

Office Student Activities

Group Dynamics*

The Tuckman Model of Group/Organization Formation

As a group or organization forms, it goes through certain predictable stages, progressing from a collection of individuals to a cohesive group working together for a common cause.

Theory

In 1965 Tuckman published his famous 'Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing' model. This model identifies four distinct phases within a group's life.

Forming

At this stage, personal relations are characterized by a dependency on group leaders to provide structure. The leader's main goal is to orient members of the group - to the mission, vision and goals of the organization. The kind of behavior that is commonly observed at this point is questioning. Why are we here? What we are supposed to do? How are we going to get it done? These questions are part of the group forming process.

A leader should provide as much structure as possible in this stage. Team building is important here, so things such as games and clarification exercises are necessary. Don't assume that people know each other, or are comfortable with each other.

Storming

This stage in group development is characterized by a focus on personal relationships within the group. Different people vie for positions, and there is a fair amount of: conflict and confrontation among group members.

Confrontations can be about who is responsible for what, who are going to be the 'leaders' of the group, what are going to be the work rules, and so forth. On a committee, differences of opinion over how things should be done, and who should be the 'movers and shakers' will come to play.

Working In The Storming Stage

It is important to help members move constructively from conflict between themselves towards a renewed commitment to the group. If this does not happen, members may become isolated, annoyed, or generally lose interest in the group. In the Storming stage, leaders may need to provide clarification or support to individual members if they are unsure or insecure about their own role within the group. Leaders need to ensure at this stage that nobody is being treated too harshly or unfairly.

* Information on this flyer is excerpted in virtual totality from work done by the World Union of Jewish Students. The content of this handout may be found at http://www.wujs.org.il/activist/leadership/manual/hadracha/group_behaviour.shtml.

Norming

During this stage the group begins to settle down. Personal relations are marked by greater cohesion. Members of the group start to feel that they belong to it, rather than merely being in it. At the Norming stage of development members begin to share ideas, feelings, give and receive feedback, and generally chat about what is going on and what they are doing.

During this period, members of the group feel good about being a part of their group. At this time, there is a brief abandonment of the task at hand (studying, working or whatever) and a period of play - enjoyment of each other, socializing, and general fun.

Working In The Norming Stage

At this time members of the group are generally happy to be a part of things. They would be happy to do more work, or whatever it would take to get more involved. Leaders at this stage can easily and successfully give a lot of work to members of the group. This could mean committee work, event/program coordination etc.

Performing

At this stage, group members achieve interdependence. This means that they work well together, achieving more together than they would as individuals. In a committee context, this means that people help each other with ideas and support. In the Performing stage group members are both task and maintenance (people) orientated - this means that they get things done but also make sure that individuals in the group are okay. By this point, a group has set itself clear goals (to have a good time, to run a big event, etc), and a lot is achieved.

Working in the Performing Stage

At this time, a leader should take a less active role and allow the group considerable autonomy. In general a leader won't need to do that much in the performing stage, however, close attention needs to be paid to make sure that the group avoids the 'Imploding' stage. The "Imploding" stage is when people get irritated with each other and things start to go wrong. To solve this a leader should take efforts to talk with group members and solve problems when they are small, before they escalate.