty or originality do you prefer to pay attention to? Second, how much structure, direction, or guidance do you need in order to understand and deal effectively with the change? And finally, how broadly or narrowly do you search for alternatives? The two contrasting styles on this dimension are the Explorer and the Developer.

The Explorer Style. An "Explorer" is someone who prefers to venture into uncharted directions and follows possibilities wherever they might lead. Explorers enjoy initiating many tasks. They thrive on novel, ambiguous situations and challenges. They seek to create many original options that, if developed and refined, might provide the foundation for valuable contributions. Explorers see unusual possibilities, patterns, and relationships. These highly novel alternatives may not be very workable or easy to implement. Explorers often "plunge right in," feeding on risk and uncertainty, and improvising as situations unfold. They often find externally imposed plans, procedures, and structures confining. Explorers prefer that sources of authority maintain their distance and limit their influence on their thinking and doing.

The Developer Style. A "Developer" is an individual who prefers to bring tasks to fulfillment, or who organizes, synthesizes, refines, and enhances basic ingredients, shaping them into a more complete and useful result. Developers are concerned with practical applications and the reality of the task. They think creatively by emphasizing workable possibilities and successful implementation. They are usually careful and well organized, seek to minimize risk and uncertainty, and are comfortable with plans, details, and structures. They are able to move tasks or projects forward efficiently and deliberately, and they appreciate close guidance from sources of authority.

Explorer and Developer styles of Orientation to Change can also be examined on three additional elements. They can differ on their:

Approach to Novelty – When it comes to how people prefer to deal with originality, Explorers emphasize fundamentally new alternatives.

They enjoy uniqueness, being spontaneous, and forging new pathways. Developers, on the other hand, emphasize the improvement of existing options. They enjoy gradual change, usefulness, and extending existing pathways.

Need for Structure and Authority – When it comes to recognizing and responding to structure and authority, Explorers prefer autonomy. They enjoy defining their own approach, often assume approval, and working with loose or permeable boundaries. Developers are enabled by external and clear structure, often seek approval, look for direction, and working within clear and defined boundaries.

Search Strategy – When if comes to the preferred degree of openness or closure, Explorers search broadly and without many limits. They often ignore or look outside the "box." They enjoy being open to a wide variety of input and resources. Developers search in a more focused way and work creatively within limits. They enjoy improving or enlarging the "box." They tend to seek targeted and more relevant input and resources.

Manner of Processing

This dimension of VIEW allows people to describe their preference for processing information as well as when and how they prefer to interact with the environment. The main issues included within this dimension include how you prefer to manage information, when you share your thinking, and whether or not interacting with others builds or spends energy. The two styles on this dimension include those who prefer to process externally and those who prefer to process internally when managing change and solving problems.

The External Style. Interacting with others is a source of energy for individuals who prefer this style. Externals enjoy discussing possibilities and building upon the ideas of others. When learning difficult material they clarify their ideas and understandings through discussion. When solving problems, they seek a great deal of input from others before reaching closure. They prefer action to reflection, and may seem to rush into things before others are ready to proceed. Externals prefer to share their ideas and thinking early in the process and may be seen as doing so too early by internals. When problem solving, externals will often share their preliminary thinking with others in order to flesh it out.

The ideas they share are usually not very well thought through and are meant to start the problem solving process.

The Internal Style. People with an Internal style preference look first to their inner resources and they draw energy from reflection. Initially, they prefer learning and working alone before sharing their ideas, taking action only after careful consideration, and processing information at their own pace. Since their natural preference is to keep their thinking and processing inside, they may seem quiet and might be perceived by externals as pensive or withdrawn. When problem solving, internals will work with their ideas inside, sharing them when they are more fully developed or near perfection.

Ways of Deciding

The Deciding dimension involves the initial emphasis a person places on maintaining harmony and interpersonal relationships (i.e., people) versus attention to the more logical or rational aspects and obtaining results (i.e., task) when making decisions or managing change. The main issues for this dimension relate to your first priorities when you must focus, narrow down choices, or make decisions. Your preference for Ways of Deciding provides insight into how you will prefer to make trade-offs during decision-making.

People-oriented Deciders. Individuals who prefer the People style consider first the impact of decisions on people's feelings and on the need for maintaining positive relationships. They prefer emotional involvement when setting priorities, are often seen as warm and caring, and are often quick to become aware of, and to respond to, the needs of others. They seek solutions that others can "buy into," but may be seen by Task-oriented deciders as "soft" and "indecisive." They tend to see Task-oriented deciders as being overly concerned about the quality of the outcome, without sufficient consideration being given to the needs of people. People-oriented deciders make decisions and engage in evaluation by considering both the suggestion and the person as a whole, making it more likely that their feedback is more considered and thoughtful of both. People-oriented deciders will make trade-offs in favor of establishing and maintaining good relationships with people over ensuring the highest quality results.

Task-oriented Deciders. Individuals who prefer the Task style look first at decisions that are logical and objective.

They make judgments based on well-reasoned conclusions. They seek in-depth information to reach the "best solution," or one they can readily justify. They stress staying cool and emotion-free, while seeking clarity and logical order, and may be seen by People-oriented deciders as "judgmental" and "uncaring." They tend to see People-oriented deciders as "soft," sacrificing outcome quality to the demands of maintaining harmony and relationships. Task-oriented deciders tend to separate the person from their suggestion enabling them to be more critical of the idea in order to transform it into a more perfect outcome. When they make trade-offs, they will more likely favor obtaining good quality results over maintaining personal relationships.

There are three major levels of application to consider when it comes to using VIEW to promote teamwork for transformation. The first is to promote insight into an individual's preference and to help them utilize their strengths within the team. The second is to assist when individual team members need to work outside their personal preferences to work together effectively and obtain the desired results. This level of application is called "coping" and takes energy for those who need to work outside their preferences for extended periods. The third level of application helps diverse individuals come together and work to complement each other's styles. We call this "coverage" – having others provide the natural energy that comes from their different preferences to more adequately accomplish the work.

Team Development

Once the leader has decided that the resources of a team should be convened, there are a number of dynamics to consider. One of the first of these is the notion that teams go through certain phases of development.[8] Groups and teams are not static. Like individuals, they are unique, dynamic, complex living systems, capable of learning and development. Like any living system, teams go through identifiable stages of development. Some writers refer to this as a natural life cycle for teams. The Figure below depicts a well-known model for team development. According to this model, the stages a team goes through while moving toward some desired goal are relatively identifiable and predictable. In reality, it is quite clear that in practice these stages are not necessarily linear and sequential. Some teams seem to skip stages or spend more time in one than other stages. Some teams may approach them in reverse order. Still others will reach a level and need to begin all over again because a new member has joined the team.

MODEL FOR GROUP DEVELOPMENT
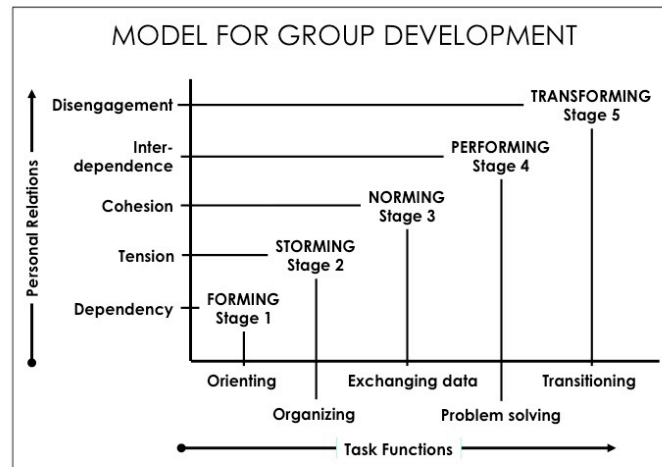
Adapted from: Tuckman, B. W. & Jensen, M.A. Stages of small group development revisited. *Group and Organizational Studies, 2,* 419-427.

Understanding where teams are and where you want them to be can be helpful in planning for maximum effectiveness and productivity. Development of a team usually includes two inter-related internal processes. The first deals with internal member-to-member interaction and the nature of the interpersonal relationships. We refer to this as Personal Relations. The other deals with interaction focused on the task, the work to be done. In other models these dimensions go by other names, but a number of scholars have identified these two dimensions as being central to the process. The classic leadership dilemma is getting the work done while at the same time maintaining positive human relations. Some balance, or appropriate equilibrium, is sought between concern for people and concern for task.[9]

The personal relations dimension refers to the 'human side' of the activity that occurs within the team. Whether it is a task group or a growth group, people progress in development from individuals to group members, to people who feel some attachment to each other, and also to people who are able to link up in creative kinds of ways. People also need to be ready to leave their team and join other teams. Personal relations involve how people feel about each other, how people expect each other to behave, the commitments that people develop to each other, the kinds of assumptions that people make about each other, and the kinds of problems people have in joining forces with each other in order to get work done. Personal relations characterize the nature and quality of the interaction among team members.

The assumption is that the kinds of groups that are referred to here are all organized for the purpose of achieving goals, tasks, production, etc. and that personal relations refers to the human component in the accomplishing of this purpose.

The other dimension is task functions. Characteristic behaviors can also be identified in the different stages of group development with regard to task. A group comes together, learns what the task is, mobilizes to accomplish the task, does the work, and then gets ready to move on. So the two dimensions, personal relations and task functions, form a matrix in which there is an interaction between characteristic human relations and task-oriented behaviors at the various stages of group development. Of course, no two-dimensional model can completely or holistically describe all group interaction without a loss of some precision. The purpose of looking at group development in this relatively simplistic way is to underline the importance, not only of the two dimensions — human and task — but also to provide a common language whereby group members can explore the emerging characteristics and parameters of the team. It is our hope that this will help teams you work with move through the appropriate stages of development more effectively.

Stage One: Forming

In the initial stage, called forming, personal relations are characterized by dependency, and the major task functions concern orienting.

In the beginning of the team's life, the individual members must resolve a number of dependency problems and characteristic behaviors on the personal relations dimension.

They tend to depend on the leader to provide all the structure: the group members "lean" on the facilitator, chairman, or manager to set the ground rules, establish the agenda, and to do all the "leading." The parallel stage in the task function to be accomplished is the orientation of group members to the work that they are being asked to do. The issues have to be specified. The nature of the work itself has to be explored so there is a common understanding of what the group has been organized to do. Common behavior at this point is questioning why we are here, what are we supposed to do, how are we going to get it done, and what are our goals?

People who have different styles will have diverse needs in terms of orientation and dependency. Explorers will likely want or prefer minimum guidance and structure, while developers will prefer to have very clear guidance and boundaries. Externals will prefer to get going right away on getting the work done, while internals may prefer to ensure that all the details are worked out before any action is taken. Task-oriented deciders may prefer to emphasize the results that are required, while people-oriented deciders may prefer to clarify their relationship with the leader and other group members.

If you are responsible to lead teams, it will fall to you to encourage everyone to participate and productively engage in clarifying the boundaries of the task and the desired results. Team members will look to you to provide the right level of structure to create a sufficient degree of clarity and help team members understand your role and theirs as well.

Stage Two: Storming

Stage two is characterized by conflict in the personal relations dimension, and organizing in the task functions dimension. It is referred to as "storming" because interpersonal conflict inevitably ensues as a part of small group interaction. It may be that the conflict remains hidden, but it is there. We bring to small group activity a lot of our own unresolved conflicts with regard to authority, dependency, rules, and agenda, and we experience interpersonal conflict as we organize to get work done.

Who is going to be responsible for what; what are going to be the rules; what are going to be the limits; what is going to be the reward system; what are going to be the criteria? The variety of organizational concerns that emerge reflect interpersonal conflict over leadership structure, power, and authority.

Managing interpersonal tension regarding options or diverse points of view is critical at this stage. Keeping this kind of tension separate from personal tension where individuals might attach the person to the idea is also important. Groups must often be helped through this stage or they will not form into a more cohesive unit capable of high-level performance. This is the stage at which effective application of facilitative leadership is needed. Developers and explorers are likely to have very different concepts of the kind of change required. Internals and Externals will have different ways of surfacing the tensions. Task and People-Oriented deciders will have challenges with the way they evaluate alternatives, particularly with differences in the level of personal tension associated with the differences.

You will need to carefully guide the team through this stage, as this is when the individual differences in problem solving style are most pronounced. You will need to model effective and sensitive listening and encourage others to do the same. Working with the team to establish clear and agreed norms or guidelines for behavior can be very helpful at this stage. Your goal is to help the team traverse this stage and emerge into the next by building a real consensus and challenging each member to contribute toward achieving the desired results.

Stage Three: Norming

In stage three, the personal relations area is marked by cohesion, and the major task function is exchanging information. It is during this "norming" stage of development that the people begin to experience a sense of "group-ness," a feeling of clarification at having resolved interpersonal conflict. They begin sharing information, ideas, feelings, giving feedback to each other, soliciting feedback, and exploring actions related to the task. This becomes a period during which people feel good about what is going on; they feel good about being a part of a group, and there is an emerging openness with regard to task.

Sometimes during stage three there is a brief abandonment of the task and a period of play that is an enjoyment of the cohesion that is being experienced.

When teams reach this stage, it will be important for the facilitator or team leader to provide some recognition and celebration of the success of the group. It would be analogous to the feast following the hunt or the song after successfully managing a boat through the whitewater.
A major challenge for the facilitator is to channel this positive energy toward making further progress on the task. Now the group may want to cooperate on every task and get hung up when they can't be "...all for one and one for all." The challenge is to let the celebration of consensus last long enough to recharge and refocus the group, but not too long so as to invest unnecessary energy in managing the group for the group's own sake.

Developers and Explorers will likely have different points of view regarding the scope of the challenges the team might tackle. For example, the team may have come to agreement that an innovative breakthrough is required. You can be relatively certain that Explorers and Developers have very different meanings for the same words. Internals and Externals may need to celebrate in different ways and may reach this stage at different times. Task and People-oriented deciders may have different needs in preparing to move forward.

During norming, your challenge is to provide the time and focus to ensure all team members have actually achieved consensus on the work to be done. You will also need to confirm and reinforce the norms for how the team will work, and the specific action steps to be taken during the next stage.

Stage Four: Performing

This fourth stage is called "performing" and is marked by interdependence on the personal relations dimension and problem solving on the task functions dimension. Interdependence means that members can work singly, in any sub-grouping, or as a total unit. They are both highly task-oriented and highly person-oriented. The activities are marked by both collaboration and functional competition. The group's tasks are well defined, there is high commitment to common activity, and there is support for experimentation and risk-taking.

It is during the performing stage where individual members are both empowered and aligned. They have a shared vision for why they are together and how they are operating. It is at this point where it is appropriate to use the label 'team.' It is important to remember that groups will not stay at this stage forever (nor should they). During the norming process, the group has very probably formed around an implicit set of assumptions. Occasionally, the facilitator will need to test the boundaries or even question their existence.

Developers will enjoy working within the detailed structure and focus on working within the established norms. Explorers may drift from both the agreed structure and ground-rules. Internals may enjoy working alone, but externals will still need some interaction and discussion. Task-oriented deciders will seek quick closure (sometimes premature) while People-oriented deciders may tend to delay closure (sometimes too long).

It is during this stage that the investment in the project plan should pay dividends, allowing you to remind team members about the required actions and deliverables. The same is true for the norms or guidelines you developed. You may also need to periodically remind some team members about these. A key leadership dynamic for you is keeping the team on track while providing them the space to perform. You may need to work with the team to develop clear and balanced criteria upon which to evaluate the results and outcomes.

Stage Five: Transforming

The fifth stage is called transforming and is characterized by transitioning on the task dimension and disengaging on the personal relations dimension. Transitioning is when the team works to reach closure on the work while getting ready for other and different tasks. Disengagement is when team members detach or separate from the current team members while getting ready to re-engage with other groups and tasks. New members may be entering the existing team to replace some members necessitating some forming and storming before enabling performing.

During the transforming stage, team members are finishing up the task and getting themselves ready to work with other people, while celebrating the relationships, learning and outcomes from the current team.

The major challenge facing the team is dependent on the need for the teamwork to continue beyond one or a few of its members leaving or the requirement to bring the team to an end as a result of delivering the outcome.

Explorers may perceive that the real work has not yet been accomplished, as they may continue to redefine the task. Developers may have already obtained closure and are ready to move on. Externals may wish to prematurely disengage or at the other extreme, want to continue with the group interaction beyond the delivery of the results. They may also be much more willing to accept a "good enough" solution, while the internals may be attempting to pursue perfection. Task-oriented deciders may be more than ready to move on, while People-oriented deciders may not be looking forward to making another transition.

For those responsible for the teamwork this stage represents the point where the team that has been performing must either redefine itself or bring an end to its work. If the team must disband, your challenge is to ensure that all the desired results are accomplished and that the team has the opportunity to reflect on its success and learn from what has been done. If some members of the team must leave and others remain, your challenge will be creating a transition plan so that the required hand-offs can be accomplished and new members can be acclimated to the project and norms. In either case, you will need to address the need for some sort of recognition and appropriate ways for team members to experience the conclusion of their need to be together.

Conclusion

When applying the model it is important to remember that this is not a static description of how groups develop. In other words, it is highly unlikely that a particular group would work their way through this process in a systematic manner. Teams will continually develop. Each time a new member joins or a new task is introduced, the development process begins anew. It is also possible that the problem solving style preferences may play out differently than expected, particularly if you can invite balanced coping and appropriate coverage playing to the preferences of the different members of team.

Understanding some of the dynamics and patterns that occur within groups is essential if a leader wants to diagnose and describe the current status of any group; predict what might occur in the future; and provide behavior and influence that might help the group move on to a more productive level of development. Taking some time to debrief or reflect on what the team accomplished as well as how it worked together can accelerate team development, particularly if team members can learn the tactics and strategies you deployed. As teams can learn and apply these insights they can become more high-performing and will be in a much better position to support organizational transformation.

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Note: An earlier version of this article was published as a chapter in Isaksen, S. G., & Tidd, J. (2006). *Meeting the Innovation Challenge: Leadership for Transformation and Growth.* Sussex, UK: Wiley.