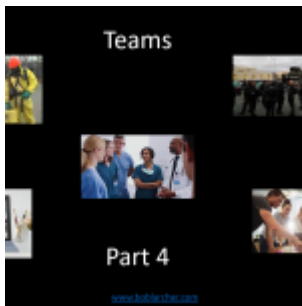# Teams – part 4

The fourth of a five-part series of posts around the subject of teams

In this part I will look at the team development process

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success"

Henry Ford

Clearly, high performance within in a team isn't instantaneous; a collection of disparate individuals needs time to become a cohesive and supportive whole, heading in a common direction. The journey from "forming" to "performing" is not linear, it is not timebound and the destination is always changing

Virtually all team development models identify four common "phases" or "configurations" that teams go through in their search for the holy grail of team performance

1. An initial phase of getting to know one another and understanding what the team is about.

Depending on the model chosen this phase goes under a variety of names, forming phase, polite phase, orientation phase, etc. In this phase authors agree that team members will be hesitant about speaking their minds and mindful of how others perceive them; with members thinking of themselves, individually, in

relation to the task and what they might have to contribute.

If time is allowed for team members to get to know one another, build a shared purpose/mission and continuously clarify team outcomes while working on personal commitment by linking personal goals to team roles; the team will start to move forward on its journey

> 2. A divergence phase where "like-minded" sub-teams or cliques are formed.

Storming or Bid For Power, depending on the chosen model, begins when team members begin to engage with the team 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 team leader, that person may be challenged. Storming may seem like an uncomfortable or unwelcome process, but it is necessary before the team can settle into a generally accepted way of doing things. Without it, members would be disengaged from the team and unclear about where they stand in relation to the team. Work or tasks during this phase are often executed by cliques or sub-teams within the team, hence the term "Fragmented Team" in the Jones Model and "Conflict" in the models of Tubb's and Fisher.

In order to move the team forward, it is important to pull the "fragments" of the team together in order to achieve a collective rather than individual output. Team members need to be encouraged to express their differing opinions, ideas, and feelings so as to raise issues, confront deviations from commitments and make connections between divergent perspectives. Realistic targets need to be set for the team to enable them to start achieving performance goals and tasks.

> 3. A coming together phase with a realisation that the team needs to share in order to move forward.

This, "Norming" phase is where the team begins to generate its own 'culture' or accepted understandings about how things are

done. Team norms may be overt and written, like ground rules, or unspoken, unacknowledged practices that arise. It is in this phase of the team's development that the individuals starts to feel like a "collective." Team members share information, ideas and perceptions as they emerge and a consensus is sought as to how to become truly effective.

4. A final phase where the team is able to reconcile both individual and team needs

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

A team, and its members, in this phase will have incorporated not only tasks and people needs, but also individual and collective needs. Leadership is often shared in this phase with the designated leader becoming more of a participant, but ready to stand-in when necessary. It is in this phase that the synergy created brings about an excellence which goes beyond the sum of the individual contributions.

The whole process is not a linear, mono-dimensional journey. Teams can accelerate, become derailed, fall-back, get lost and, in some case, implode and disintegrate.

If you would like to discuss teams and their development do not hesitate to contact me at boblarcher@boblarcher.com