

Tuckman's Stages of Team Development: Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing

by Lyndsay Swinton

Is your team forming, storming, norming or performing? Tuckman's stages of [team development](#) provide a recognised structure to help shape up your team. Having a better understanding of your team's interactions and behaviours enables quicker conflict resolution, appropriate leadership styles and ultimately increased productivity.

This article is a real case study, showing in 3 simple steps how to use the stages of team development to assess what stage your team is at, and change behaviour to suit.

Define; Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing

Before we get stuck into the case study, here's a quick explanation of the stages of team development;

Forming – the team are polite and avoid conflict. They wonder what is expected of them. They need roles and responsibilities and clear objectives.

Storming – Interpersonal conflict arises, with arguments about roles and responsibilities or differing views or standards. Team needs ground-rules and to listen to each other.

Norming – successfully resolved conflict build trust and team members begin to co-operate.

Performing – the team is productive and adapts quickly to compensate for strengths and weaknesses.

Step 1 – are you forming, storming, norming or performing?

It would be an unusually self-aware team that could name the stage of development, so the best option is to ask them. I sent out a survey using www.surveymonkey.com, which allows you to create online surveys quickly and easily. Oh and it's basic package is free 😊 All the surveys are collected on-line and collated automatically, so once you've set up the questions, your work is done.

I found the stages of team climate survey questions online [here](#). The questions are all statements about observed behaviour in the team and you indicate how often your team shows the behaviour. This can range from "Almost Never" to "Almost Always"

Here is a snapshot of the survey – there are 32 questions in all and it took no more than 10 minutes to fill in.



1. We try to have set procedures or protocols to ensure that things are orderly and run smoothly (e.g. minimize interruptions, everyone gets the opportunity to have their say).

Almost never
 Seldom
 Occasionally
 Frequently
 Almost always

Each question links back to one of the 4 stages of team development, and they are mixed up, making it difficult to tell which stage the question relates to. There are no “right” answers to the questions, and it is possible to be a highly effective team and display some of the less “mature” behaviours occasionally.

Step 2 - Analyse the results

Survey monkey show the answers to each question as below.

1. We try to have set procedures or protocols to ensure that things are orderly and run smoothly (e.g. minimize interruptions, everyone gets the opportunity to have their say).		Response Percent	Response Count
Almost never		0.0%	0
Seldom		0.0%	0
Occasionally		0.0%	0
Frequently		42.9%	3
Almost always		57.1%	4
		<i>answered question</i>	7
		<i>skipped question</i>	0

You need a scoring grid to make sense of the answers, which I set up in Excel.

Question no.	Almost never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost always	
Scoring	1	2	3	4	5	Average Response
Forming						
1				3	4	4.6
5	3	3				1.7
10	4	1	2			1.7
15			0	3	4	4.6
18	1	2		2	2	3.3
21	3	4				1.6
27	3	4				1.6
29				4	3	4.4
Storming						
2			1	3	3	4.3
7				3	4	4.6
9	3	3	1			1.7
16	6	1				1.1
20	3	3	1			1.7
23	3	2	1	1		2.0
28	5	1	1			1.4
31	5	1	1			1.4
Norming						
4				5	2	4.3
6				5	2	4.3
11				4	3	4.4
13			1	1	5	4.6
19		2	1	1	3	3.7
24		1	4	2		3.1
25				4	3	4.4
30	1		4	2		3.0
Performing						
3			1	1	5	4.6
8	2	4	1			1.9
12				3	4	4.6
14			1	2	4	4.4
17			1	4	2	4.1
22				2	5	4.7
26			3	2	2	3.9
32				5	2	4.3

Here are the questions and actual results from my team

Question no.	Average Response	Forming
1	4.6	We try to have set procedures or protocols to ensure that things are orderly and run smoothly (e.g. minimize interruptions, everyone gets the opportunity to have their say).
5	1.7	Team members are afraid or do not like to ask others for help.
10	1.7	Team members do not fully trust the other team members and closely monitor others who are working on a specific task.
15	4.6	We are trying to define the goal and what tasks need to be accomplished.

18	3.3	We assign specific roles to team members (team leader, facilitator, time keeper, note taker, etc.).
21	1.6	There are many abstract discussions of the concepts and issues, which make some members impatient with these discussions.
27	1.6	It seems as if little is being accomplished with the project's goals.
29	4.4	Although we are not fully sure of the project's goals and issues, we are excited and proud to be on the team.
Storming		Storming
2	4.3	We are quick to get on with the task on hand and do not spend too much time in the planning stage.
7	4.6	The team leader tries to keep order and contributes to the task at hand.
9	1.7	We generate lots of ideas, but we do not use many because we fail to listen to them and reject them without fully understanding them.
16	1.1	Many of the team members have their own ideas about the process and personal agendas are rampant.
20	1.7	The tasks are very different from what we imagined and seem very difficult to accomplish.
23	2.0	We argue a lot even though we agree on the real issues.
28	1.4	The goals we have established seem unrealistic.
31	1.4	There is a lot of resisting of the tasks on hand and quality improvement approaches.
Norming		Norming
4	4.3	We have thorough procedures for agreeing on our objectives and planning the way we will perform our tasks.
6	4.3	We take our team's goals and objectives literally, and assume a shared understanding.
11	4.4	The team leader ensures that we follow the procedures, do not argue, do not interrupt, and keep to the point.
13	4.6	We have accepted each other as members of the team.
19	3.7	We try to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict.
24	3.1	The team is often tempted to go above the original scope of the project.

25	4.4	We express criticism of others constructively
30	3.0	We often share personal problems with each other.
Performing		Performing
3	4.6	Our team feels that we are all in it together and shares responsibilities for the team's success or failure.
8	1.9	We do not have fixed procedures, we make them up as the task or project progresses.
12	4.6	We enjoy working together; we have a fun and productive time.
14	4.4	The team leader is democratic and collaborative.
17	4.1	We fully accept each other's strengths and weakness.
22	4.7	We are able to work through group problems.
26	3.9	There is a close attachment to the team.
32	4.3	We get a lot of work done.

And the survey says?

After a bit of number wizardry, the summarised scores are

SUMMARY	Total Score
Forming	23
Storming	18
Norming	32
Performing	32

The minimum score is 8, and the maximum is 40. A score of 32 or more is a strong indicator and a score of 16 or below is a weak indicator. If there are equal scores, then the team is in transition from one stage to the next.

So, although our team exhibits all of the behaviours, we are in the Norming phase.

Step 3 – Actions speak louder than words.

Now, we're not ones to rest on our proverbial laurels, and don't take team performance for granted, so we have taken the following actions;

- Continued rolling out our company [goals](#) and refocused our monthly 121's and quarterly business reviews.
- Created our own [Personal Development Plans](#) to motivate us to learn and develop.
- Continued with team building activities including quick [ice-breakers](#), off-site activities and so on.

- The managing director holds daily "surgeries" to help the team to progress projects that need his input
- Our off site creative director makes weekly phone contact with all team members to keep in touch.
- Reminded everyone to be on the lookout for exceptional effort and “big-up” your team member.
- Included our two key contractors in monthly meetings and will start to provide them quarterly business updates.

In 3 easy steps, we now know how “mature” our team is and what actions to take to become a high performing team. You can get guidance on what actions may be appropriate for your team [here](#).

Tuckman’s stages of team development can be successfully applied to teams of differing size. Knowing if your team is forming, storming, norming or performing allows you to better understand team interactions and behaviours, enabling quicker conflict resolution, appropriate leadership styles and ultimately increased productivity.

[More team building articles](#)