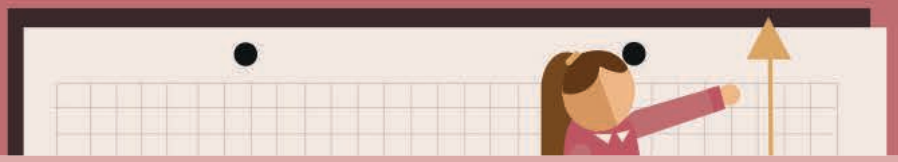
Principles of Developing, Managing and Leading Individuals and Teams to Achieve Success

Lesson 1

WESTON COLLEGE | Mindful Education

Last updated: 08/09/21

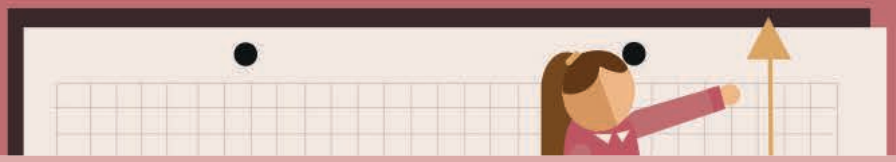


Team Development

What makes a good team

Different team roles

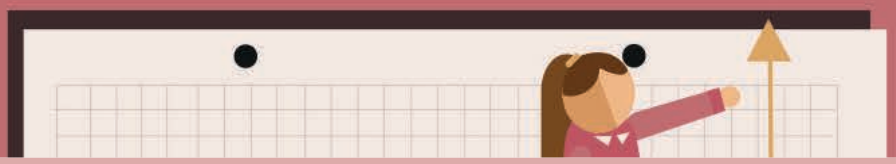
How teams develop over time



Defining a Team

Every one of us has been part of a team at some point. You may have been a member of a sports team at school, for example, or a project team at work.

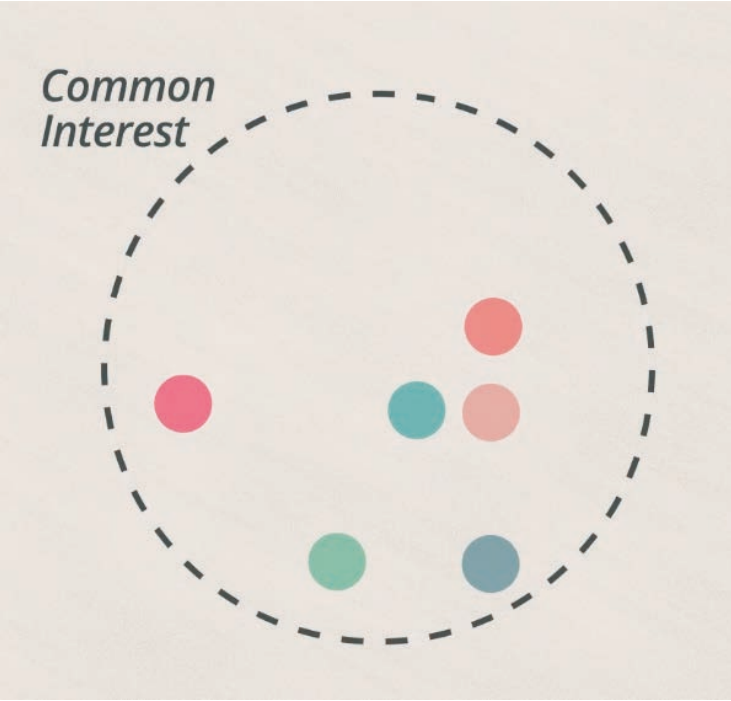
But what is it that defines a ‘team’? And what makes a team different from just being part of a group?



Defining a Team (cont.)

According to management author Laurie Mullins, “whereas all teams are, by definition, groups, it does not necessarily follow that all groups are teams”.

A group can be made up of any number of people who have been brought together by a common interest. In the workplace, they may sit or work closely with one another. Perhaps they share information and resources - but they work independently and each person is responsible for their own outputs.

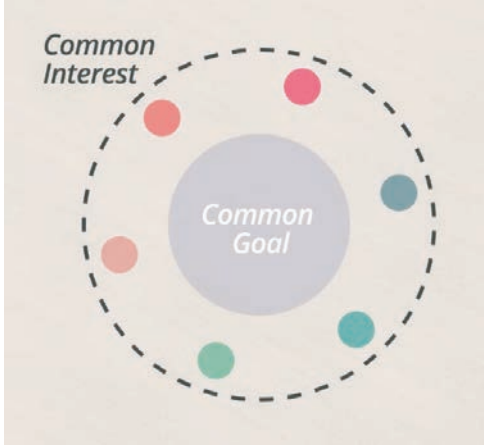


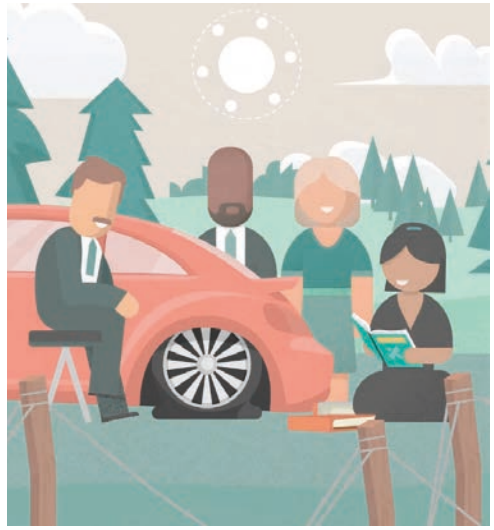
Defining a Team (cont.)

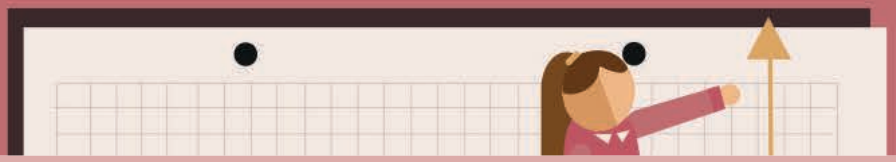
A team, on the other hand, is defined by a sense of shared responsibility and close, collaborative working. In a well-functioning team, everyone works together towards a common goal. US authors Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto provide a good definition. They say:

"A team has two or more people; it has a specific or recognisable goal to be attained; and co-ordination of activity among the members of the team is required for the attainment of the team goal or objective."

We can illustrate this idea with a quick example. A number of people sharing a car journey are a group. But if the car gets a flat tyre, they may then all work together as a team to fix the problem and get the car back on the road.







Defining a Team (cont.)

A second defining characteristic of an effective team is that all of its members contribute in different ways.

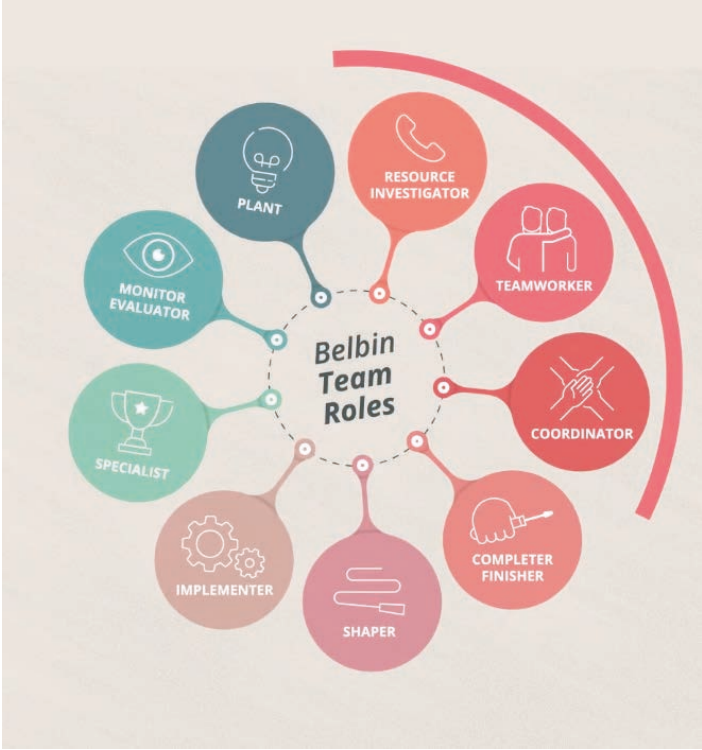
Just as a football team has a goalkeeper, defenders, midfielders and forwards, effective teams are made up of people working in different roles to help the group as a whole succeed.

One of the best-known models of team roles was developed by British management theorist Meredith Belbin in the 1980s. He researched teams in action and found they needed team members to perform a variety of different behaviours - or roles - to function effectively.

Belbin's Team Roles

Belbin identified nine distinct team roles, which he grouped into three categories. These are:

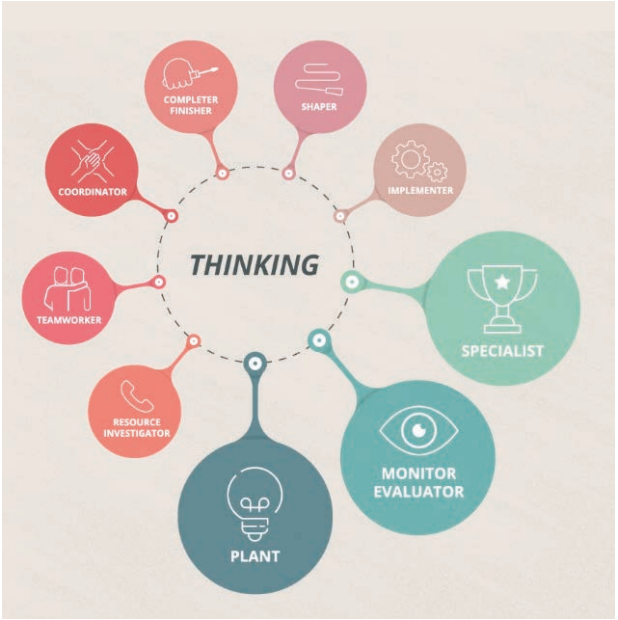
- Thinking roles
- Action-oriented roles
- People-oriented roles



Belbin's Team Roles (cont.)

'Thinking' roles suit team members who focus on the ideas behind the work.

The Plant generates ideas, the Monitor-Evaluator analyses them, and the Specialist gives further guidance based on their expert knowledge.



Belbin's Team Roles (cont.)

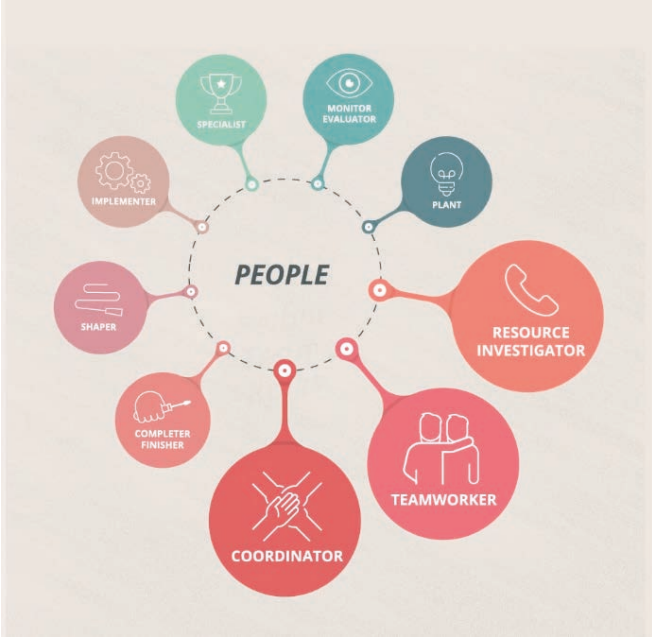
'Action-oriented' roles appeal to people who like to turn ideas into plans and carry them out.

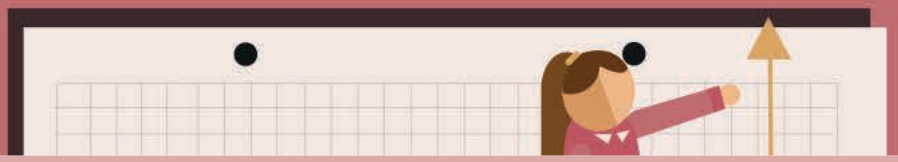
Implementers organise the work, Shapers refine it, and Completer-Finishers - as the name implies - perfect and deliver it.

Belbin's Team Roles (cont.)

Along the way, those in 'People-oriented' roles keep the work on schedule, while making sure that everyone communicates with one another and that conflicts are resolved quickly.

The Coordinator is in charge of this process, supported by Team Workers, who smooth out any internal friction. Meanwhile, the Resource-Investigator acts as the communications link between the team and the outside world.

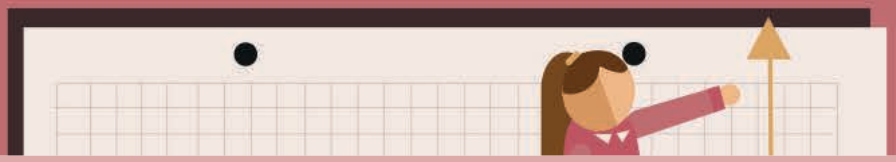




Allowable Weaknesses

As you can see, each role brings a particular strength to a team. But they can also come with drawbacks. Belbin referred to these as ‘allowable weaknesses’, as they are natural byproducts of being strong in other areas. For example, Usain Bolt excelled at running the 100 metres - but this meant he could never be a strong marathon runner.

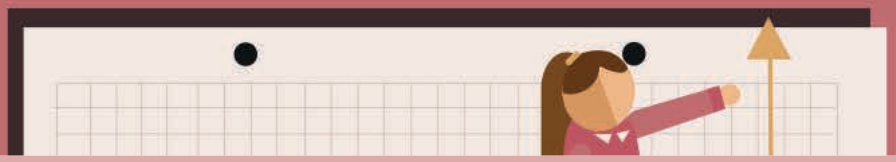
In Belbin’s model, Plants are very strong creatively - but as a result they may get too caught up in their ideas to communicate effectively; Completer-Finishers may take their determination to get things ‘just right’ to extremes, creating costly delays.



The Right Blend of Roles

Belbin found that not all nine roles were needed in a single team - in fact, it's rare to find so many roles on one team in the real world. You may find the teams in your workplace don't conform to this model, or that one person plays multiple roles.

But to be successful, Belbin said that teams need to have the right blend of roles. If team members have similar strengths, they may compete rather than co-operate. And if they share flaws, they may weaken the team as a whole.

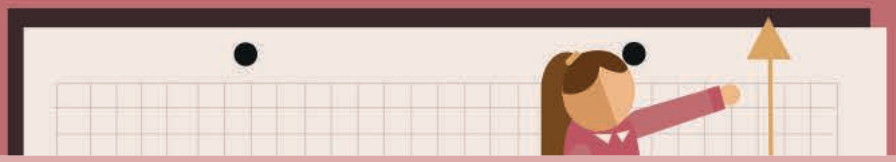


The Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel

In the early 1990s, researchers Charles Margerison and Dick McCann developed a similar model, based on interviews with over 300 managers about good and poor team performance.

The Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel identifies eight key work functions that all teams need to perform well in order to succeed. These are:

- Advising - which involves gathering and reporting information
- Innovating - or creating and experimenting with ideas
- Promoting - that is, exploring and presenting opportunities
- Developing - or assessing and testing the applicability of new approaches
- Organising - which is establishing and implementing ways of making things work
- Producing - which involves concluding and delivering outputs
- Inspecting - that is, controlling and auditing the working of systems
- Maintaining - which is upholding and safeguarding standards and processes



The Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel (cont.)

From here, Margerison and McCann created the concept of 'role preferences'. They determined that if people in a team are able to work on activities that suit them, they'll perform better and be happier in their jobs.

To help people work out which role suits them best, they developed a 60-item Team Management Profile Questionnaire, which assesses people's work preferences according to:

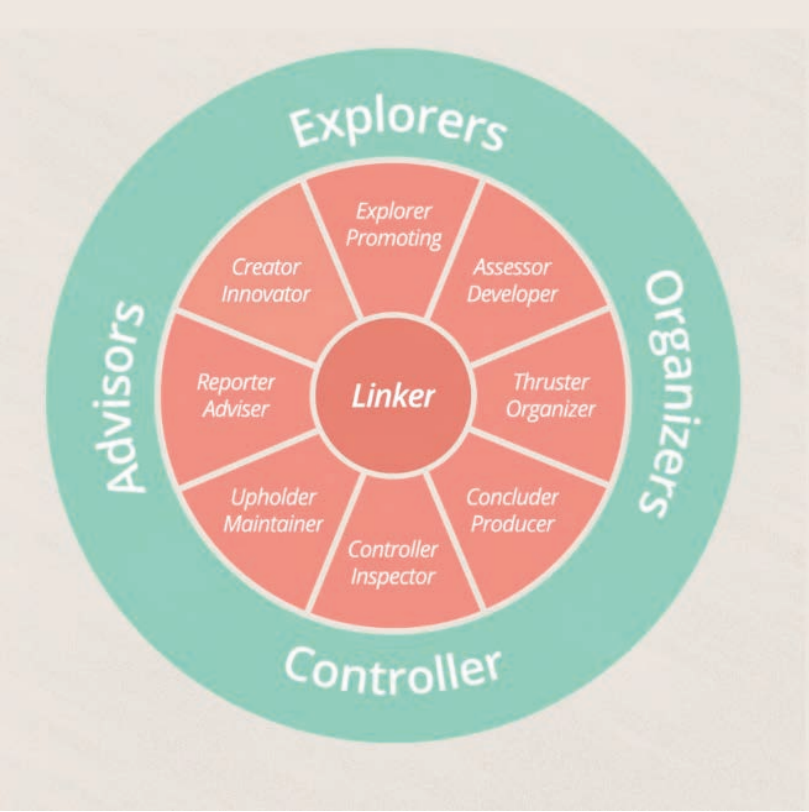
- How they like to relate to others
- How they like to gather and use information
- How they like to make decisions, and
- How they like to organise themselves and other people

The Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel (cont.)

Someone who strongly prefers to manage people and resources, for example, might be best suited to a 'Thruster-Organiser' role. But someone who likes to generate new ideas and suggest improvements might perform better in the role of 'Creator-Innovator'.

People's questionnaire results typically show one 'strong' preference and one or two 'weaker' ones.

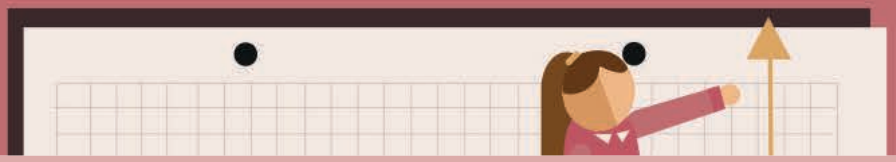
Let's look at an example of how you could use this model to help develop a more effective team.



The Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel - Example

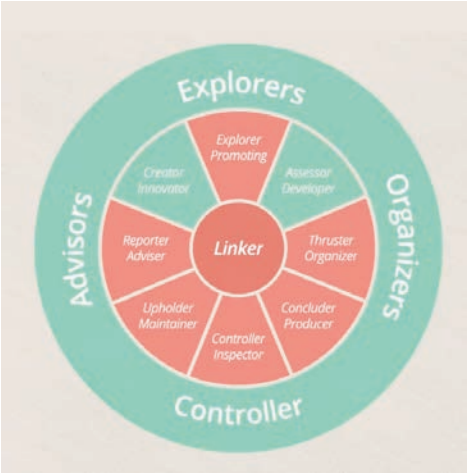
Sally manages the market research department at a food manufacturing company. She's been asked to review the performance of the team responsible for measuring customer satisfaction with the firm's range of frozen ready meals, after the team failed to deliver several reports on time.

There are four people in the team and Sally asks each of them to complete a Team Management Profile Questionnaire to assess their individual working preferences and see if this might reveal where the problem lies.



The Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel - Example (cont.)

When she gets the results, Sally quickly realises that the team is 'unbalanced' in terms of its roles - all four of its members' role preferences are grouped in one part of the team wheel: they all like to 'innovate' and develop ideas, while none of them shows any preference for organising work or delivering outputs.

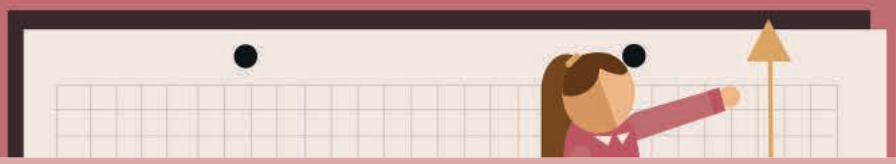


Sally discovers that while the team is great at coming up with creative methods for assessing customer opinion using imaginative surveys and inventive focus group designs, they are no good at following through on these ideas and they are not actually collecting much data. When what data they do have arrives, no-one is taking charge of the analysis or leading the report writing, so the team is constantly failing to meet its deadlines.

The Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel - Example (cont.)

To overcome this problem, Sally presents the questionnaire results to the team and discusses with them how their individual preferences are negatively impacting the team's overall performance.

One of the team members discovers she has a slight preference for 'reporting', and so she volunteers to take responsibility for leading the data gathering and analysis process. One of the other team members transfers to a different team that is lacking in creative ideas. And Sally brings a new member into the team, whose questionnaire results show a preference for 'organising' and gives them responsibility for managing the team's research. This helps bring a better balance to the team, and it is now able to perform much better.



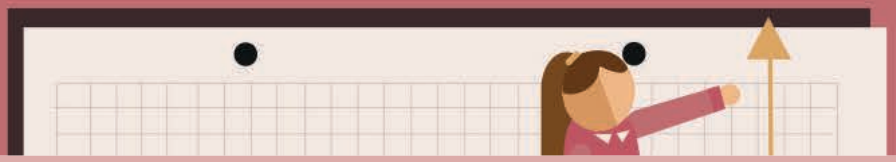
Tuckman's Team Stages

Looking at individuals' roles is just one way of considering how teams work. Another approach is to look at how teams as a whole develop over time.

This kind of long-term team development was observed most famously by psychologist Bruce Tuckman in the 1960s, when he studied group work in the US Air Force. Tuckman noticed that the dynamics between team members changed and developed over time. He created a model to summarise this in terms of four distinct stages, which he called:

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing

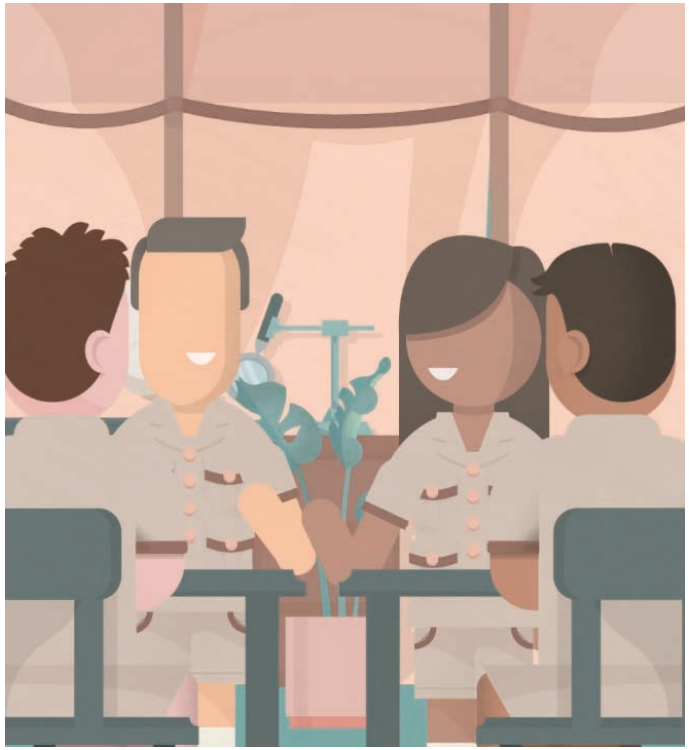
He later added a fifth stage - 'Adjourning' - to recognise that many teams break up once they have achieved their objectives.



Forming

In the initial Forming stage, groups ‘form’, but individual responsibilities can be unclear and people may be reluctant to participate. At this point, new members will be keen to establish their identities within the team and they may work independently rather than co-ordinating with one another.

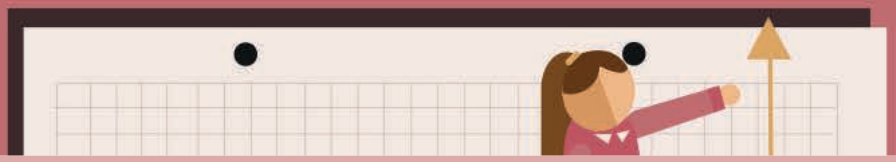
Over time, however, members will get to know each other. And by the end of this first stage, the developing team may begin to feel a sense of camaraderie. However, Tuckman found that this impression is often false, and most teams go into a stage of conflict following any initial period of goodwill.



Storming

This is the Storming stage, when people figure out where they actually fit within the team. The team's purpose, roles and rules may all be challenged at this point, as individuals become bolder in expressing their personalities and views.

If members are unable to reach an agreement on the team's overall shape and their specific roles within it, it's possible - in some extreme cases - that the team could become permanently stuck in this stage.

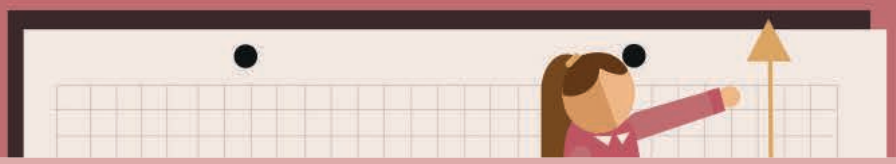


Norming

However, most of the time, individuals will settle into their roles and come together as a team. The group then moves into the Norming stage, when the members agree rules - or 'norms' - about how the team will work in practice.

Some norms will be quite straightforward - especially those relating to the team's behaviour, such as when to meet and how to share information.

Other norms may be less obvious and the team may have difficulty reaching a consensus. Norms relating to the team's core values - such as how to deal with personal disagreements - may be hard to agree, for example.



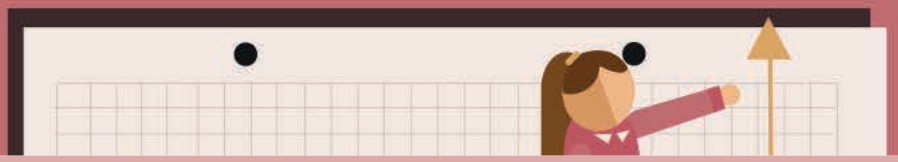
Performing and Adjourning

Only once all three of these stages have been successfully completed will the group be fully productive and Performing. In this stage, the team's full focus is directed towards achieving its goals.

However, the team still needs to be flexible so it can adapt to changing conditions.

For example, a team may face cuts to resources, new deadlines or changed priorities. Or new members may join the team. In these circumstances, the team may have to revert to one of the earlier stages and work through it again, until it reaches the performing stage once more.

In many cases, once the team has completed its task, it reaches the Adjourning stage and it disbands.

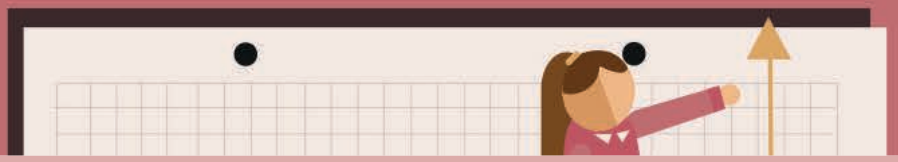


Adapting Your Management Style

Stage-based models such as this can help you align your management style to your team's current stage of development.

Early on, for example - in the Forming stage - you'll want to guide the team more firmly: this will ensure you have maximum influence over its direction as it matures.

In the Storming stage, you should give your team an opportunity to air disagreements, and negotiate their own way forward. You can contribute positively to these debates by reminding team members about their shared values, and the team's ultimate goals.

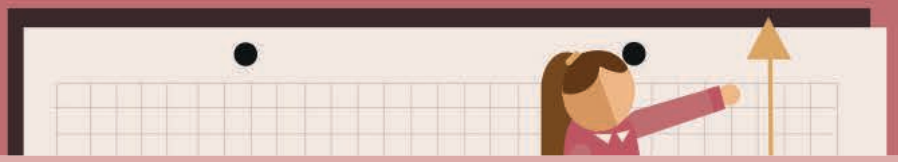


Adapting Your Management Style (cont.)

Once a team reaches the Norming stage, it's time to shift into a less hands-on role. Give advice, sit in on meetings and reinforce the team's goals and values - but don't try to control it. Eventually, the team will have to perform without you.

At the Performing stage, the team should function smoothly without any outside input.

That brings us to the end of the first lesson. We've looked at some of the key factors involved in managing teams to achieve success - particularly the importance of taking account of individual roles and how teams develop over time.



Recap

In this lesson, you have learned about:

- What makes a good team
- Different team roles
- How teams develop over time