

bruce tuckman and the group development model essay sample

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Bruce Wayne Tuckman a well-respected psychologist was born in 1938. In 1960 he completed a Bachelor of Science at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute situated in New York. After completing his bachelor, he attended Princeton University where he received his Masters and PhD in Psychology. Tuckman finished his studies in 1964 respectively, and since then has worked in many universities. He is currently Professor Emeritus of Educational Psychology and the Director of the Learning Center at the Ohio State University. Most of the works and theories Tuckman has done deal mainly with educational research and psychology. Although he has published many famous works such as his Theories and Applications of Educational Psychology (first published in 1996) or his novel The Long Road to Boston (1988), Tuckman is probably best known for his short article ' Developmental sequence in small groups' first published in 1965. He came up with this article while performing a research for the US Navy concerning the behavior of small groups in different environments. His original article basically explained the way in which the groups he was researching evolved, this was described using four distinct stages that a group has to go through as it starts to operate.

These four stages where: Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing. He concluded that in order for a team or group to achieve maximum effectiveness, it must first experience the four steps mentioned above. A fifth stage of Adjourning was later added in 1977 with the help of Mary Ann Jensen. Although simple, this model is very straightforward and effective. It helps think and understand the dynamics around the way teams develop and behave. This model suggest that since the beginning formation stage of a small group to the end of the task they are assigned to do, the team goes

through drastic changes from an unproductive beginning to a very efficient end. The model suggests that there shouldn't really be a team leader, rather every team member should slowly as we move stage to stage become more responsible and lead to a self managing team allowing freedom without a controlling team leader.

This report will look at the model of group development in detail and explain the way it is still being used today in real life situations either in small university class teams or in multi-national corporations.

1) Orientation/testing/dependence, to (2) conflict, to (3) group cohesion, to (4) functional role-relatedness.

Above, we can see the original description of Tuckmans model. It consists of the four main stages of team development. The diagram above does not include the fifth step which was later added, Adjourning, because sometimes teams might not even reach that stage. As you can see in the diagram, the arrows from stage to stage are reversible as the arrows point back and forth, this is because Tuckman believed that development is non-linear, meaning that sometimes team might have to go back to the stage they were in before due to either new team members joining, or a disagreement between the members etc. As teams move along the stages, they become stronger and more efficient, a reverse in the process would just slow down the assignment.

The first phase in Tuckmans group development model is Forming, as the name describes, this stage is the first stage to team building, where the

forming of the team occurs. In his article, Tuckman describes this stage as were “ groups initially concern themselves with orientation accomplished primarily through testing”. Testing is done on the group itself and on the leader if one is present, such testing is done by identifying the interpersonal and task behaviors boundaries. This stage is basically the introduction to all the teams’ members and to the task itself. It is not a very comfortable stage as the team members are just sometimes meeting for the first time and don’t know each other. Team members in this stage usually don’t act themselves fully as their behavior is driven by the desire to be accepted by the other team members, so they will agree to everything and avoid conflict with each other.

This stage can actually only last one day (the first meeting) as some teams might already be familiar with each other so their only task in this stage would be to focus on how the task is going to be completed (who does what, when to meet, etc). Not much usually gets done in this stage but it is very important as it sets ground to the future of the team and the approaches they are going to take to complete the task. Team members also learn about themselves in this stage and if a leader is needed they can appoint one here but also see how each member of the team works as an individual and how they respond to pressure.

Once forming has been completed, the group moves into the second stage called Storming. In this stage team members are much more comfortable around each other and start to share their views, contrary to the first stage in which any form of conflict was avoided. Therefore, if team members are

not very mature, some teams sometimes don't ever leave this stage as everyone confronts their opinions and views creating a big fight which does not get resolved. Although sometimes tough, this stage is necessary for the growth of the team. Tolerance, understanding, open-mindedness and patience is very important in this stage as to understand all the members views and try to work any problem out. If these are not present, the team will most probably fail. As the name also suggests, storming is where all the tension takes place, but a team is able to get through this stage with the help of the supervisors or leader through guidance of decision-making and professional behavior to resolve all problems and come to agreements.

The third phase in Norming, here is where the team actually starts to work efficiently with one common goal between the members, which is to successfully finish the task. Although every member has their own ideas and approaches to success, in this stage some members have had to give these up and agree with a mutual plan in order to make the team function and reach the goal of finishing the task. In this stage every team member has their jobs set and rules and communication between each other is well established. Each member has taken their responsibilities and it is very important not to argue or disagree about anything in this stage, as it would just lead them to regress back to the previous stage.

The fourth and in the original model, last stage is Performing. Not all teams are able to reach this stage, but some high-performing teams do and are able to function with good team members skills, behavior and team synergy. In this stage they are able to finish the job smoothly and effectively without

getting into any arguments. By this stage, the role of a leader is almost not needed as everyone can self manage and work independently and efficiently.

The final phase, Adjourning, which was added to its original model in 1977 by Mary Ann Jensen is the process of “ unforming” the group, it’s the phase in which the group dissolves and breaks apart once the job has been successfully completed. The team members will now part separate ways leaving with a sense of achievement and happiness knowing they have achieved the task they were asked to do.

To conclude, Tuckmans group development model has helped and guided many in today’s world, especially in the business world. This model allows the management of companies to have a better understanding of how teamwork should be and what to do when problems within groups arise. The model also helps the team members themselves realize what phase they are in and what their next steps should be for a more successful group. Of course this model is valuable and has benefited some companies, but it also has many limitations to it and generalizations, which have been greatly criticized by other theorists. The main critics that have been mentioned is that the model only actually applies to small groups as their behavior and way of acting is more predictable.

If we were to apply this model in a much bigger team lets say 50 people, it would not work as well as the relationship between so many people would be much more complicated than that of a group of 8 people. Other negative

things about the model people have said are that not all teams follow these stages and it is just a generalization. In my opinion I think his model is a great representation of the way groups act and form to complete a successful job. It explains and helps understand the dynamics and behavior of small groups and can help many companies and managers form organized groups and help develop a successful team.

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The sources I have used for my research in this report are credible because most authors of the articles used in which I took information from are experts such as Smith, M. K. Another source I used was from consulting companies such as Businessballs Index. All sources give a good explanation of Tuckmans model, and to conclude counter argue the pros and cons of the model.

This model is still useful today as it helps understand the dynamics of group behaviors. It helps companies and managers develop efficient teams which lead to quick successful results, keeping team members satisfied.