

# Team Development

Paul Newton

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# TEAM DEVELOPMENT

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# CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1 Bruce Tuckman's 'Stages for a Group'</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Stage 1 – Forming	12
1.2 Stage 2 – Storming	15
1.3 Stage 3 – Norming	17
1.4 Stage 4 – Performing	18
<b>2 Richard Hackman's 'Five Factor Model'</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 Factor 1 – Being a Real Team	21
2.2 Factor 2 – Compelling Direction	22

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2.3	Factor 3 – Enabling Structure	23
2.4	Factor 4 – Supportive Context	24
2.5	Factor 5 – Expert Coaching	25
	<b>Summary</b>	<b>28</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>29</b>

# PREFACE

The best leadership style for any particular team will be influenced by its purpose and composition. This eBook provides a practical guide to understanding team dynamics to help you with practical day-to-day team building.

You will learn:

- How the study of group dynamics can be applied to real-world team building issues.
- The five factors you must put in place to ensure that the team's dynamics remain positive and productive.
- How to recognize the development stages that a new team must undergo before reaching its full potential.
- Why you should modify your level of involvement depending upon which stage your team is at.
- How conflict affects your team members why you need to coach them in developing their own coping strategies.

# INTRODUCTION

A great deal of research has been published on team building and team dynamics. Even though most of this research is purely academic and has been performed in a research environment rather than in the workplace, some of it does contain value for a working manager.

In particular, there have been two studies that you should be familiar with: Bruce Tuckman's 'Stages for a Group' and Richard Hackman's 'Five Factor Model.' This eBook describes both of these in detail and explains how they can help you with practical day-to-day team building and team management.

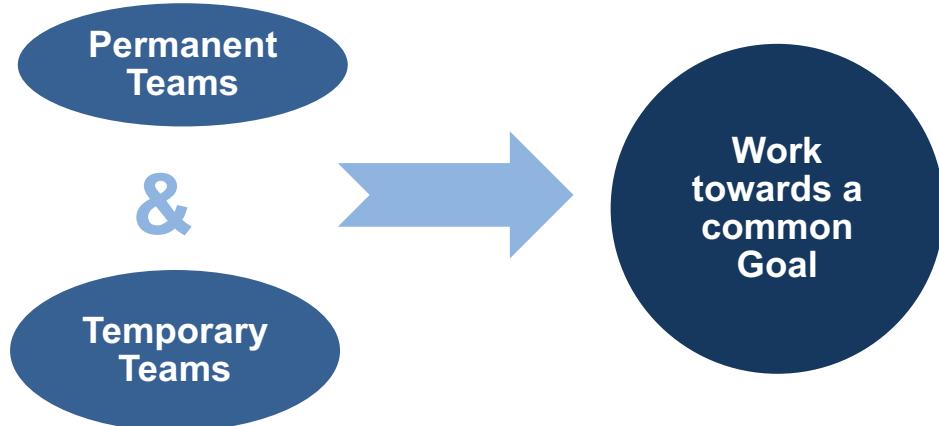
How one defines a team varies according to the context one is referring to, but it is useful to look at three widely accepted definitions:

*'[A team is a] group in which members work together intensively to achieve a common group goal.' (Lewis-McClear & Taylor, 1998)*

*'A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they are mutually accountable.' (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993)*

*'[A team is made up of people] working together in a committed way to achieve a common goal or mission. The work is interdependent and team members share responsibility and hold themselves accountable for attaining the results.' (MIT Information Services and Technology, 2007)*

The common thread in each of these definitions is that teams consist of a group of people who share a common understanding of their goal and work together to accomplish it.



None of these definitions states whether the team is a fixed or transient entity, yet in the world of work there are many examples of both permanent and temporary teams:

- A temporary group could be brought together to:
  - Investigate or solve a specific issue
  - Design a new product or service
  - Act as a committee to resolve an issue
- A permanent group could be formed:
  - To act as a steering committee
  - With responsibility for a particular function
  - From the same functional area who meet regularly to seek work improvement opportunities

Whilst the purpose of the team may be described as permanent in the examples above it is inevitable that the membership of this type of team will change over time.

This will be for a variety of reasons: for example, individual members, including the leader, may leave or be replaced; those with a scarce skill may be seconded to another team that is in greater need of their skills; or a team's composition will change, even if the purpose remains, when an organization is taken over by or merged with another.

The support structure you have at your disposal will directly affect the success of your team, and your ability to reward, develop, and inform your team members will play a significant part in your team's and your own success.

Whether you are managing a temporary or permanent team there are considerable benefits successful teams bring to organizations.

**Benefits of teams:****More productive****Deliver larger projects****Bring together expertise****Build a 'community'**

Many projects in the workplace are too large or complex for one individual to complete and the use of teams ensures the project's timely success. This is especially true of IT development projects and organization-wide projects.

Perhaps one of the most important benefits a team can provide is that of increased and broader-based expertise when compared to an individual. One person on their own will not have all the necessary skills to deliver a product or service.

Teams comprise individuals with complementary knowledge that can far exceed that of a single person. Team members are also able to coordinate their efforts in order to produce the desired outcome on schedule and to budget.

Through specialist teams and steering committees departments can combine their knowledge to take an active role in company-wide and strategic-level decisions. This helps these divisions and departments to feel they have some 'ownership' of the decisions made when the board acts upon these recommendations.

This 'ownership' reinforces the organizational community feeling. This community sentiment permeates throughout the organization and is often the motivation for calling a group of people a team. An example of this is a Customer Support Team where individuals share the same set of skills and all do exactly the same job, thus having a collective expertise within the team.

By creating this type of team environment management boosts the morale of both the individual and the workplace. This does not mean all groups of people performing the same role are referred to as a team (e.g. the accounts department), but they have their group identity, and morale is based on their department's contribution to the organization.

### Key Points

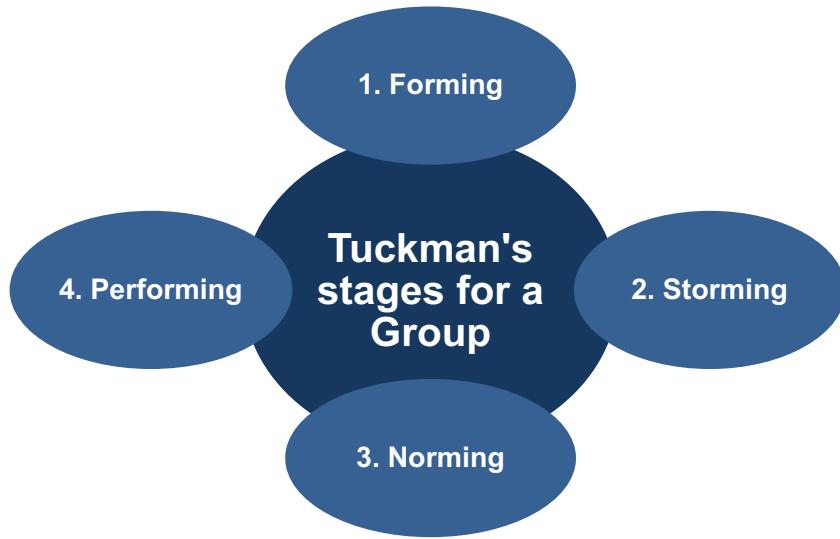
- A team is a group of people who share a common understanding of their mission and work together to accomplish it.
- Teams can be temporary or permanent.
- Managing a team will reflect the nature and composition of that team.
- Your ability to manage and motivate teams under your authority will have a significant correlation with your career aspirations.
- Teams bring several benefits to organizations:
  - Greater levels and depth of expertise.
  - More productive than individuals.
  - Able to deliver large projects successfully.
  - Build a workplace community, thus boosting morale.

# 1 BRUCE TUCKMAN'S 'STAGES FOR A GROUP'

Much of the theory of team building is based on academic research and has its roots in both psychology and sociology. It began with the work of Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), who is credited as the founder of experimental psychology. It was Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), a social psychologist, who coined the phrase 'group dynamics' to describe the positive and negative forces within groups of people.

In 1945, Lewin established The Group Dynamics Research Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the first institute devoted explicitly to the study of group dynamics and how it could be applied to real-world, social issues.

As research continued in this area throughout the second half of the twentieth century its focus moved more into studying how group performance could be improved in the workplace.



One of the most influential studies in this area is Bruce Tuckman's (1965). He proposed the four-stage model called 'Tuckman's Stages for a Group,' which states that the ideal group decision-making process should occur in four stages:

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

Tuckman maintained that these phases are all necessary and inevitable in order for the team to grow, to face up to challenges, to tackle problems, to find solutions, to plan work, and to deliver results.



This model has become the basis for subsequent models and it is important to understand the process of each stage and its concepts so that you can apply it to your workplace.

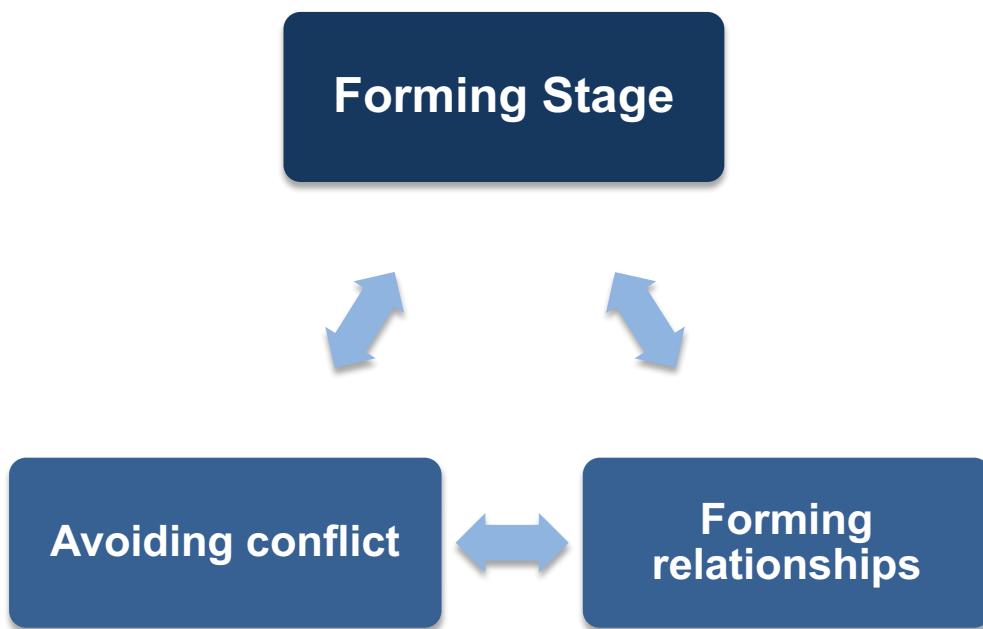
## 1.1 STAGE 1 – FORMING

This first stage involves the bringing together of a group of individuals to form a team. At this stage, members usually have positive expectations about the venture, although they may harbor some anxiety about other members, such as who they are and what they are like.

At this point it is about building relationships within the group and clarifying the team's mission. Initially individuals behave independently of each other, but as they gather information and impressions about:

- Each other,
- The scope of the task,
- Its challenges and opportunities, and
- How to approach it

the team members begin to agree on goals and tackle particular tasks.



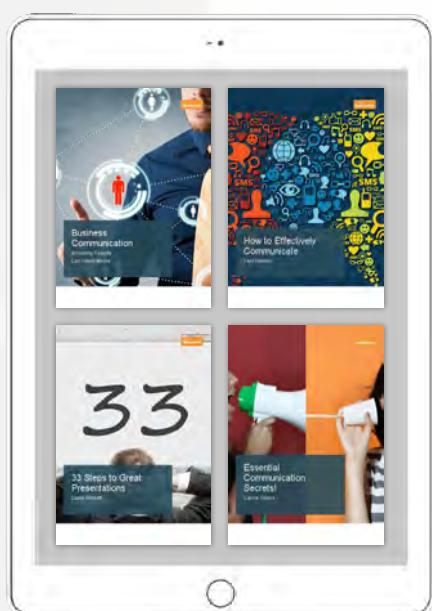
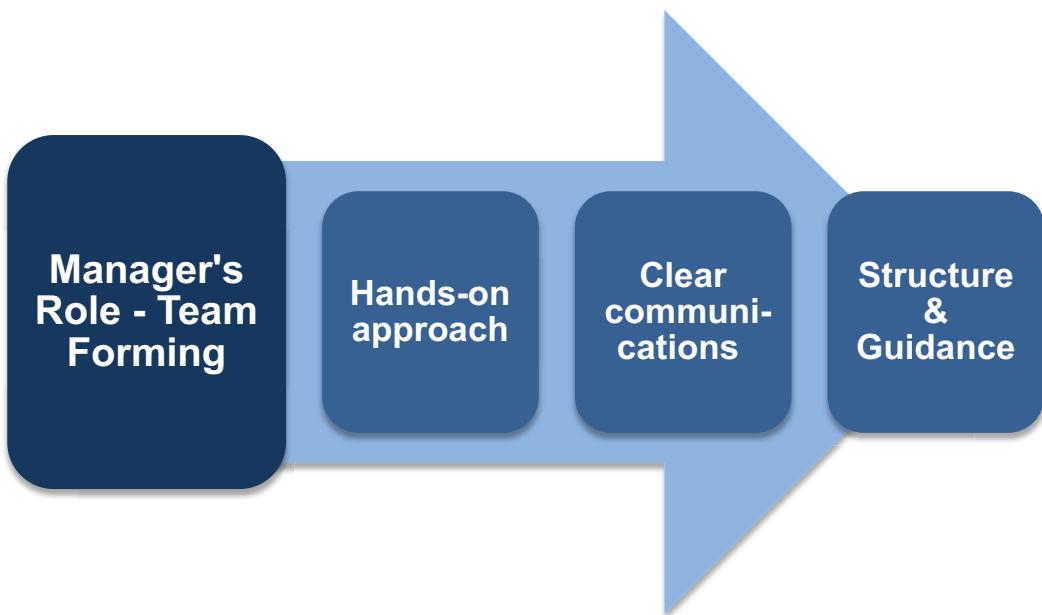
Each individual's behavior is driven by a desire to be accepted by the other team members and to avoid conflict. This results in serious issues being avoided, or put off, as team members concentrate on non-contentious or routine issues.

This reluctance to engage in and resolve areas of conflict means that the team accomplishes very little and the underlying differences which have been brushed aside will eventually surface and have to be addressed.

The length of this first stage will depend on how clearly the task is defined and on how much experience the individuals have of working in a team. Groups with simple tasks will move through orientation quickly, but groups with complex goals and tasks may spend much longer in this stage.

Teams made up of people who are used to being autonomous will take longer to build the necessary relationships for a successful team than those used to working in a group. Many individuals may be reluctant to contribute at this stage and their support of the leader is given cautiously.

As a manager you need to be very 'hands on' at this stage, giving clear directions and structure to make sure that your team build strong relationships. You can facilitate this by making sure your communications dispel any misunderstandings that could arise about roles and responsibilities.



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With decisions being made in the majority of cases by the nominated leader you also need to ensure that no team member is committing themselves to do too much, or too little, of the planned work.

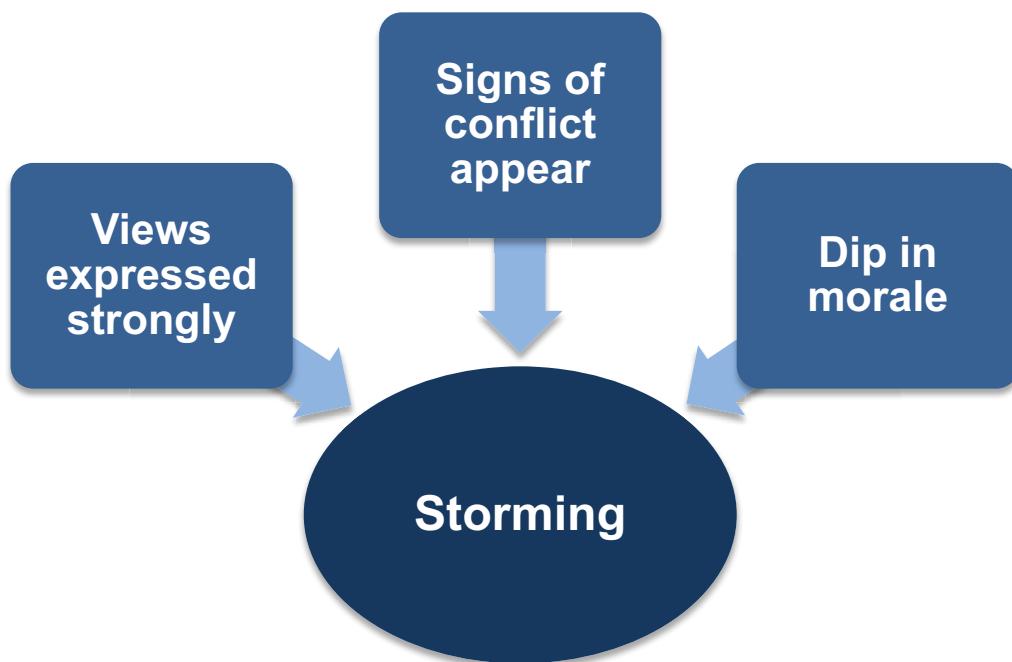
By paying attention from the outset to building good relationships, as well as focusing on a clearly defined task, your team will perform better than teams whose managers rush through or skip over the relationship-building stage.

## 1.2 STAGE 2 – STORMING

During this second stage, where team members feel more able to express and question opinions, you will see more evidence of internal conflict. Your role as manager is to contain and direct this energy into a productive channel. You need to be aware that some level of internal conflict will cause a simultaneous dip in team morale.

Your management role will have to become more supportive, guiding the team in their decision-making and offering explanations of how these decisions came about. You need to define what you and the organization expect of the team in terms of professional behavior.

This more instructional approach will enable you, as team manager, to prevent any conflict from getting out of control and poisoning relationships between team members.



You will be able to recognize when your team moves into the 'storming' stage because you will observe your team beginning to address the differences between their initial perceptions and the reality of the situation that they have been formed to address. This will cover issues such as what problems they are really supposed to solve, how they will function independently and together, and what leadership model they will accept.

As your team members begin to negotiate the work assignments and express their views on the best way to achieve the task outcome disagreements will arise. Through your active listening skills you will mediate and help decisions to be made through compromise as the most efficient way to attain the necessary outcomes.

While your team members confront each other's ideas, test differing perspectives, discuss what the group needs to do, and how best to accomplish it, your role becomes one of a facilitator building trust within sub-groups of the team.

Team storming, whilst it may be contentious and unpleasant, will be resolved relatively quickly with your guidance and support. You must view this as a necessary step for your team to become a cohesive whole, not as an enormous irritation to be dismissed.



As a manager you need to be mindful of how this 'conflict' affects your team members and coach them in developing their own coping strategies. For example, some individuals may:

- Find this stage painful because they are averse to conflict.
- Feel anger or frustration with the task or with other members.
- Resent the presence of formal leadership.
- Focus on minutiae to avoid the real issues confronting the team.

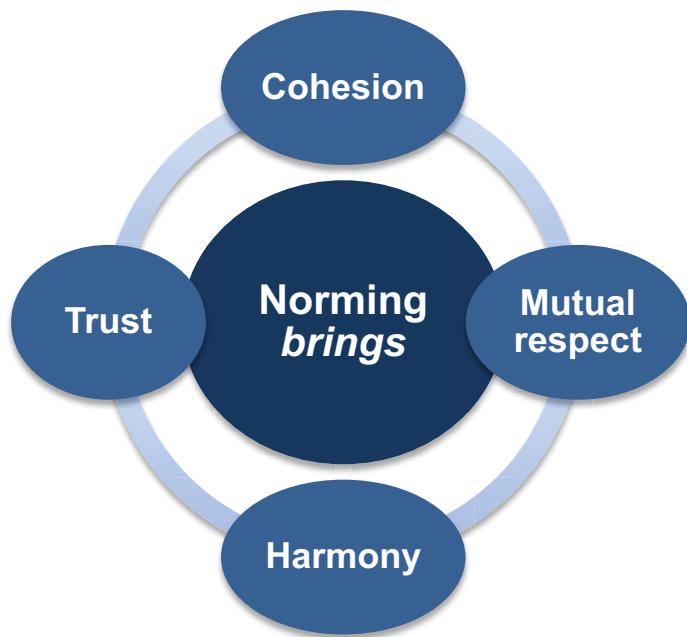
The maturity in terms of attitude and approach to problem resolution of some team members can be significant in determining whether your team will ever move out of this stage.

If you try to bulldoze through this stage in your team's development you may find it becomes a permanent state, resulting in low morale and lack of productivity. If you fear this is happening to your team you will need to see how much flexibility you have in altering the composition of your team within the constraints of your organization.

You may choose to break the team into smaller subsets of cohesive individuals within your team so that morale and productivity are raised.

### 1.3 STAGE 3 – NORMING

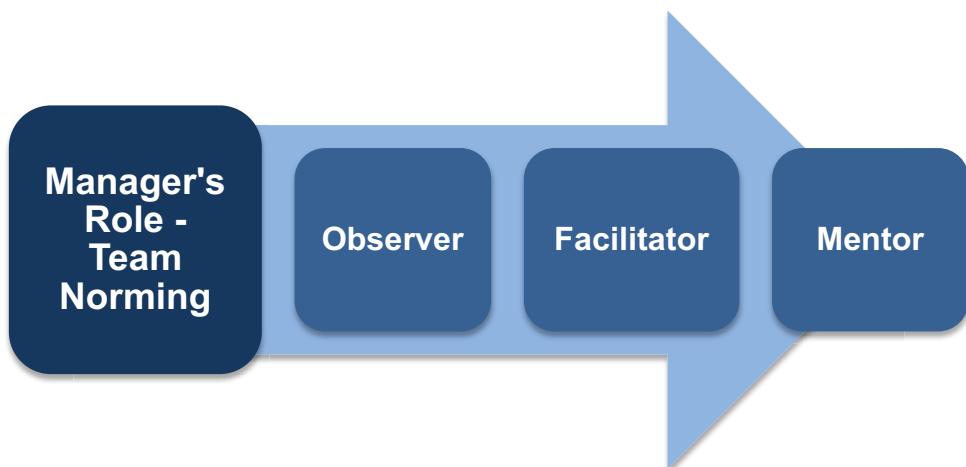
Once your team has reached the third stage of its development the members focus on resolving differences so that the mission and goals can be clearly defined. Your role within the team transfers from that of leader to that of team member.



Team members are learning more about each other and how they will work together and are developing tools such as a problem-solving process, a code of conduct, a set of team values, and measurement indicators. The team has now established core processes, and as manager you need to ensure the team avoids spending unnecessary time on issues related to the smaller processes.

During this period of negotiation and discussion, your role becomes one of observer and facilitator in order to assist your team in establishing the ground rules of behavior as they learn to work together. Their attitudes are characterized by decreasing animosities toward other members; feelings of cohesion, mutual respect, harmony, and trust; and a feeling of pleasure in accomplishing tasks.

Your team is truly developing a sense of team pride, and you will see evidence of increased productivity as skills develop. The team arrive at decisions that are more in line with their purpose rather than from a position of compromise.



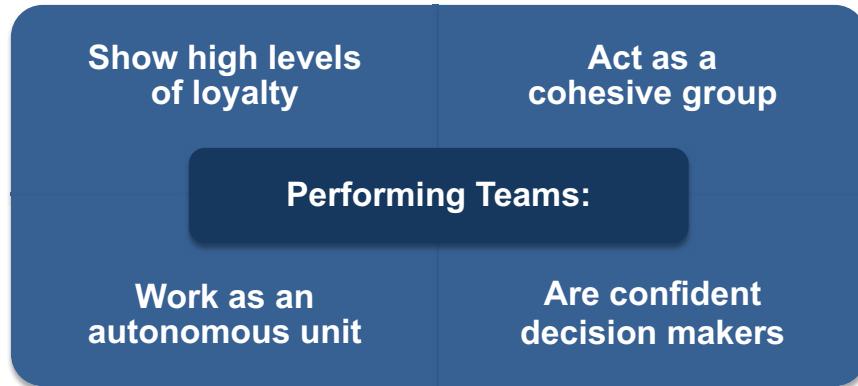
You can begin to transform your role as coach to one of a mentor and delegator, offering your team greater opportunities to raise their levels of expertise.

#### 1.4 STAGE 4 – PERFORMING

Now your team has reached the final stage of its development and can now bring real benefits to you and the organization. Your team members are now competent, autonomous, and able to handle the decision-making process without supervision.

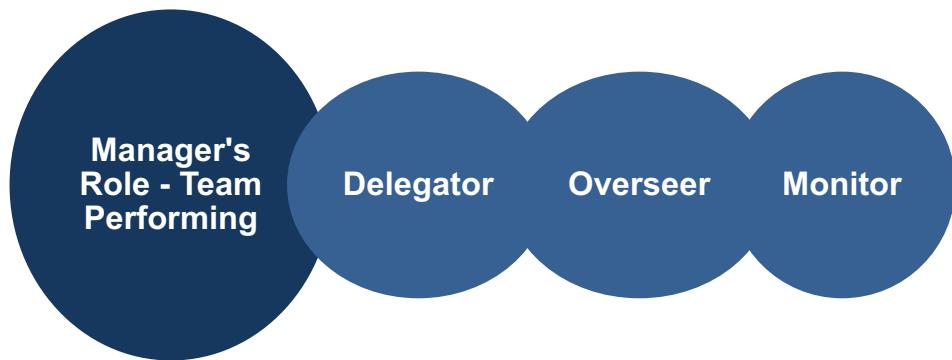
Your team has been accomplishing work at every stage, but it is at this 'performing' stage that work is accomplished most effectively. Morale is high and the general atmosphere is positive. Team members' attitudes are characterized by positive feelings and eagerness to be part of the team.

Members are confident about the outcome, enjoy open communication, exhibit high energy, and disagreement is expected and allowed as long as it is channelled through means acceptable to the team. Leadership within the team is often shared and tasks are delegated within the team, which makes the overall decision-making process operate more easily than at earlier stages.



As a manager, once your team is operating at this level then your role becomes one of overseer and delegator. You are no longer involved in day-to-day activities and the team's relationships with each other emulate the high degree of trust and loyalty you show in your relationship with the team.

Another key task you will perform at this stage is one of monitoring your team's relationships and performance to ensure that the group dynamics remain positive and productive. This is because changes in the dynamics of the group can result in high-performing teams reverting to earlier team-building stages.



For example, a change in leadership may cause the team to revert to 'storming' as the new people challenge the existing norms and dynamics of the team.

Whilst Tuckman's model has been extremely influential in terms of improving peoples' understanding of how group dynamics change as a team becomes a cohesive group, it is not readily transferable to the world of work.

In the more than fifty years since Tuckman's research many others have related group dynamics to the place of work. It is the model of J. Richard Hackman that is frequently referred to when one is responsible for designing and managing work groups.

## 2 RICHARD HACKMAN'S 'FIVE FACTOR MODEL'

In 2002, whilst working at Harvard, Richard Hackman developed a research-based model for designing and managing work groups.



His research looked at why some groups were successful and what it was that made them so. He identified three attributes that such groups possessed:

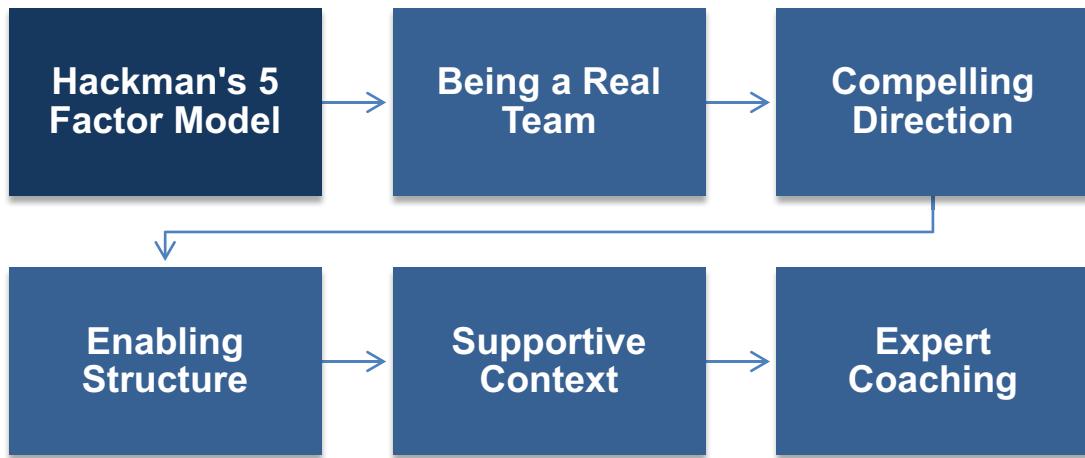
- They satisfy internal and external clients,
- They develop capabilities to perform in the future, and
- The members find meaning and satisfaction within the group.

He then went on to identify the conditions that can increase the chances of success for teams. This he called his 'Five Factor Model.'

Those five factors are:

1. Being a Real Team
2. Compelling Direction
3. Enabling Structure
4. Supportive Context
5. Expert Coaching

These phrases need to be defined so that you can see how in your management role you can influence the success of your team by ensuring these elements exist within the environment of your department.



## 2.1 FACTOR 1 – BEING A REAL TEAM

What does Hackman mean by 'being a real team'? The elements he said were required to ensure your team is 'a real team' are: the members have a shared task, the team boundaries clearly state who is inside or outside of the group, and the group membership is stable.

As a manager you will have direct control over the first two elements of what constitutes 'a real team', but it is the stability of the group members that is often the hardest aspect to control. If you are based in a project-type environment then it is probable that team stability will last only as long as the project.

If your team includes someone with a rare skill, even this level of stability may not be possible, as different project teams may vie for this scarce resource.

Instability within the team composition can also arise from the nature of the work. For example, managing within a call center environment is often plagued by a high rate of staff turnover due to the nature of the job and the fact that it often attracts transient individuals.

As a manager in this type of environment you will be able to minimize the inevitable disruption of staff turnover by developing an induction program that quickly integrates new recruits into the team.

## 2.2 FACTOR 2 – COMPELLING DIRECTION

The second factor of this model is that of providing your team with a compelling direction. This means that you provide your team with clear goals, which are both challenging and consequential.



As a manager, whatever type of team you are responsible for, you have direct control over the goals you set your team. You can also ensure that you set SMART goals for your staff that motivate and reward them.

These goals need to clearly state how the team contributes to the organization so that the team is aware of their own contribution to the overall mission.

## 2.3 FACTOR 3 – ENABLING STRUCTURE

The structure that your team exists in is the third factor that Hackman cites as influential in making your team a success. Some of these aspects you will have control over, while others are going to be dictated by the type of organization you are in and your role within it.



Where possible, offering your team variety in the tasks they must complete improves the team's success. Examples might include small changes in task assignment if you are managing a call center team, or keeping the size of your team at a manageable level so that they are not too large and become unwieldy. Sometimes you may want to make small sub-groups within a large team so that the qualities of successful teams can be nurtured.

Within your team's structure you will also want to ensure that some of your key players have good social skills. This makes certain that persuasion and well-presented arguments rather than conflict forms the basis for decision making within the team. These social skills will also ensure that behavior is guided by strong norms.

## 2.4 FACTOR 4 – SUPPORTIVE CONTEXT

The fourth quality required to ensure successful teams is that of support. A supportive context is essential for companies and organizations, as they are made up of small groups which when combined form a larger group.



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This support framework is made up of three elements: reward, development, and information. The reward must be linked to the performance of the group or team. This system must be based upon rewarding the group's performance and cooperation.

The second element of the support must be the development of individual members' skills through an educational system. For many organizations this educational system is formed around the Appraisal System, and as a manager it is vital that you develop your skills in this area.

The third supportive element is connected to the provision of information and guaranteeing easy access to this data and materials. Your ability as a manager to ensure your team have access to the information and materials they need to develop their own skills is crucial.

You can take advantage of the advances in communications technology (computers, notebooks, eBook readers, and smartphones, etc.) and the Internet. You will be able to guide your team to the best resources and information they require to develop their skills.

## **2.5 FACTOR 5 – EXPERT COACHING**

This guidance leads into the finally aspect of the Five Factor Model, that of expert coaching and mentoring. Through the annual appraisal system and your day-to-day management of the team you are able to identify which members of your team require your help with a task, or help that individual develop their interpersonal skills.

Once this need has been identified you coach the person in how they can best meet this challenge and develop the skills they lack. You must be conscious not to be too overbearing in your manner, as this can seriously undermine the effectiveness of the team. The latter is a criticism that Hackman draws attention to in his research and it will significantly reduce the success of any team.

Hackman has been publishing work on teams since 1967 and his work in this area remains highly regarded. Many of the academic papers written by Hackman are available at:

<http://www.harvard.edu/searches?searchtext=richard%20hackman>

'Most teams you encounter in the working world are likely to exhibit a mix of Tuckman's Four Stages and Hackman's Five Factor Model in their day-to-day operations.

As a manager it is useful to be able to identify the stage at which your group is operating and which of the five factors are present in your organization. By understanding the group dynamics of your team in this way you are better able to adapt your leadership style and behaviors to suit your current team.

You will encounter teams that are an almost permanent fixture, but in which individual members may come and go. Your role in this instance is to ensure that any new members are integrated into the pre-existing team as quickly as possible. This enables the team to continue to operate most effectively.

Other teams are more temporary in nature, often set up for a specific project. Frequently this type of team will be made up of individuals who are familiar with and have a great deal of experience of working in teams.

If you are managing this type of team you will facilitate the team to be a cohesive unit as they are likely to be very clear about each other's responsibilities. This means that the forming and storming stages will be more quickly resolved as the whole team is focused on its objective.

As your career progresses you will inherit teams with each new position, and being able to identify at which stage of development this new team is at will help you provide the correct level of support and guidance.

It is inevitable that at some point in your career you will come across a dysfunctional team that is locked into the storming stage and is unwilling to progress no matter what you do. In some instances the only way to handle such a team is to create sub-teams within this group so that each can work effectively and productively.

You can also ensure that the team environment is conducive to the attainment of goals and that sufficient support is available to individuals, with the addition of your coaching expertise as and when required.

**Key Points**

- Tuckman's four-stage model states that the ideal group decision-making process should occur in four stages:
  - forming,
  - storming,
  - norming, and
  - performing.
- You can use this four-stage model to assist you in clearly identifying the group dynamics of your team.
- The four-stage model provides a framework for how you can best interact with your team.
- Hackman's model suggests that groups are successful when they:
  - Satisfy internal and external clients,
  - Develop capabilities to perform in the future, and
  - Provide meaning and satisfaction in the group.
- Setting your team and its members SMART goals will ensure that they have a clear focus for their activities.
- Developing your appraisal management skills will enable you to ensure an appropriate team structure and provide a supportive environment in which your team can develop their own skills.

# SUMMARY

Team working provides a wide variety of benefits to organizations from bringing together diverse expertise to building a workplace community. This makes it very difficult to generalize about teams as even within the same organization there will be teams that have very little in common.

The best management style for any particular team will be influenced by its purpose and composition. This means that you will have to think carefully about each piece of team building or team management advice that you encounter. You will need to ask yourself, under what conditions would this be helpful, be of limited use, or be completely inappropriate?

Remember, your ability to manage and motivate teams under your authority will have a significant correlation with your career aspirations because team leadership is such an essential skill in the modern workplace.

The other team building eBooks available from [bookboon.com](http://bookboon.com) Premium are:

- Team Leadership
- Team Building
- Understanding Why Teams Underperform

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