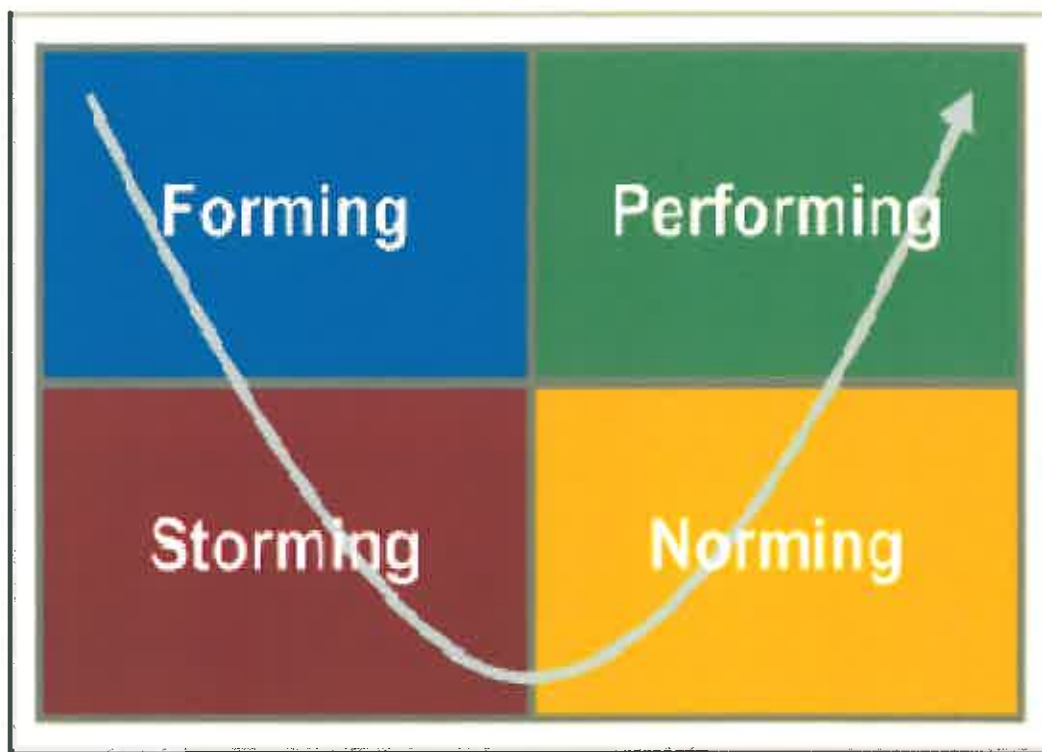# Developing High-Performance Teams

## Summer Managers' Series

## Bob Wright

# Stages of Team Development

# When You're in Charge: Tips for Leading Teams

By Beth Cole

Do you remember that nervous feeling you had in the 4th grade when Mrs. Smith warned you about cheating? You know, looking off another's paper, talking about the answer, or working with someone else outside of class? Isn't it ironic that in the classroom you competed against your classmates for the best scores, but when the bell rang you were expected to play with the team in a pickup game of soccer, or football or playground baseball?

Author and CEO of Teambuilding, Inc., Peter Grazier comments, "We moved through our school system learning the way to succeed in the classroom (or "the real world") was to do it ourselves in an ongoing competition against others. On the playground, the system favored teaming. So it is my strong belief that many of the problems we see in workplace teams are directly related to our early programming that teaming is for play and not really meant for real work. Workers, including senior managers, subconsciously write it off as some exercise to make everyone feel good. And so we struggle."

Nonetheless, teams are serious business in today's economy as companies realize the value of teaming in creating greater employee involvement, leveraging human resources, fostering innovation, and shoring up the bottom line. In fact, a survey of U.S. Fortune 1000 companies by the Center for Effective Organizations at the University of Southern California, showed a jump in the number of companies using self-directed work teams from 27% in 1987, to 68% in 1993. "I would predict that percentage to continue its persistent increase from year to year," says Dr. Doug Johnson, Associate Director of the Center for the Study of Work Teams at the University of North Texas in Denton. When you're in charge of your team, the experts say success lies in understanding your role as a leader, reading the personalities of your team, and leading through the stages of your team's development.

No matter your title -- team leader, manager or facilitator- your goal is to help your team achieve results. The first step toward that end is to understand how to juggle those three roles. Chances are you will be expected to perform all three at one time or another, and your ability to be a "chameleon" will be critical.

Team expert Scott Simmerman of Performance Management Company suggests, "The leader is more of an inspirational person, the one who sets the stage and the vision, while the facilitator is more concerned with generating self-awareness within the team and coercing new ideas and contributions from all." To compare the roles of leader, manager and facilitator, you might consider the following guide from *Managers as Facilitators*, by Richard G. Weaver and John D. Farrell[1].

| Leader | Manager | Facilitator |
|---|---|---|
| Concerned with doing the right thing. | Concerned with doing things right. | Concerned with helping people do things. |
| Takes the long-term view. | Takes the short-term view. | Helps people find a view and articulate it. |
| Concentrates on what and why. | Concentrates on how. | Helps people concentrate and be clear in the here and now. |
| Thinks in terms of innovations, development, and the future. | Thinks in terms of administrations, maintenance, and the present. | Helps people think, and helps them communicate their thoughts. |
| Sets the vision: the tone and direction. | Sets the plan: the pace. | Helps people make meaning of tone and direction, and to function well at the required pace. |
| Hopes others will respond and follow. | Hopes others will complete their tasks. | Hopes others will engage in the process. |
| Appeals to hopes and dreams. | Monitors boundaries and defines limits. | Helps others make meaning of hopes and dreams; pushes appropriately on boundaries. |
| Expects others to help realize a vision. | Expects others to fulfill their mission or purpose. | Helps others articulate a shared vision and common mission or purpose. |
| Inspires innovation. | Inspires stability. | Helps people respond to things that are new and things that remain the same. |

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*Managers as Facilitators,* by Richard G. Weaver and John D. Farrell, p. 6.

How do you know which role is best in any given situation? Generally speaking, if you **lead** people, **manage** tasks, and **facilitate** decisions, you will be on the right track. Weaver and Farrell suggest looking at the nature of the result for which you are responsible. "If the task is setting direction for a group - helping group members see the bigger picture – then the leader role is best. If the task is setting limits on the work, delegating, or defining deadlines, then the manager role should be the choice. If the task is more complex, requiring the assistance of a number of other people to complete, then the facilitator role is best. As a practical guideline, for a given work session or meeting, one primary role should be used."

Just because you may need to change roles, doesn't mean you change your personality. "A common misunderstanding about good leaders is they are brash or flamboyant, great on the golf course, or socially advanced." says Gerard M. Blair, management consultant and author of *Starting to Manage: The*

*Essential Skills.* "This is wrong. In any company you will find all types of personalities who lead and manage teams with great success. If you are subdued, fear not; all you need is to listen intently and talk clearly to people. Great leaders are ones who challenge apathy and lead their teams toward a personal vision."

Understanding yourself is one matter, but understanding your team is equally, if not more, important. Johnson says, "Years ago, companies saw teams as a panacea and implemented them without much forethought as to the process and whether teams were really appropriate. What we're seeing today is a much more selective approach to team work." In other words, don't throw people together because the boss says "build a team." Think systematically and selectively as you assemble the group. Look for interpersonal skills as well as technical expertise.

According to Nancy Croft-Baker in *Corporate University Review's* "Giving Teams a Winning Edge," many companies today use assessments specifically tailored to the workplace. Team Mangement Systems Inc. founders and researchers Charles Margerison and Dick McCann, for example, have developed a system comprised of several questionnaires that identify individual work preferences and skills, provide feedback on leadership strengths, interpersonal skills and decision-making styles, and analyze jobs based on eight work functions. This system helps companies put individual team members into roles where they can be most effective.

Team assessments will help you understand variances in personalities as well as strengths and weaknesses of your team members. One team interaction model by Russell (1986), indicates common styles often present within teams. You may recognize these traits in your own team.

### Team Interaction Styles [2]

| Style | Profile | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|---|---|
| DRIVER | <ul><li>Take charge person</li><li>Strongly influential</li><li>Focused on results</li></ul> | <ul><li>Determined</li><li>Thorough</li><li>Decisive</li><li>Efficient</li><li>Direct</li></ul> | <ul><li>Dominating</li><li>Unsympathetic</li><li>Demanding</li><li>Critical</li><li>Impatient</li></ul> |
| ENTHUSIAST | <ul><li>Social specialist</li><li>Expressive</li><li>People person</li></ul> | <ul><li>Personable</li><li>Stimulating</li><li>Enthusiastic</li><li>Innovative</li></ul> | <ul><li>Opinionated</li><li>Undependable</li><li>Reactionary</li></ul> |
| ANALYZER | <ul><li>Well-organized</li><li>Likes specific projects</li><li>Puts structure to</li></ul> | <ul><li>Industrious</li><li>Persistent</li><li>Serious</li><li>Orderly</li></ul> | <ul><li>Indecisive</li><li>Uncommunicative</li><li>Critical</li></ul> |

| | | ideas | | Methodical | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AFFILIATOR** | • | Adaptive | • Cooperative | • Conforming |
| | • | Relationship oriented | • Supportive | • Uncommitted |
| | • | Likes stability | • Dependable | • Hides true feelings |
| | • | Wants to be part of bigger picture | • Helpful | |

One winning strategy in good leadership is to recognize individual styles within the team, and then play to the strengths of the individual. Another strategy is to match your leadership tactics with your team's stage of development.

The most widely utilized model of the stages of team development is sometimes called the 'Orming Model, developed in 1965 by Bruce Tuckman of the Naval Medical Research Institute at Bethesda, Maryland. Tuckman's model suggests four stages of group development: *Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing.*

## **Forming**

In the forming stage, group members first come together to lay the foundation for the team. Excitement, anxiety, dependence and uncertainties are the driving motivations. Team expert Peter Everson of The Everson Institute suggests, "The best leaders at this stage are empathetic and know how to draw out other people." In others words, don't tell them what you know. Instead, ask what they know. "The CEO of a major drug company who really 'got this' concept said 'I learned more from the process of working with individuals in a team setting than I ever learned or understood from Harvard Business School'."

## Issues

: Testing of your authority and feelings of inclusion and trust.

## How to Lead

: Add structure to team meetings, for example, assemble a team charter, focus discussions, clarify tasks, and help to define team roles. You also need to encourage learning within the group. Watch for dominant behavior in this stage, and invite all to participate equally.

## **Storming**

When groups enter the storming stage, members begin to realize the amount of complicated work ahead and sometimes panic. They may see disparity between their hopes and the reality of the work ahead of them. "Many teams temporarily de-rail at this stage," says Peter Grazier, "so don't be discouraged by tidal waves within the group. Instead, focus on clarity and honesty among team members."

## Issues:

Power, control and conflict. Team members may have feelings of incompetence and confusion -- they may second-guess their ability to do a good job. Frustration may pop up because of the amount of time required to get things done, and attitudes toward you or others may turn negative.

How to Lead:

Facilitate dialogue – get all the sacred cows out on the table. "Sometimes we make things too complicated," says Everson. "Work on being human with each other – build trust and make contributions. Be a moderator between dissenting voices around the table."

You can also help by guiding decisions and problem-solving efforts. The team is vulnerable at this point because of conflicting opinions and emotions. Consider reaffirming the vision and purpose, running interference with outside groups, making sure there are adequate resources to do the job.

## Norming

Norming is the stage where people get used to working with one another. You will see cooperation over competition, more acceptance, and comfort in giving and receiving feedback. Simmerman says, "Nobody ever washes a rental car. The team must feel ownership at this stage of the game or they won't take care of the team."

Issues:

Sharing of responsibility, building confidence in reaching goals, and developing trust and respect among members.

How to Lead:

Back off – let the team be independent. Delegate more responsibility and be conscious about doing so. If you have held off on giving your opinion, now is the time to express yourself, and you may also want to challenge your team with a high-stake assignment – help them grow in the process.

## Performing

In the performing stage, team members are comfortable with each other and everyone is "reading from the same page". Team performance soars and everyone's highest concern is team success. Grazier says, "At this stage good leaders will blend the task and work at hand with the people side, using personal motivations and clear communication."

Issues: Continuous accomplishment of goals and maintaining the momentum.

How to Lead:

Create an environment of connection where members feel valued. At this stage you might also suggest new goals and opportunities, or test assumptions, (i.e. do we need new members or new ground rules), and think about some type of self-evaluation process.

All teams will have ups and downs, regardless of the stage they're in, or your leadership. "We see teams as a long-march approach," says Johnson of the Center for the Study of Work Teams. "Organizations that

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implement teams as a bold stroke usually don't succeed. Developing teams takes time, often requires change in all systems and will not be an overnight remedy for companies."

In short, as a team leader you can be your best when you remember to *lead people*, *manage tasks*, and *facilitate decisions*. Be conscientious about the different personality styles within the group, and match your leadership tactics to the stage of team development. Also consider the following principles of good leadership:

- Create a working team vs. a fad team. Fad teams exist because someone thinks it's the thing to do. Working teams begin with a team charter – a statement of the group's purpose, goals, roles, and procedures.
- Be adequately resourced. Resources may be money, people, time, etc. Think through the team requirements in this area.
- Recognize team member's accomplishments. Many successful teams start with something easy and celebrate success early. This creates momentum and a history of success on which to build.
- Know when to bring in an expert. "Most leaders don't want to let on they are lost," says Grazier, "but my sense is if you let the team decide when they need help, in what way, and, most importantly, whom should be the provider, the outside expertise will pay off."

Blair concludes, "Anyone can be a great team leader. The first steps to becoming one are simply common sense - but sometimes common sense is not very common." Use yours wisely and you'll be among the best.