Worksheet

## Tuckman's Team Development Cycle – Example of a team moving through the five stages, a Case Study written by Gina Abudi
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## Task
Read through the various phases the team moves through, characterise them and note down what a team coach could do to support the team development in each of these phases.

## Background and Team Members
A team has been pulled together from various parts of a large service organization to work on a new process improvement project that is needed to improve how the company manages and supports its client base. The team lead on this project is Sandra from the Chicago office who has 15 years experience as a project manager/team lead managing process improvement projects.

The other members of the team include:

- Peter: 10 years experience on various types of projects, expertise in scheduling and budget control (office location: San Diego)
- Sarah: 5 years experience as an individual contributor on projects, strong programming background, some experience developing databases (office location: Chicago)
- Mohammed: 8 years experience working on various projects, expertise in earned value management, stakeholder analysis and problem solving (office location: New York)
- Donna: 2 years experience as an individual contributor on projects (office location: New York)
- Ameya: 7 years experience on process improvement projects, background in developing databases, expertise in earned value management (office location: San Diego)

Sandra has worked on projects with Sarah and Mohammed, but has never worked with the others. Donna has worked with Mohammed. No one else has worked with other members of this team. Sandra has been given a very tight deadline to get this project completed.

Sandra has decided that it would be best if the team met face-to-face initially, even though they will be working virtually for the project. She has arranged a meeting at the New York office (company headquarters) for the entire team. They will spend 2 days getting introduced to each other and learning about the project.

## The Initial Meeting (Stage 1: Forming)
The day of the face-to-face meeting in New York has arrived. All team members are present. The agenda includes:
- Personal introductions
- Team building exercises

- Information about the process improvement project
- Discussion around team roles and responsibilities
- Discussion around team norms for working together
- Introduction on how to use the SharePoint site that will be used for this project to share ideas, brainstorm, store project documentation, etc.

The team members are very excited to meet each other. Each of them has heard of one another, although they have not worked together as a team before. They believe they each bring value to this project. The team building exercises have gone well; everyone participated and seemed to enjoy the exercises. While there was some discussion around roles and responsibilities – with team members vying for "key" positions on the team – overall there was agreement on what needed to get done and who was responsible for particular components of the project.

The onsite meeting is going well. The team members are getting to know each other and have been discussing their personal lives outside of work – hobbies, family, etc. Sandra is thinking that this is a great sign that they will get along well – they are engaged with each other and genuinely seem to like each other!

### The Project Work Begins (Stage 2: Storming)

The team members have gone back to their home offices and are beginning work on their project. They are interacting via the SharePoint site and the project is off to a good start. And then the arguments begin.

Peter has put up the project schedule based on conversations with only Mohammed and Ameya on the team. Donna and Sarah feel as if their input to the schedule was not considered. They believe because they are more junior on the team, Peter has completely disregarded their concerns about the timeline for the project. They challenged Peter's schedule, stating that it was impossible to achieve and was setting up the team for failure. At the same time, Sarah was arguing with Ameya over who should lead the database design and development effort for this project. While Sarah acknowledges that Ameya has a few years more experience than she does in database development, she only agreed to be on this project in order to take a lead role and develop her skills further so she could advance at the company. If she knew Ameya was going to be the lead she wouldn't have bothered joining this project team. Additionally, Mohammed appears to be off and running on his own, not keeping the others apprised of progress nor keeping his information up to date on the SharePoint site. No one really knows what he has been working on or how much progress is being made.

Sandra had initially taken a side role during these exchanges, hoping that the team would work it out for themselves. However, she understands from past experience managing many project teams that it is important for her to take control and guide the team through this difficult time. She convenes all of the team members for a virtual meeting to reiterate their roles and responsibilities (which were agreed to in the kick-off meeting) and to ensure that they understand the goals and objectives of the project. She made some decisions since the team couldn't come to agreement. She determined that Ameya would lead the database development design component of the project, working closely with Sarah so she can develop further experience in this area. She reviewed the schedule that Peter created with the team,

making adjustments where necessary to address the concerns of Donna and Sarah. She reminded Mohammed that this is a team effort and he needs to work closely with the others on the team.

During the virtual meeting session, Sandra referred back to the ground rules the team set in their face-to-face meeting and worked with the team to ensure that there was a plan in place for how decisions are made on the team and who has responsibility for making decisions.

Over the next few weeks, Sandra noticed that arguments/disagreements were at a minimum and when they did occur, they were worked out quickly, by the team, without her involvement being necessary. Still, she monitored how things were going and held regular virtual meetings to ensure the team was moving in the right direction. On a monthly basis, Sandra brings the team together for a face-to-face meeting. As the working relationships of the team members started improving, Sandra started seeing significant progress on the project.

### All is Going Smoothly (Stage 3: Norming)

The team has now been working together for nearly 3 months. There is definitely a sense of teamwork among the group. There are few arguments and disagreements that can't be resolved among the team. They support each other on the project – problem solving issues, making decisions as a team, sharing information and ensuring that the ground rules put in place for the team are followed.

Additionally, the team members are helping each other to grow and develop their skills. For example, Ameya has worked closely with Sarah to teach her many of the skills he has learned in database design and development and she has been able to take the lead on accomplishing some of the components of their aspect of the project.

Overall, the team members are becoming friends. They enjoy each other's company – both while working on the project and after hours via communicating on email, via instant messaging, on Twitter, or over the telephone.

### Significant Progress is Made! (Stage 4: Performing)

The team is now considered a "high performing team." It wasn't easy getting to this stage but they made it! They are working effectively as a group – supporting each other and relying on the group as a whole to make decisions on the project. They can brainstorm effectively to solve problems and are highly motivated to reach the end goal as a group. When there is conflict on the team – such as a disagreement on how to go about accomplishing a task – the group is able to work it out on their own without relying on the team leader to intervene and make decisions for them. The more junior members – Donna and Sarah – have really developed their skills with the support and help of the others. They have taken on leadership roles for some components of the project.

Sandra checks in with the team – praising them for their hard work and their progress. The team celebrates the milestones reached along the way. When necessary, Sandra provides a link from the team to the executives for decisions that need to come from higher up or when additional support is needed.

The project is on time and within budget. Milestones are being met – some are even ahead of schedule. The team is pleased with how well the project is going along, as is Sandra and the executives of the organization

### Time to Wrap Up (Stage 5: Adjourning)

The project has ended. It was a huge success! The internal customer is pleased and there is definitely an improvement in how the company supports its clients. It has been a great 8 months working together…with some ups and downs of course. Each of the individuals on the project will be moving to other projects within the organization, but no one is going to be on the same project. They will miss working with each other but have vowed to remain friends and keep in touch on a personal level – hopefully to work together again soon!

The team has gotten together in the New York office to discuss the project, including documenting best practices and discussing what worked effectively and what they would improve upon given the chance to do it again. Sandra has taken the team out to dinner. They are joined by the project sponsor and some other executives who are extremely pleased with the end result.

### The End!

This is a simplistic view of a team working through the five stages of team development. I hope it provides some benefit to you.

Remember that at any time this team could revert back to a previous stage. Let's assume that another individual joins the team – the team will revert back to the "forming" stage as they learn how to work with the new team member; reestablishing team guidelines, finding their way again, and learning how to work cohesively as a team. Or, let's assume that Mohammed slips back into his old ways of keeping to himself and not sharing information with the team – this may cause the team to revert back to the "storming" stage.

### Summary

It is important to remember that every team – regardless of what the team is working on – will follow these stages of team development. It is the job of the team leader to help see the team through these stages; to bring them to the point where they are working as effectively as possible toward a common goal.

(Abudi, Gina 2016. 'The Five Stages of Project Team Development'. https://project-management.com/the-five-stages-of-project-team-development, 27.08.2018)