

# Teamwork Tune-up: Creating a High-performance Team

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## Introduction

Educators and business professionals have recognized that to facilitate teamwork at a high-performance level, seven characteristics must be present. Characteristics of high-performance teams can be remembered by thinking about the first letters in the word "PERFORM."

**P**urpose: team and individual goals stated clearly

**E**mpowerment: team members share responsibility for leadership

**R**elationships: active participation and communication by all

**F**lexibility: members respect different views and adapt well to change

**O**ptimal Performance: high standards, productivity, and creativity

**R**ecognition: team celebrates success; members feel appreciated

**M**orale: team enjoys working together; work can be fun

By starting with a clear purpose, empowering people, developing relationships, incorporating flexibility, and maintaining high morale, the team will consistently produce with high standards and be committed to optimal performance.

## Participant Observer

To be a member of a high-performance team, one must make the transition from traditional teamwork and become a "participant observer." A participant observer allows himself or herself to focus on the problems facing the team but also is aware of the dynamics of the group. Participant observers look for:

- Communication: Who talks; who listens; are there cliques?
- Decision-making: How do they choose to take action?
- Conflict: How is conflict dealt with?
- Leadership: Who has influence on the team?
- Roles: Who does what; what are the individual tasks?
- Norms: What are the ground rules for team behavior?
- Problem-solving: How do they find solutions and analyze results?
- Behaviors: What are the actions and attitudes of the team and individual members?

## Stages of Team Development

All teams go through stages of development, which are much like the stages of life. As a child, we are developing the foundation for life; early development for a team establishes a foundation for all the work that follows. During adolescence, we often struggle with the conflicts within us as we cope with our desire for control and our acceptance and trust with others; as a team we also struggle with these issues.

As young adults, we face the challenges of early self-management and becoming more productive members of society; as a team, we also cope with that brief period when we must clearly define and integrate team and individual goals to increase the team's productivity.

As mature adults, we strive to live by our values, maintain our relationships, and challenge ourselves to continue to grow and to learn; as a team, we also continually challenge ourselves to have high standards, to discover optimal performance, and to grow as a team.



### Stage 1: Orientation

#### *Characteristics*

- High expectations and enthusiasm
- Dependence on authority for direction and support
- Anxiety about roles, acceptance, and trust
- Polite behavior; some testing of boundaries

#### *Needs*

- Team purpose
- Group norms
- Individual roles
- Discover team members' characteristics

#### *Issues*

- Personal well-being
- Acceptance
- Trust

## Stage 2: Dissatisfaction

### Characteristics

- Discrepancy between expectations and reality
- Dissatisfaction with dependency on authority
- Confusion or frustration about roles, acceptance, and trust
- Competition for power, authority, and attention

### Needs

- Redefine team purpose
- Reestablish group and individual norms
- Develop a communication process (conflict management, nonjudgmental feedback, active listening)
- Value team diversity
- Give encouragement and reassurance

### Issues

- Power
- Control
- Conflict

## Stage 3: Integration

### Characteristics

- Increased clarity of and commitment to goals, roles, tasks, and structure
- Willingness to share leadership and responsibility
- Growing trust, cohesion, and respect
- Diversity valued
- Conflict avoided (“groupthink” utilized)
- Using “We” instead of “Me” language

### Needs

- Integrate team goals with roles and norms within the team structure
- Continued skill development (problem-solving, decision-making, communication, and trust)
- Shared responsibility for leadership and functioning
- Recognition and celebration of successes
- Focus on increased productivity

### Issues

- Sharing control
- Avoiding conflict

## Stage 4: Production

### Characteristics

- Clear team purpose, goals, roles, and values
- Empowerment for increased energy and improvement
- Strong relationships built on trust, respect, and openness
- Shared leadership and flexibility
- Optimal productivity and standards
- Recognition of team and individual accomplishments
- High morale and enthusiasm

### Needs

- New challenges
- Continued focus on productivity
- Decision-making autonomy within boundaries
- Individual acknowledgment

### Issues

- New challenges
- Continued growth and learning

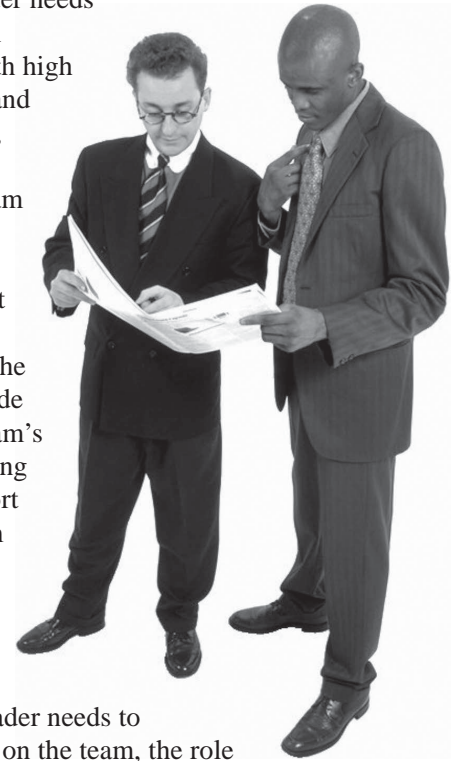
## Productivity and Morale

At Stage 1, the leader must provide structure for the team by giving high levels of direction with very little support.

At Stage 2, the leader needs

to assist the team in resolving issues with high levels of direction and support. At Stage 3, the leader should collaborate with team members and give them support but allow them to direct their own efforts.

Finally at Stage 4, the leader should provide validation to the team's efforts while allowing direction and support to be provided from within the team.



## Individual Assistance

If the situational leader needs to assist an individual on the team, the role of leadership shifts to a more direct style. Stage 1 emphasizes “directing” the individual to find solutions to problems. Stage 2 emphasizes “coaching” the individual to deal with inner conflict and struggles. Stage 3 places the leader in a “supporting” role that assists the person in growing and developing. Stage 4 is the time for “delegating” as a leader; the team member needs to continue to be challenged with opportunities to learn and grow.

## Conclusion

High-performance teams don't just happen! Team leaders must be willing to become aware of certain characteristics and recognize the stages that develop in the growth of a team. By becoming skilled at recognizing these situations and applying the correct leadership approach, team leaders will be fine-tuning their team's performance and finishing first in the race for successful teamwork.

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