

The development of a group via the forming, storming, norming and performing phases

When people come together to work as a team for the first time, the group usually goes through a couple of stages before becoming an effective team. Each of these stages has an impact on group dynamics.

Stage 1 Forming:

Individuals come together to create a new group to collaborate on reaching a common goal. In this early forming stage, they are still a collection of individuals, each with his/her own agenda and expertise with little or no shared experience.

Key points:

- a. Individuals establish their personal identity within the group and make an impression on each other.
- b. Participation is limited; individuals become familiar with the setting and each other.
- c. The group is building the foundation whereupon later decisions and actions will be based.

Stage 2 Storming:

As individuals get to know one another, they will likely enter a storming phase. Personal values and principles are challenged, roles and responsibilities are taken on and/or rejected, and the group's objectives and way of working together is defined. If some common ground can be found, the group will gain cohesion and a sense of purpose. By understanding their roles and by establish a shared vision a group identity will be formed.

Key points:

- a. Characterised by intra-group conflict.
- b. Individuals may become hostile and continue pursuing personal agendas.
- c. If successfully handled, this stage leads to a realistic setting of collaboration.

Stage 3 Norming:

The group has settled down. People got to know each other's strengths and weaknesses, have accepted the rules and it is very probable that they have developed little sub-groups. They are ready to focus on output and will enter the performing phase.

Key points:

- a. Characterised by overcoming tensions and by developing group cohesion.
- b. Group members accept the group and each other's individual strengths and weaknesses.
- c. Development of group spirit.

Stage 4 Performing:

The confidence level between the team members will have reached the point where they are willing to take significant risks and try out new ideas on their own.

Key points:

- a. Characterised by maximum productivity.
- b. Can only be reached by successfully completing previous stages.
- c. Members take on roles to fulfil the group activities.
- d. New insights and solutions begin to emerge.

Advantages and disadvantages of working in groups:

Groups generally produce fewer ideas than individuals. However, they do produce better ideas by taking the time to discuss proposals in more in detail. Therefore, it is more likely that a group manages to identify errors before initiating an action. Groups can take riskier decisions than individuals because members take courage from each other and individual responsibility is diffused. But, groups that are too cohesive can have serious drawbacks. Religious sects, military groups, sports teams and political groups all show a tendency towards a dominant group identity. In extreme cases, the individual's opinion is sacrificed for group loyalty. The group can be highly selective in the facts it sees and accepts. Maintaining an open agenda and creating a sense of self-critical awareness is essential if group 'delusions' are to be prevented.

Source:

Baas, S., Dawn, C., Fleig, A. (2003). *Participatory Processes Towards Co-Management of Natural Resources in Pastoral Areas of the Middle East: A Training of Trainers Source Book Based on the Principles of Participatory Methods and Approaches Module III: Working together, Rome and Palmyra*. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/ad424e/ad424e04.htm> last accessed on 14/09/2016.