

BUILDING STRONGER TEAMS THROUGH FORMING, STORMING, NORMING AND PERFORMING

Developed by Dr Bruce Tuckman in 1965, the 'Forming Storming Norming Performing' model is based around the idea that leadership style changes as a team matures and evolves through certain distinct stages.

As the name implies, those stages are:

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing

As a leader, your responsibility is to recognize which stage of development your team is at and provide direction to facilitate the movement from forming to performing.

Forming

People are positive and polite during the forming stage, and they'll be trying to get to know fellow team members. However, they're also apt to be slightly anxious and unsure of how the team will perform and where their place in it is.

Your role is essentially to help the team understand its purpose. You should determine how they will be organized and start to delegate responsibilities. A discussion of goals (long-term and short-term) will help set the team on track. An introductory workshop is a great chance to clearly communicate without making team members feel overwhelmed, and you should allocate time for people to become familiar with each other and form bonds. It's a good time for icebreakers and team challenges.

Storming

Now is when people test the boundaries. Initial uncertainty gone, clashes between different working styles and personalities become more likely, and people will vie for internal influence. Goals may be questioned, and tasks ignored. It's not a good place to be, and some teams never leave it.

Your role is to focus the team on targets and smooth out any conflicts. You'll transition into a coaching role to facilitate cooperation instead of dictating directly. Explaining the 'Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing' model helps normalise conflict. You'll need to ensure everyone is heard and create an open forum for discussion. Remain positive, and don't rush your team towards the next stage.

Norming

Conflicts should now be resolved, and your team should be showing respect and building on each other's strengths. Decisions are made as a group, and the team's commitment to ongoing goals is strong.

Leaders can now start to take a step back as individuals begin to work autonomously, only becoming directly involved when strictly necessary. However, you'll want to make certain the purpose of the project remains clear and paramount, so ask your team members to think about tasks strategically – giving them a little freedom can help refocus their attention.

Performing

Your team is now strategically aware – they know exactly what they're doing and why they're doing it. There's a focus on long-term as well as short-term goals, and any disagreements can be resolved internally. Internal leadership will feel flexible, with responsibility shifting according to changing circumstances.

You now have only to delegate and oversee. Instead of focusing on people management, you'll provide ongoing support and motivation, recognising the contribution of each team member and facilitating communication between sub-teams.

Adjourning

In 1975, Tuckman added the Adjourning stage, referring to the period when a team breaks up and moves on. It's when you'll want to allocate time for debriefing and celebration. Reports on accomplishments should be given, and the role of each team member should be acknowledged. You've created a well-oiled machine by following the 'Forming Storming Norming Performing' method – managing the Adjourning stage helps maintain performance as team members transition into new projects and roles.

<http://www.innovativeteambuilding.co.uk/building-stronger-teams-through-forming-storming-norming-performing/>