

TOOL

# Stages of Team Development

---



This product is the intellectual property of Elena Aguilar and Bright Morning.  
Unauthorized use, reproduction, or distribution is prohibited.

# Stages of Team Development

## **Purpose**

This tool helps leaders understand the stages teams move through over time and identify the leadership moves that support growth at each stage. Building on Bruce Tuckman's model of team development (forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning), it expands the framework by offering concrete indicators and specific leadership moves to help you make sense of team dynamics and respond intentionally.

## **When to Use**

Use this tool when you are trying to understand your team's current dynamics, when challenges arise, or when planning how to support your team's development. It is especially useful when a team feels stuck.

## **How to Use It**

Review the indicators for each stage and identify which most closely reflect your team's current experience. Then use the corresponding leadership moves to guide your approach. Avoid trying to "skip" stages—focus instead on supporting the team to move through them. Revisit this tool over time as your team evolves and new dynamics emerge.

# Stages of Team Development

Stage	FORMING	STORMING
<p><b>Indicators</b> Some of these might be present. If so, try the leadership moves in the next row.</p>	<p><b>IF...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varied levels of participation in discussion—some might talk a lot whereas others sit back and listen.</li> <li>• Discussions feel awkward.</li> <li>• It feels like people are holding back.</li> <li>• There are lots of questions for the leader.</li> <li>• There's excessive politeness between members.</li> <li>• Members (and leaders) leave meetings feeling tired—not good tired.</li> </ul>	<p><b>IF...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members question how the leader runs the team and may advocate for changes to the goals or process.</li> <li>• Not a lot gets done at meetings. Agendas are taken over or diverted to discuss process and purpose.</li> <li>• Productive and unhealthy conflict erupts during meetings and outside of them between members.</li> <li>• Outside of meetings, members communicate with each other about their frustration or disagreement with the leader with other members.</li> <li>• Some members are more actively engaged in discussions while others step farther back.</li> <li>• No one feels excited about attending meetings and the leader also questions whether they want to lead the team.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Leadership Moves</b> Focus on these activities in meetings.</p>	<p><b>THEN TRY...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building trust.</li> <li>• Establishing community agreements and decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Articulating the team's purpose and ensure understanding and buy-in.</li> <li>• Structuring learning experiences, meaning making and discussions.</li> <li>• Modeling vulnerability, risk taking, engagement, and transparency.</li> </ul>	<p><b>THEN TRY...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalizing this stage and ensuring the team that members can move through it.</li> <li>• Continuing to build trust.</li> <li>• Paying close attention to your own emotions.</li> <li>• Incorporating strategies to build the team's emotional intelligence.</li> <li>• Addressing conflict between members as soon as possible—sometimes publicly in the moment, sometimes privately.</li> <li>• Engaging the team in reflecting on how they work together. Use the Effectiveness Survey and Team Temperature Check.</li> <li>• Pushing forward on the team's work, but consider modifying projects or goals.</li> <li>• Asking for feedback on your leadership—anonously and publicly.</li> <li>• Offering members feedback on their behavior privately.</li> <li>• Structuring opportunities for members to give each other feedback. Use the team feedback process.</li> <li>• Highlighting moments of success, especially those indicating that the team is moving out of storming.</li> <li>• Acknowledging organizational conditions that might contribute to storming.</li> </ul>

# Stages of Team Development

Stage	NORMING	PERFORMING
<p><b>Indicators</b> Some of these might be present. If so, try the leadership moves in the next row.</p>	<p><b>IF...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is more laughter in meetings.</li> <li>• Members seem to like each other, they appreciate each other, and communication feels easier.</li> <li>• Members push back on each other's ideas, and this leads to deeper understanding.</li> <li>• Feedback is offered in the moment and is received with appreciation.</li> <li>• Norms and structures to support norms (e.g., a process observer) are less often used.</li> <li>• Members know what they're doing together as a team and why they're doing it.</li> <li>• The leader participates in some of the activities as a colleague and during others plays a directive leadership role.</li> </ul>	<p><b>IF...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot gets done and members feel proud of their work and learning together.</li> <li>• The work done independently and collaboratively is high quality.</li> <li>• There's obvious warmth between members, laughter, and appreciations.</li> <li>• Members take risks and make mistakes and clearly see their areas for growth (both individually and as team).</li> <li>• Discussions can be lively and heated, but members don't take it personally.</li> <li>• Facilitation of meetings is shared.</li> <li>• Members don't feel like the leader has authority over them.</li> <li>• Members leave meetings feeling good tired.</li> <li>• As the leader, it feels easy, enjoyable, and rewarding to work with this team.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Leadership Moves</b> Focus on these activities in meetings.</p>	<p><b>THEN TRY...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building trust.</li> <li>• Establishing community agreements and decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Articulating the team's purpose and ensure understanding and buy-in.</li> <li>• Structuring learning experiences, meaning making and discussions.</li> <li>• Modeling vulnerability, risk taking, engagement, and transparency.</li> </ul>	<p><b>THEN TRY...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to distribute leadership and hand over elements of team facilitation to members.</li> <li>• Acknowledging all the indicators that the team is at a performing level.</li> <li>• Paying attention to changes in organizational conditions that might affect your team.</li> <li>• Continuing to encourage healthy conflict and promoting even deeper levels of engagement and learning.</li> <li>• Outside of meetings: Sharing the story of your team with other leaders and other teams so that they can learn.</li> <li>• Relaxing and enjoying your team.</li> </ul>

# Stages of Team Development

Stage	ADJOURNING or TRANSFORMING
<b>Indicators</b> <i>Some of these might be present. If so, try the leadership moves in the next row.</i>	<b>IF...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A significant number of members are leaving.</li><li>• The team is disbanding.</li></ul>
<b>Key Leadership Moves</b> <i>Focus on these activities in meetings.</i>	<b>THEN TRY...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating opportunities for team members to tell their stories about their experience in the team.</li><li>• Engaging members in reflecting on their individual growth and learning.</li><li>• Celebrating successes.</li><li>• Offering structures for closure, including holding space for sadness.</li><li>• Sharing your own feelings about the team ending.</li></ul>

WHAT'S NEXT

# Keep Learning with Bright Morning



Join [Leading Teams that Get Stuff Done.](#)

**Confidently lead a thriving, resilient, learning team that gets stuff done.**

- Build trust-based cultures where innovation flourishes and cynicism fades.
- Establish clear team purpose that aligns individual efforts toward common goals.
- Turn administrative overwhelm into streamlined systems that keep your team thriving.



**And for an entire year of on-demand support, join our [Leadership Lab.](#)**

**Everything you need to lead a thriving team.**

- Transform your thorniest team problems into clear action plans through monthly consultancy sessions.
- Walk away with ready-to-use templates and word-for-word scripts that eliminate leadership guesswork.
- Build trust, distribute leadership, and increase buy-in through strategic approaches.

Curious what this could look like for your team?  
Schedule your [complimentary consultation.](#)

