



# DEVELOPING AND GROWING A TEAM FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

A Close Up Look at a Team Development  
Model That Has Stood the Test of Time

A Strategic Business White Paper by

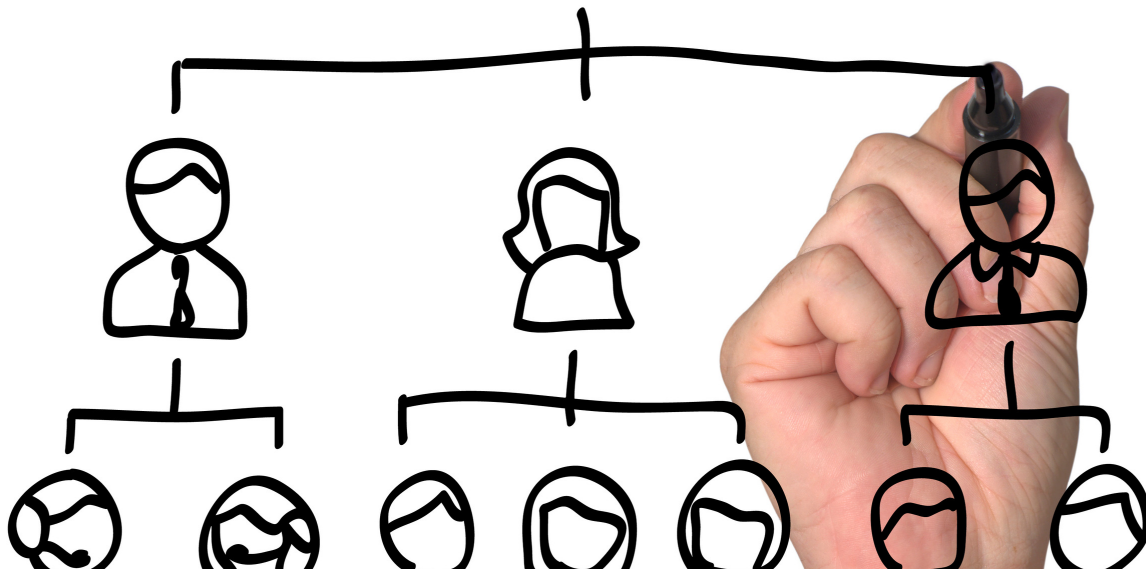
*Tony Lynch*

Business Consultant, Speaker, Coach, Trainer

[KeepThinkingBig.com](http://KeepThinkingBig.com)

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## ABSTRACT

Developing a productive and proficient team is important to every company and every project. It is an integral part of the business strategy and vision. [\[For more on Developing Your Business Strategy, get Tony's White Paper: What To Consider When Developing a Business Strategy.\]](#)

Understanding the stages of team development and how you can facilitate and even foster that development can make the process faster and easier. In today's environment of mergers, changing roles and careers, mastering this process is more important now more than ever.

The best model for doing this that I've found is Tuckman's Tool, a self-evaluation process to help facilitate group development by helping the team cooperate more effectively. The model is named after its developer, Bruce Tuckman, an educational psychologist, who developed it in 1965 based on his observations of group behavior in different settings.

In Tuckman's Model, he outlines the different phases groups go through to grow as a team. The model initially consisted of four stages of group formation: forming, storming, norming and performing. Later, a fifth stage was added, called adjourning.

Note: This model is presented in a linear format, but teams can go in and out of some of these phases as new tasks or projects are introduced or new team members are added.

# PHASE I: FORMING

This is the time when the team is being formed. Everyone is on their best behavior and getting to know each other, welcoming and polite but yet distant. Some team members are anxious because they don't yet understand the work ahead and their role in it. Other team members are excited about the project ahead.

## **Tips for the leader:**

The members of the team focus on you as the leader, accepting your guidance and authority. The leader should be open with information and ready to answer questions. Realise that boundaries, strengths and weaknesses will be tested, including those of the leader.

There is likely to be some baggage regarding the way people have been treated in the past, which might result in some clinging to the old ways, if their experience was positive, or suspicion and apathy if their experience was negative.

Make sure expectations and job descriptions are clearly laid out and define a reward structure.

As the leader, you should model the behaviour you would like to see the team exhibit. Be directive and assert your position. Bring the team together on a regular basis to work on joint projects.

## **Tips for team members:**

The best thing to do during this phase is to listen to and empathise with the other team members. Learn as much as you can, and



invest in getting to know your team members and your leader.

# PHASE II: STORMING

This phase lives up to its name. It is the time in team development when conflicts occur and frustration sets in. The team descends into conflict while team members establish their positions. Team members tend to be more concerned with the impression they are making and being valued than they are about the project or end goal. Keep in mind that this is the phase in group development during which many teams fail.

## **Tips for the leader:**

This is the time when there is danger of factions forming and some members becoming isolated. Encourage your team members to do things their way whenever possible.



***There are generally a few reasons why storming occurs:***

- When team members' work styles conflict. People work in different ways. But differing working styles can cause frustration.
- When team members jockey for position as roles are defined and clarified.
- When team members feel overwhelmed by their workload. This happens when you as the leader haven't clearly defined how the team will work.
- When team members question your authority, your approach or the value of the team's goals.

While many of the above naturally occur and you cannot necessarily skip the storming phase, there are things you can do as the leader to get through to the next phase faster and with less pain.



***A team leader should focus on the following during this phase:***

- Establish clear processes and structures.
- Build good relationships between team members.
- Resolve conflicts quickly if and when they occur.
- Be supportive, particularly of those team members who are less secure.
- Remain positive but firm.
- Explain Tuckman's Team Development Model to your team so they understand why problems are occurring and can see that things will get better as the team works through the model.

**Tips for team members:**

Be sure curt e-mails written in the heat of the moment are left to cool in the draft box overnight and then reviewed before sending in the morning. Focus on delivering sincere positive feedback to the other team members. Listen to other team members and show them respect. Honour your commitments to the team.

## **PHASE III: NORMING**

During this phase, the team members start to resolve their differences, appreciate each other's strengths and respect the authority of the leader. Boundaries are finally set (sometimes tortuously established). Now that the team members know each other better, they may socialise together and they are able to ask each other for help and provide each other with constructive feedback.



Motivation is high among the team members, and all team members are committed to the team mission.

The time it takes to get to this stage varies. The longer it takes, the more tension will build up in the organisation. Teams can often go back into the Storming Phase as new tasks are assigned to the group or new team members are added.

**Tips for the leader:**

Ask for the team's recommendations before providing a resolution. A team at the Norming stage will have much to offer in terms of experience and ideas which, if accessed, can save leaders time and energy, leaving them free to focus on the wider horizon, for example, broadening the scope through strategic partnerships and succession planning.

It's good for the leader to step back and allow team members to take responsibility for the team's progress.

Consider having a team event to keep the momentum going.

Keep raising the bar. Set higher goals

Any changes to the group (if a member joins or leaves) results in a "new" team and the process is repeated. Be very selective when recruiting new members.

**Tips for team members:**

Praise and flatter other team members. Be willing to self-evaluate. Communicate with others. Commit time to the team.

## PHASE IV: PERFORMING

This is the phase where the team is working well together and productive. Plenty of healthy conflict, of the type that does not damage the fabric of the relationships, is interspersed with fun and humour. Successes almost seem to create themselves. Team members are proud of the team and its accomplishments. They trust each other and support one another.

### Tips for the leader:

Give your very best then get out of the way. You can delegate much of your work so you can concentrate on developing team members. Be sure to recognise the contribution of others and ensure that credit is awarded where it is due.

### Tips for the team members:

Continue to keep your commitments and be open to feedback from others. Try to stay positive and offer constructive criticism when necessary.



## PHASE V: ADJOURNING

This phase occurs when the team's tasks are completed. It is important to celebrate the team's positive achievements and to bring about closure to the team.

While it seems that this phase is not important to the overall performance of the team, it is for a myriad of reasons. If team members adjourn on a positive note with a sense of accomplishment and learning, they will approach the next task with more enthusiasm and likely be more productive.

### Tips for the leader:

Remember that each personality style will be motivated by something different. The High D Personality will be motivated by accomplishments and achievements, whereas the High I will be motivated by the relationships that have been built. The High S will be motivated by the people the team has served, whereas the High C will be motivated by looking at the stats of the project.

Be sure to thank the team members and recognise them for their individual achievements. Be sure to include the opportunity for reflection on how far the team has come. Keep in mind that team members who like routine or who have developed close working relationships with other team members may find this stage difficult, particularly if their future looks uncertain.

### Tips for the team members:

Focus on the success of the team and how you have personally grown through the process instead of what you may be losing as the team's tasks are completed.

To get the most out of this model, you first must identify the stage of development your team is at right now. Then you can use the specific strategies to move your team through to the next stage in the process.

By understanding the personality styles of each of the team members, you can also understand how they will react during each of the team development phases, allowing you, as the leader, to adjust accordingly. You can have each of your team members take an online Personality Profile for Teams and understand:

- What motivates them
- Their communication strengths and things they may need to work on as well as a game plan to communicate with them.
- The type of team player they are (an executer, theorist, analyzer, strategist or manager). This helps you define roles and responsibilities and can help when it's time to add someone to the team.

- Their strengths

- An action plan to help them improve interpersonal skills

For instance, during the Storming Phase, a **D** Personality Style will become frustrated with the progress of the team while an **I** Personality Style will become disappointed in the team spirit of the group and its ability to work together.

**An S Personality Style** will be afraid to take risks while **a C Personality Style** will not thrive unless they fully understand the goal and the process to achieve it.

As the leader, you can assign a high **D** personality a leadership role while you make sure that your high **I** personality styles have team events and opportunities to get to know each other. For high **S** personalities you can show them that they can trust you. And for high **C** personalities, you can give them your full plan to motivate them.



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FOR YOUR  
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## THE CYCLE

As you review this model, you may be wondering about the timing for these phases and how often a team goes through them.

Of course a team will go through the phases upon its initial development. You can't skip any of the phases, but you can move more quickly through some of them (storming) and prolong others (performing) by using some of these tactics.

A team will go back through the Phases of Team Development when the team undergoes any type of change. This includes adding a team member, the removal of a team member and the addition of a project.

Exactly how long a team stays in each phase depends on the team itself. It is possible that the team never make it past the Forming phase. This stage can last for some time, as people start to work together, and as they make an effort to get to know their new colleagues.

There have been accounts of teams stuck in the Storming phase for as long as 15 years.

There is often a prolonged overlap between storming and norming, because, as new tasks come up, the team may lapse back into behaviour from the storming stage.

But If the team can reach the Norming phase they are probably home free.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tony Lynch  
Keep Thinking Big  
22-25 Farringdon Street,  
London. EC4A 4AB

Tony Lynch is a business consultant, speaker, coach and trainer. He helps business leaders develop strategic plans, closing the gap between expectations and results, with a process for greater effectiveness, team engagement, performance, productivity and profitability.

Tony is a regular speaker at events as well as being a TEDx speaker. He was also featured in Inc in the '100 Great Leadership Speakers for Your Next Conference'.

T: 0203 195 2905.

E: [tony@keepthinkingbig.com](mailto:tony@keepthinkingbig.com)

W: [www.keepthinkingbig.com](http://www.keepthinkingbig.com)

L: [www.linkedin.com/in/tonylynch1](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tonylynch1)



## **CONCLUSION**

As a team leader, your goal is to move your team through the phases of development — from Forming to Storming — from Storming to Norming — from Norming to Performing and then from Performing to Adjourning. You cannot skip any of the phases, but you can help your team move through them as quickly as possible.

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