

Stages of Team Development

1 Forming

The first stage is *forming*, which is when the members within the team first come together to meet. It can be considered the period of orientation when everyone is getting to know one another and becoming acquainted.

Think of the forming stage like the first day of school or the first day at a new job. There's excitement in the air and everyone is ready to roll up their sleeves and get started on the project. Usually, group dynamics and roles have yet to be established, a team leader will typically emerge and take charge and direct the individual members.

The forming stage is also where team members discuss things like:

- Team goals
- Individual roles
- Strategy
- Ground rules

2 Storming

Next up is storming. Stage two of five is considered the most critical but also the most difficult to go through. It can be riddled with conflict as the individual personalities and work styles clash within the team. It's also common for team performance to dip a bit in the storming stage as members can sometimes disagree on goals, strategy, responsibilities, and roles. Also, keep an eye out for subgroups or cliques that can begin to form during this stage.

In order to not get bottlenecked in the storming stage, members have to work together and play to each other's strengths to overcome obstacles and stay on pace. Also, take the time to address and overcome conflicts early on so they don't stay an issue throughout the other phases.

Think of this phase like when you move in with a friend you've never lived with before, and you slowly start to notice the little things about them that get on your nerves. The same is likely to happen with members of your team. While some teams think they can skip this stage, it's important to dive into it with the expectation that there may be some conflict.

3 Norming

Once you've weathered the storm, pun intended, your team can move into norming. Here, team members have figured out how to work together and there's no more conflict or internal competitions lingering.

Unity is upon everyone and a consensus develops around who the leaders are, what everyone's role is, and what comes next. There's also a sense of bonding between the team and is more familiar with each other's personalities and sense of humour. There should also be a sense of comfort in the norming stage when giving constructive feedback or asking for help as you work through various tasks.

4 Performing

Next up is the performing stage, which tends to be where there is the most cohesive work environment, people are happy and excited, and team performance is at an all-time high. There's a clear and stable structure in place throughout the group and everyone is fully committed to achieving the goals put in place. In the performing stage, there's a sense of focus, purpose, and alignment from everyone on the team, no matter their role.

Problems and conflict can still emerge, but they're handled and dealt with in a constructive and honest manner. And, because there's a bond and a relationship already built amongst the team members, it's easier and faster to get to a resolution if a conflict were to occur.

5 Adjourning

Last but not least is the adjourning stage. Sometimes also called the termination, mourning, or ending stage, most, if not all, of the goals of the team have been accomplished. The project as a whole is being wrapped up and final tasks and documentation are completed. As the workload becomes smaller, it's common for team members to be taken off the assignment and delegated to a new project. The team members also usually debrief and discuss what went well and what could be improved on for projects in the future.

Depending on how long the project lasted and the bond that was formed, there is sometimes a ceremonial celebration of the work that was completed and the overall success of the project.

Why are the 5 stages of group development important?

For your team to be as successful and as high-performing as possible, it's important that all five stages are utilized to their fullest potential. You may feel like you can skip the first or the last, but each stage has a purpose.

When each of the five stages is carried through, your group will feel more in sync and be a high-functioning unit. No one is afraid to ask a question, bring up a concern, or pose a new way of going about certain tasks. Everyone can bring their whole self to the team, play to their strengths, and will step up and help one another when it's needed.

Being able to do this will also increase productivity. Bottlenecks are solved fast and with purpose. And, if any other roadblocks are met, the team is able to work together to come up with the necessary solutions to get back on track.

And, when all is said and done, going through all five stages of team development sets the team up for success. There's an increased chance of reaching the product goal within the timeline originally set during the forming stage.