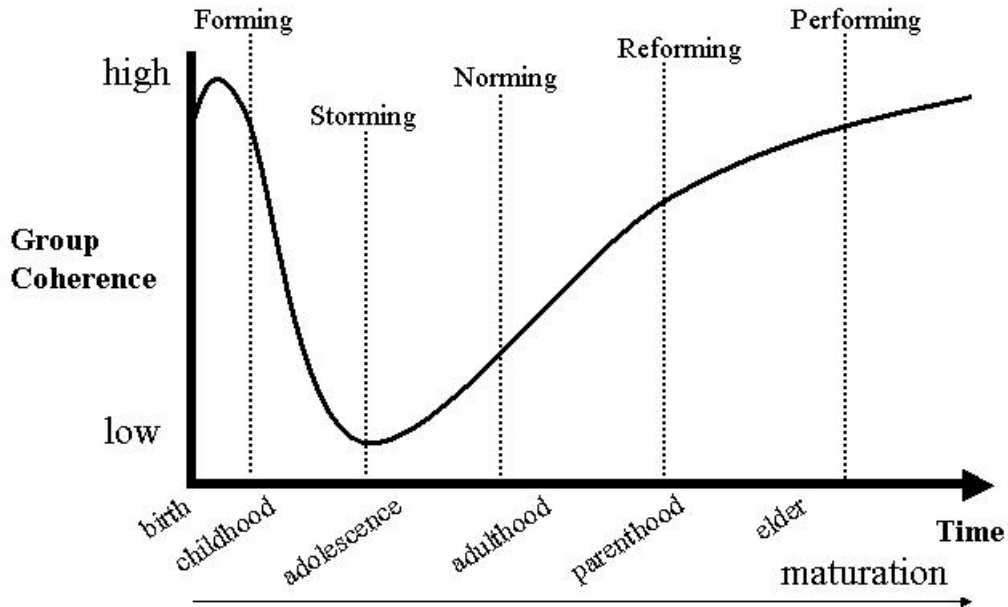# Team Development

There are 5 classic stages that groups go through in order to become a team. These are:

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Reforming
5. Performing

A team can be defined as a group of people who are committed to share tasks in order to reach a mutually agreed outcome.

These stages of becoming a team follow the natural growth cycle of maturation.

1. Birth/Child
2. Adolescent
3. Adult
4. Parent
5. Elder

Forming.

When people first come together to form or join a group, they bring with them:

- The need to belong to something greater than themselves.
- The desire to contribute their time, talents and experience.
- The implicit expectation to receive support, recognition and rewards.

This 'birth' stage is often typified by excitement, idealism and the showing of the best sides of ones' personality. This is the 'honeymoon' phase where we are very forgiving of each other and invariably sublimate our 'me' needs for the good of the newly formed 'us'. Although just the beginning, there is a high sense of purpose and self esteem. Breakthroughs and accomplishments are common and people freely give of their time and talents. Visionaries and Innovators are attracted to this early stage.

Storming.

After some time, people have got to know each other better and are now more aware of differences. These differences are usually ones of style, structure and strategy (see the Diffusion of Innovation Model). Personal needs and expectations begin to surface and drive communication, leading to differences of opinion and argument. People may begin to feel that the reasons why they joined have changed and the pace of the task development is either too fast or too slow. At this 'adolescent' stage, where the sense of 'me' is emerging for members, each person is questioning their status, standing and relative importance to the collective effort. Passions are high and the coherence is dropping while the original purpose of the group can become unclear. This is an 'identity crisis', the storming phase that will test the metal of the group. Some people will want to quit and may leave, shifting alliances and allegiances in the changing social dynamics. How the group deals with this turbulence will determine whether it stays together or falls apart. Facilitators and counselors are essential to help the group survive this stage.

Norming.

If the group successfully works through 'storming' then a shared 'deep breath' can enable it to step back and take stock of its situation. Norming is now the adult stage where people rethink their purpose, priorities and guiding principles. Procedures are explored for governance, decision making and group process. This is often the time when core values are referred to or created that will guide the vision and mission. Facilitated retreats are often conducted to create a safe place to participate in this think-tank work. Essentially, norming is about agreeing on the rules and regulations that will provide structure to the group towards becoming a team. Conceptual thinkers usually emerge at this time to guide the process.

Brian Weller & Jason Bradford

Reforming.

After norming the group is ready and willing to reform, guided by the conceptual work of the preceding phase. This stage is a rebirth where the members of the group are now emerging as the parents of the projects that will lead it to becoming a true team. They realize that to achieve their purpose, they will need to collaborate rather than compete. New agreements are reached concerning who is best suited to what tasks. Where gaps exist in terms of skills, knowledge or competence, new members will be recruited. Leadership issues arise and are negotiated by agreed process. Spheres of control and influence are created to define work and accountability. Training sessions may be put in place to share vision and best practice and so realign the group. Enthusiasm begins to re-emerge, there is a more settled sense of commitment. Reforming is characterized by realism and a sense of the possible.

Performing.

Now that the group is maturing into a team, it can begin to stretch its' wings and test itself in the real world. Whereas forming and storming displays dependent and co-dependent relationships, performing requires relationships to be more inter-dependent. This 'elder' phase is where the collective wisdom of the people becomes the guiding force as the team makes its mark and contributes to the wider world. Rather than solely feeding from its own internal energy, the feedback that it receives from outside feeds and motivates the members to meet greater challenges. Mature teams both enjoy and celebrate successes whilst handling difficulties with insight and a sense of perspective.

High performing teams are characterized by:

- A collaborative climate
- Principled leadership
- Unified commitment
- Standards of excellence
- Competent team members
- Clear elevating goals
- A results driven structure
- External support and recognition

These qualities are won by hard experience. In mature teams leadership will be situational. This means that changing requirements in the world at large require different leadership skills and abilities. This policy avoids what is commonly known as the founders crisis, where 'original' leaders fall into difficulties and no longer lead by consensual agreement and usually revert to command and control measures to maintain their authority.

When new members join an established team, they do not have the shared history of the existing members. They will go through the 5 stages to 'catch up' with the others.

Effective teams deploy elders to mentor these new members and guide them. Traditionally, this journey is known as a 'right of passage'. This time honored process is one where people find their place and earn their right to full membership and in so doing reinvent and recharge the spirit of the team and its' purpose in the world.