

By Bob Larcher

Group Development Models - A Comparison

For those involved in working with groups and facilitating group development, an understanding of the group development process is an absolute must.

The objective of this article is to:

- Compare five popular group development models, those of Tuckman, Tubbs, Cog, Fisher and Jones.
- Identify the behavioural indicators associated with each phase.
- Give some hints and tips as to how to move groups from one phase to the next.

I will use as the basis for the comparison the Tuckman "Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing" model, as it is both the earliest and probably the most widely used. All five models are "linear" in their approach with a general consensus of essentially four phases:

1. An initial phase of getting to know one another and understanding what the group is about.
2. A divergence phase where "like-minded" sub-groups or cliques are formed.
3. A coming together phase with a realisation that the group needs to share in order to move forward.
4. A final phase where the group is able to reconcile both individual and group needs.


The model of Jones is particularly interesting in that it explicitly separates Task Behaviours (getting things done) and Process Behaviours (how group members interact) in the form of a matrix; I find this useful in terms of deciding which type of exercise/activity to set the group.

Below are the group development phases depending on the model.

Tuckman	Tubbs	Cog	Fisher	Jones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forming ● Storming ● Norming ● Performing ● (Mourning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Orientation ● Conflict ● Consensus ● Closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Polite Stage ● Why We're Here ● Bid for Power ● Constructive ● Esprit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Orientation ● Conflict ● Emergence ● Reinforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Immature group ● Fragmented group ● Sharing group ● Effective team ● Team Synergy

The Forming phase of the Tuckman model includes the Polite phase and the Why We're Here phases of Cog, the Orientation phase of both Tubbs and Fisher and corresponds more or less to the Immature Group phase of the Jones Model. Group members who have not worked together as a group before, or who may not even know each other, will be polite at first, hesitant about speaking their minds and mindful of how others perceive them. At some stage, perhaps by the second meeting, or even after five minutes, someone will draw attention to the task at hand, and the group's attention will be drawn to that. Members are then thinking of themselves in relation to the task - what they might have to contribute etc.


In order to move the group forward we need to allow time for group members to get to know one another, build a shared purpose/mission and continuously clarify group outcomes while working on personal commitment by linking personal goals to group roles.



Typical behavioural indicators for this phase are:

- Questioning the objectives of the group
- Lack of involvement
- One-way communication
- Confusion
- Low morale
- Hidden feelings
- Politeness
- Poor listening

Storming or Bid For Power begins when group members begin to engage with the group and the task. Members put forward ideas about how things should be, and a kind of power struggle takes place. If there is a designated group leader, that person may be challenged. Storming may seem like an uncomfortable or unwelcome process, but it is necessary before the group can settle into a generally accepted way of doing things. Without it, members would be disengaged from the group and unclear about where they stand in relation to the group. Work or tasks during this phase are often executed by cliques or sub-groups within the group, hence the term Fragmented Group in the Jones Model and Conflict in the models of Tubbs and Fisher.



Typical behavioural indicators for this phase are:

- Lack of cohesion
- Decisions are hard to make
- Hidden agendas
- Conflicts
- Compromise
- Power plays
- Resentment, anger

In order to move the group forward it is important to pull the "fragments" of the group together in order to move towards a collective rather than individual output. We need to encourage group members to express their differing opinions, ideas, and feelings by asking open-ended questions, we need to raise issues, confront deviations from commitments and make connections between divergent perspectives. We need to set realistic targets for the group in order for them to achieve a few performance goals and tasks.

Norming is the phase where the group begins to form its own 'culture' or generally accepted understandings about how things will be done. Group norms may be overt and written, like ground rules, or unspoken, unacknowledged practices that arise. It is in this phase of the group's development that the group starts to feel like a "whole." Group members share information, ideas and perceptions as they emerge and a consensus is sought as to how to become truly effective.

Helpful in the this phase are: explicit queries around group norms, flexibility around norms, considering the value of particular norms, explicit statements of leader's and members' values, discussing group norms rather than just letting them happen.

Once the group culture is established, the group can really start to work; Performing in the terms of Tuckman, Effective Team for Jones and the Constructive phase for Cog.

It is helpful in this phase to: celebrate successes, share rewards, formally give and receive feedback and recognise both group and individual achievements.

Esprit or Team Synergy is a bonus phase - it is what happens when a group is working so well that the synergy created brings about an excellence which goes

beyond the sum of the individual contributions. In the Performing phase, group leadership is usually shared between group members; the designated leader becomes more of a participant, but is ready to stand in where necessary.

Mourning means the way the group approaches the ending of its task, finishing off and acknowledging the ending of the group's unique relationships. Helpful in

the Mourning phase are: specific acknowledgement of the ending, realistic plans and procedures, reminiscing, accepting recognition, praise etc, allowing time for goodbyes.

It is also useful here for individuals to capture "best practice" and "lessons learned" in order to help accelerate the team development process in future teams. ■

Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unclear objectives ● Uninvolvement ● Uncommitted ● One-way communication ● Confusion ● Low morale ● Hidden feelings ● Poor listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of cohesion ● Subjectivity ● Hidden agendas ● Conflicts ● Confrontation ● Volatility ● Resentment, anger ● Inconsistency ● Failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questioning performance ● Reviewing/clarify objectives ● Changing/confirming roles ● Opening risky issues ● Assertiveness ● Listening ● Testing new ground ● Identify and building on strengths and weaknesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creativity ● Initiative ● Flexibility ● Open relationships ● Pride ● Concern for people ● Learning ● Confidence ● High morale ● Success

References

Tuckman, Bruce W. (1965) 'Developmental sequence in small groups', *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384-399. The article was reprinted in *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal* - Number 3, Spring 2001 and is available as a Word document: <http://dennislearningcenter.osu.edu/references/GROUP%20DEV%20ARTICLE.doc>.

Tubbs, Stewart. (1995). *A systems approach to small group interaction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.

Cog's Ladder of group development is based on the work, "Cog's Ladder: A Model of Group Growth", by George O. Charrier, an employee of Procter and Gamble, written and published for a newsletter in that company in 1972.

Fisher, B. Aubrey. (1970). Phases in group decision making. *Small Group Decision Making*, 1993. ISBN: 9780070212121

John E. Jones 1975 *Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*. An overview of the model can be seen at: <http://www.hrdq.com/products/gda.htm>.

Author's Notes

I am a British independent Management Development Consultant living and working in Toulouse. I would appreciate any comments on the above article and can be contacted by the following methods: Tel (home) 00 33 5 61 15 76 08 Tel (mobile) 00 33 6 82 38 45 44 E-mail: boblarcher@yahoo.com W: www.boblarcher.com

Photos: Karen Stuart