

A Model of Stages of Group Development

The following model is a frequently used training tool for helping any groups to improve their functioning. At WPI it is generally used to help students understand that development of group cohesion is a predictable process and can be helped along by understanding the dynamics and practicing certain procedures. The model can be taught to students easily. The critical component is the development of explicit norms (rules) for how the group will work together and enough self-awareness of groups to use the norms.

The stages described below are ideal stages.

Stage 1. Forming (Orientation and Initiation)

Little *trust*.

Anxiety is very high.

Conflict is not apparent.

Members skirt and scout to get to know each other. They begin to identify the individual characteristics of their group members, and they form some early hypothesis about their partners.

Stage 2. Storming (Redefinition)

Trust begins to develop

Anxiety diminishes as people begin to see themselves as part of a group, but it still may be somewhat high as adjustments are made to each other.

Conflict may erupt as power struggles emerge, but it usually is denied or ignored, but people worry about how they will get their own opinion or positions heard but they don't want to create more anxiety.

Members compete or capitulate. Roles become defined. Different levels of motivation become apparent.

Stage 3. Norming (Setting the Rules)

During this stage, the group members work out an agreement about how the group operates. Informal norms exist as well. Those norms often supersede the formal norms.

Trust – In the process of working together, team members build trust, learn to share more than just their work and therefore develop cohesion, and they build skills necessary to do their work.

Anxiety- diminished among most members because they know what the rules of behavior are for the group.

Conflict- managed by the group members, especially if they have become self aware and have done the proper level of norm building. They have an agreed upon plan for managing conflict.

Stage 4. Performing (Getting the job done)

Trust is high.

Anxiety around getting the job done may resurface but there is high performance.

Conflict is submerged in order to heighten performance.

Stage 5. Winding Down

This is the stage when student say goodbye and terminate their work together. It may be short in some teams or may be longer in others. If students have become friends, it may not occur.

Source:

This model is based on the following work.

Tuckman, B. (1965) Developmental Sequence in Small Groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384-399.

Tuckman, B. & Jensen, M. (1977) Stages of Small Group Development. *Group and O*

Scholtes, Peter R., *The Team Handbook: How to Use Teams to Improve*, 1988. *Organizational Studies*, 2, 419-427.

www.newforums.com Using Small-Group Development to Facilitate Cooperative Learning Base Groups by Nancy E. Stetson in *Small Group Instruction in Higher Education, Lessons from the Past, Visions of the Future*, James L. Cooper, Pamela Robinson, & David Ball, Editors. New Forums Press Inc. Published in the United States of America by New Forums Press, Inc. 1018 S. Lewis St. Stillwater, OK 74074