



TEAMBUILDING IN THE PARISH

Functional, cohesive and effective working teams do not happen by accident. They are the result of intentional, direct efforts and are developed only after going through fairly predictable stages of formation. Years ago a researcher, BW Tuckman noted the following four stages of group development:



Stage I: Form

During Stage I, team members discover what behaviors are acceptable to the group. For newly established groups, this stage is the transition from individual to member status. For teams with new leadership, mission, or members, this stage is a period of testing behavior and dependence on formal or informal group leadership for guidance in a newly unstructured environment. This stage is also characterized by the following:

- Attempts to identify tasks in terms of relevant parameters and to decide how the group will accomplish the tasks;
- Decisions on the type of information needed and how it will be used;
- Hesitant participation;
- Tests of behavioral expectations and ways to handle behavioral problems;
- Feelings of initial attachment to the team;

Stage II: Storm

During Stage II, team members become hostile or overzealous as a way to express their individuality and resist group formation. Members recognize the extent of the task demands and respond emotionally to the perceived requirements for self-change and self-denial. Other characteristics of this stage include:

- Infighting, defensiveness, and competition;
- Establishment of unachievable goals;
- Disunity, increased tension, and jealousy;
- Resistance to the task demands because they are perceived to interfere with personal needs;
- Polarization of group members;

Stage III: Norm

During Stage III, members accept the team, team norms, their own roles, and idiosyncrasies of fellow members. Emotional conflict is reduced by patching up previously conflicting relationships. Other

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characteristics of this stage include:

- An attempt to achieve maximum harmony by avoiding conflict;
- A high level of intimacy characterized by confiding in each other, sharing personal problems, and discussing team dynamics;
- A new ability to express emotions constructively;
- A sense of team cohesiveness with a common spirit and goals;
- The establishment and maintenance of team boundaries; and

Stage IV: Perform

Now that the team has established its interpersonal norms, it becomes an entity capable of diagnosing and solving problems and making decisions. Stage IV is not always reached by teams. Other characteristics of this stage include:

- Members experience insight into personal and interpersonal processes;
- Constructive self-change is undertaken; and
- A great deal of work is accomplished.

Just as individuals go through predictable stages of growth depending on age, experience, maturity, and other factors, teams go through predictable stages the duration of which depends on factors such as individual and team maturity, task complexity, leadership, organizational climate, and external climate.

How do we get to stage IV?

Healthy teams start moving forward by establishing a climate of trust. Patrick Lencioni is the author of a book entitled, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. In the Five Dysfunctions Patrick lists the following traits of truly cohesive teams:



Truly cohesive teams are obvious:

1. They trust one another
2. They engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas
3. They commit to decisions and plans of actions.
4. They hold one another accountable for delivering against those plans.
5. They focus on the achievement of collective results.

Faith centered teams logically should be relatively easy to develop. In truth they are much more difficult and complex to create.

The ways to move parish teams forward is to develop:

- Broad consensus on the mission, vision, and purposes of the parish
- Clearly defined and accepted individual roles, goals and responsibilities
- The ability to distinguish between content and process
- The ability to recognize- engage and resolve conflict
- The nature and limits of authority, responsibility and accountability
- A free exchange of information
- Learning systems and processes
- A positive and healthy humor
- An appreciation and respect for the differences and diversities within the group