

# HPT: Stages in Team Development



A number of formal assessment and management tools are routinely deployed in organizations to help facilitate the formation and operations of high performing teams. This module will focus on the stages of team development, with a focus on Tuckman's model of team development. The applicability and validity of this and other team development models will be explored in order to give the learners the ability to apply them in a more informed and productive way.

## ☰ Module Objectives

### TUCKMAN'S STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

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#### ☰ Overview of Tuckman's Stages of Team Development

#### ☰ Stage 1: Forming

#### ☰ Stage 2: Storming

#### ☰ Stage 3: Norming

#### ☰ Stage 4: Performing

☰ Stage 5: Adjourning

🔍 Knowledge Check

#### OTHER MODULES

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☰ Other Models of Team Development

☰ Scenario

#### RESOURCES

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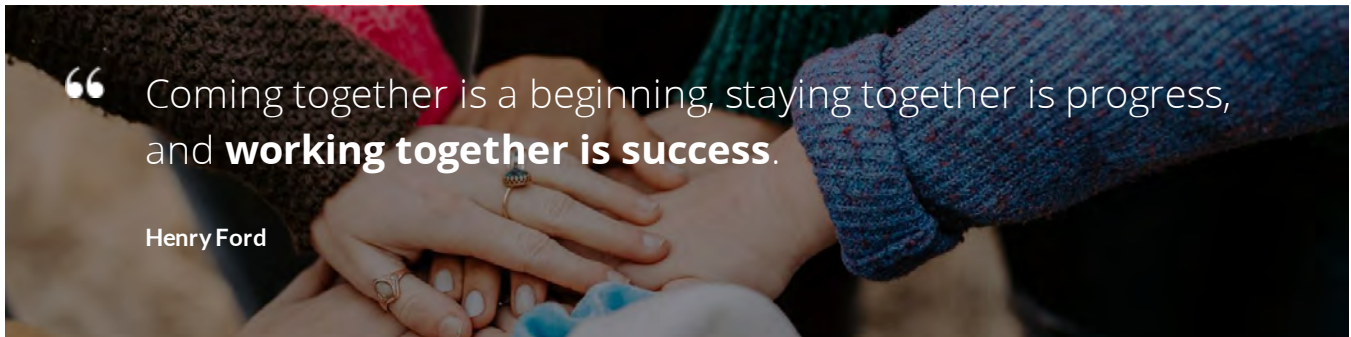
☰ References & Resources

#### QUESTION BANKS

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# Module Objectives

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**By the end of this module, you will be equipped with the knowledge to:**

- 1 Identify and describe Tuckman's five stages of team development
- 2 Assess your own team's stage of development
- 3 Design and apply strategies to support the development of your team

[CONTINUE](#)

# Overview of Tuckman's Stages of Team Development

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Group of individuals staring at a sunset.

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## Introduction

You may work on a team for a short-term project, or you may be part of a team that you work with on an ongoing basis. No matter what type of team you are on, productive teams have been found to go through clear stages of team development.

This module will review Tuckman's Stages of Team Development and give you an opportunity to reflect on your own experience working with teams and help you to facilitate your team's development.

Other modules of development exist and each breaks down development into stages. These stages can be a helpful way to identify behaviours on your team, and help you to have a conversation with members, to maximize your experience and productivity on your team.

## Tuckman's Stages of Team Development

If you are familiar with the stages of team development you most likely have come across Tuckman's 1965 Stages of Team Development. The original model included forming, storming, norming and performing. An additional stage—adjourning—was added over time. While the model is presented as linear, it is recognized by many that teams may move between stages.

Forming

This stage represents the beginning of a team's formation, where teams are working to orient

Storming

The key element of this stage is a lack of unity, resistance and emotions.

Norming

In this stage teams have established group norms

Performing

In this stage teams have a shared vision of the team and working efficiently

Adjourning

In this final stage of team development the task is completed, and the team disbands. Sometimes called



Having trouble accessing the video or interactive transcript? Watch online at this link: <https://stream.queensu.ca/Watch/j4PRm26B>

Now, let's dig in further to each of the stages of Tuckman's model to understand how the stages influence teams' feelings, behaviours, task performance, and leadership.



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**CONTINUE**



# Stage 1: Forming

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This stage represents the beginning of a team's formation, where teams are working to orient themselves to the task and establish the ground rules of the team.

<b>FEELINGS</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS</b>	<b>TASKS</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP</b>
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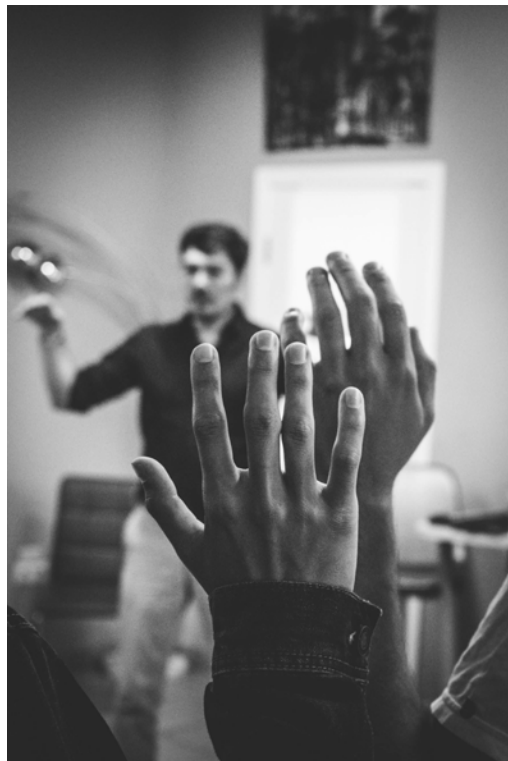
Team members are excited to be a part of a new team and looking forward to the work that is facing them. There may also be uncertainty about the team and what lies ahead.



**FEELINGS**

**TASKS**

There may be many questions as team members learn about the tasks, the members on the team, and their own role.



**FEELINGS**

**BEHAVIOURS**

**TASKS**

**LEADERSHIP**

The team works to orient themselves to the tasks—obtaining clarity about the tasks, including the goals, structure and direction, as well as the roles of the team members. Orientation activities can help to ground the members in the team's goals and to establish expectations about the team's product and process. A focus on task accomplishment may be low as energies are focused on defining the team and tasks; however, this is an excellent time to learn about yourself and what you bring to the team by reviewing the 'Know Yourself, Know Your Teammates' High-Performance Teams module.



<b>FEELINGS</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS</b>	<b>TASKS</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP</b>
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During this phase, a leader may take a more active and directive role in team development—building in activities to help the team get to know each other, clarify roles, and build relationships. Leaders will help to establish expectations and goals and determine the initial action plans. Leaders at this stage can also establish a norm of rapid learning. If you are looking for team building activities during the forming stage, [here are some ideas](#).



## Activities to Support Forming

The following activities have been derived from [SessionLab](#).

### Three-Question Mingle —

For some groups, the idea of getting to know you activities elicits a collective groan. Overly prescriptive or unimaginative exercises can frustrate a team, particularly if it's not their first rodeo. In this activity from Hyper Island, group members create their own questions on Post-Its and trade them with other group members as they mingle and break the ice.

At the end of the exercise, all of the questions go up on a whiteboard to encourage further conversation throughout the day. By encouraging the group to take ownership of this part of the team development process, you can meaningfully impact the Forming stage.

[Click here](#) for the activity instructions.

## Nine Dimensions Team Building Activity —

Effective relationships between team members go beyond work. Truly getting to know your colleagues and building strong relationships require honest self-appraisal, deeper sharing, and clear communication. This activity is a great way of quickly and efficiently help a team share themselves and go beyond the scope of some standard activities. This team development exercise also helps to promote self-appraisal and personal development, both of which become even more important as the team continues to grow and develop—it's a great way to use the opportunity to get to know each other meaningfully.

[Click here](#) for the activity instructions.

**CONTINUE**

## Stage 2: Storming

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This is a critical phase that can be difficult to manage as it is often where **conflict occurs**. It is important here that the team seeks clarity on their goals and that they understand and accept the unique skills and styles each member brings. Getting to know each other, and yourself, in the forming stage sets a strong foundation to move through the storming phase.

<b>FEELINGS</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS</b>	<b>TASKS</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP</b>
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Team members begin to realize that the team and tasks may not live up to their vision or expectations. Members may become frustrated with the team's approach, processes, or with the overall clarity of the objectives.



**FEELINGS**

**TASKS**

Members may express their frustration about the goals, expectations, roles, and responsibilities that have and are being expressed. Frustrations may be directed at team members, leadership, the organization, or the task itself. Overt conflict may occur and members may argue or become critical.



FEELINGS

BEHAVIOURS

TASKS

LEADERSHIP

During this storming stage, teams need to refocus on the goals and objectives, and begin to break down the tasks into smaller achievable steps. The team may need to identify and develop skills related to the task as well as develop group processes and conflict management skills. Working on team communication is key to ensuring that the team moves through the storming phase.





<b>FEELINGS</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS</b>	<b>TASKS</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP</b>
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Leaders can help teams organize and support the enactment of ideas. Leaders can provide individual feedback and coaching and be aware of potential tensions between members. It is important that leaders ensure the team views conflict productively, and that they support the team in identifying how concerns will be raised and discussed. Leaders may take on a coaching role to support teams through conflict.



## Activities

For further information on dealing with conflict in teams, [check out this module](#). It offers insights into both how teams address conflict and how individuals on teams deal with conflict.

CONTINUE

## Stage 3: Norming

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During this phase, the team settles into a rhythm and members begin **working cohesively** towards their **identified goal**.

FEELINGS	BEHAVIOURS	TASKS	LEADERSHIP
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Team members feel a sense of comfort at this stage, having gotten to know each other and clarified their tasks and roles. There is a feeling of acceptance of others on the team and recognition that each brings a unique and valued perspective. Members start to enjoy being part of the team and the increased cohesion.



**FEELINGS**

**TASKS**

The team makes an effort to resolve problems/conflict and there is a feeling of cohesion on the team. Communication may be more meaningful and there is a willingness to share ideas and ask for help.



FEELINGS

BEHAVIOURS

TASKS

LEADERSHIP

The team shifts their attention to the team's goals and there is increased productivity—both in the individual contribution and overall team's work.



FEELINGS	BEHAVIOURS	TASKS	LEADERSHIP
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During this time, leaders and members need to acknowledge their success and continue to be aware of the team's dynamics and individual and group performance. Leaders may want to have teams reflect on their development and performance and provide team-level performance feedback. A team self-assessment could be considered. Leadership may shift to a transactional style.



## Activities

The following are taken from [SessionLab](#):

### Appreciations Exercise —

Building team bonds and creating space for your team can be about simply having fun together, though structured time to give appreciation to your colleagues can be effective in not only boosting morale but in improving motivation and communication, too.

In this method, invite participants to write a few words on what they value most about their colleagues on a piece of paper before passing it along to the next person. After going around the circle, invite each person to share which comment they liked the most. By sharing what everyone values about each other, you can build self-confidence and team bonds that can help the group move from norming to performing effectively.

[Click here](#) for the activity instructions.

## Circles of Influence —

A large part of giving your team members room to grow is by allowing them to focus on where they can have the most impact and refining priorities to remove or minimize extraneous concerns. Circles of Influence is a great exercise to help your team reflect on what affects them and to see how they can meaningfully impact what concerns or influences them.

While you will have discussed and considered team and individual priorities earlier in the group development process, this is an iterative process that should be revisited and improved upon as the team grows. Giving each team member the space to focus on what is best for both them and team can be a vital part of moving from norming to performing—so be sure not to rest on your laurels and keep pushing!

[Click here](#) for the activity instructions.

**CONTINUE**



## Stage 4: Performing

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This is the **ideal state** of a team, where members have **clarity** on their roles and tasks. Members see themselves as part of the team, and are committed and working together towards their goals. This is peak performance! Not all teams reach this stage.

FEELINGS

BEHAVIOURS

TASKS

Team members feel a sense of satisfaction with the team's progress and overall functioning. Individuals feel a connection to the team and may feel that their work together is "greater than the sum of its parts." Members at this stage feel confident in their individual abilities and those of the team members.



**FEELINGS**

**TASKS**

Team members work together to solve problems—working on both team processes and tasks. Members may move beyond their initial roles and take on additional roles and responsibilities when needed.



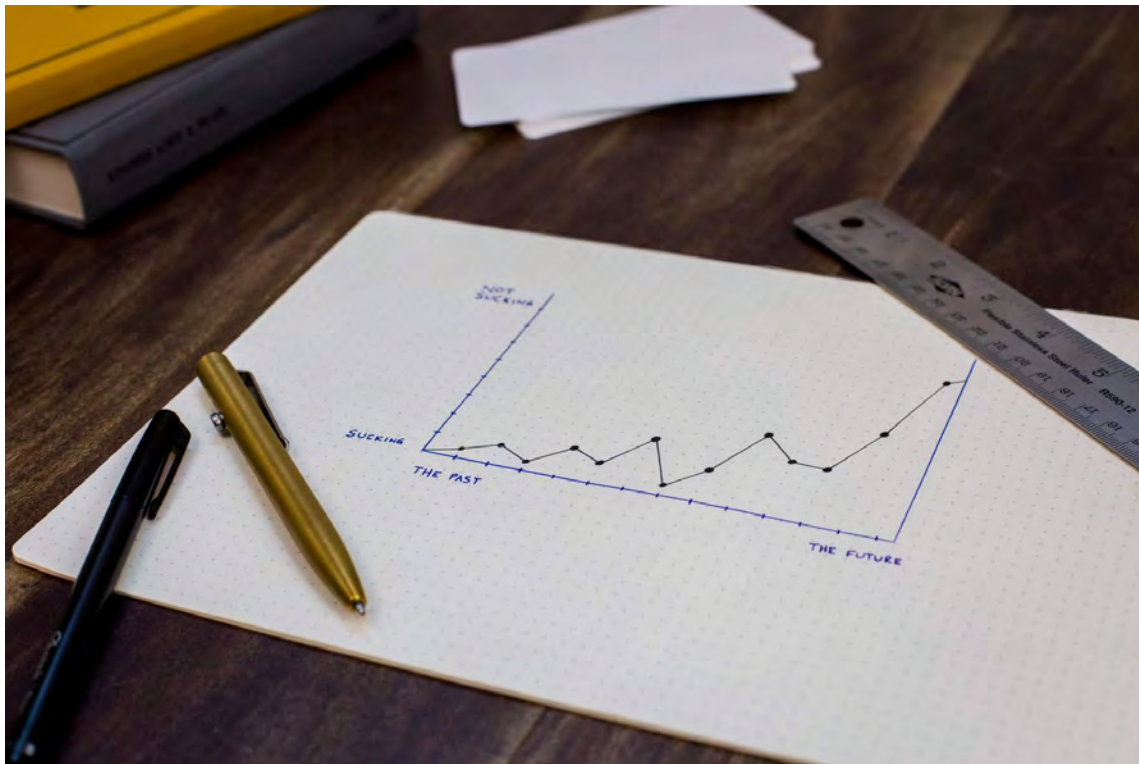
**FEELINGS**

**BEHAVIOURS**

**TASKS**

**LEADERSHIP**

Here the team is making progress toward its goals. Team members are committed to the team and members are competent. Team members need to be committed to continual learning and development.



FEELINGS

BEHAVIOURS

TASKS

LEADERSHIP

As a leader, it is important to continue to recognize team and individual performance, looking to promote the team's accomplishments more broadly. Teams at this stage are performing well and independently—leaders/project managers may take a more visionary approach, looking to foster continual growth and development of individuals on the team and the team itself.



## Activities

The following are taken from [SessionLab](#).

### **I used to think...But now I think...** —

Reflecting on how perspectives and working practices have changed and been positively affected by individual and group effort can reveal great learning points for the future. Though this activity can be used as a debriefing exercise at the end of a project, it can also be effective at surfacing the positive outcomes of initiatives like moving a team from norming to performing. It's also a great way of reinforcing how far you've come as a group and to celebrate how you've grown. By documenting the individual and group responses, you can begin to chart how attitudes have changed and improved and thus understand how you can do so again in the future.

[Click here](#) for the activity instructions.

## Blind Square - Rope Game

Having fun together can be an often overlooked element of team development. Seeing your colleagues as more than their job roles is something that should happen in the early stages of the forming process, but it's important to keep engaging these muscles. This method is a classic facilitation method designed to bring a team together to solve a seemingly simple task that teaches and reinforces the importance of planning, communication, collaboration and problem solving. Even as a team improves in performance, it's vital to keep improving and engaging these skill sets in the name of better cooperation and team development.

[Click here](#) for the activity instructions.

CONTINUE

## Stage 5: Adjourning

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This final phase was added after the initial model and recognizes the importance of attending to the end of a project—when the work is completed or when an organizations needs change.

FEELINGS	BEHAVIOURS	TASKS
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There may be a wide range of feelings at this stage. There may be feelings of uncertainty and anxiety as the project ends and the team adjourns. There may also be feelings of sadness and loss of team relationships. Other members may feel a sense of satisfaction and pride at what the team has accomplished. There may also be a sense of relief if the team was unable to move beyond the storming phase, or if there was dissatisfaction with processes or outcomes.



FEELINGS	BEHAVIOURS	TASKS
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Individuals may enhance productivity as the project winds down. Alternatively, some team members may become less focused as they move on to other projects and teams.



FEELINGS	BEHAVIOURS	TASKS
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It is important that the team acknowledges the conclusion of their work. Teams need to ensure they have completed their objectives and any outstanding tasks. Ideally, teams also reflect on their process and final product, identifying any "lessons learned" that they can bring to future teams. Finally, it is important to have a celebration or specific acknowledgment of the team's accomplishments.



## Activities

The following are taken from [SessionLab](#).

### History Map —

Purposeful reflection often means tracing the entire journey of a team or project and pinpointing moments of success, difficulty and change. With History Map, you can help your team consider all of the major learning points of a project or time period, while also celebrating highlights and bringing the



project to an effective close. The creation of a shared resource for future sharing and reflection is also a massive benefit, especially for virtual or asynchronous teams!

[Click here](#) for the activity instructions.

## **Bus Trip** —

Quick-fire appreciation exercises can be great for generating energy and fun during a retrospective meeting or reflection session. Bus Trip is a great method for helping a group meaningfully celebrate one another while also keeping things moving. In this exercise, invite participants to imagine they are seated on a bus together and give them just 45 seconds to share appreciative comments about the person sitting next to them before the other person returns the favour. Rotate seats and in a short period of time, everyone has shared feedback, celebrated one another, and likely had some fun while doing so, too!

[Click here](#) for the activity instructions.

# Knowledge Check

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Check your knowledge of Tuckman's Stages of Team Development covered in this module by completing this quiz.

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*Question*

**01/04**

Which of the following are part of Tuckman's Five Stages of Team Development?

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Storming

Adjourning

Forming

Conforming

Warming

Question

02/04

What definition best characterizes the norming phase?

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- This stage represents the beginning of a team's formation, where teams are working to orient themselves to the task and establish the ground rules of the team.
- The key element of this stage is a lack of unity, resistance and emotions. Members of the team are working to establish themselves within the team.
- In this stage teams have established group norms that ensure a team's harmony and cohesion.
- In this stage teams have a shared vision of the team and working efficiently together on the task/project.
- In this final stage of team development the task is completed, and the team disbands. Sometimes called 'mourning' members may feel a loss as the project ends.

*Question*

**03/04**

Which of these stages represent the time characterized by excitement and also uncertainty?

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning

**Question**

**04/04**

Match the Tuckman stage with its characteristics.

<p>☰ Adjourning</p>	<p>Teams are working to orient themselves to the task and establish ground rules.</p>
<p>☰ Forming</p>	<p>Members of the team are working to establish themselves within the team.</p>
<p>☰ Storming</p>	<p>Teams have established group norms that ensure a team's harmony and cohesion.</p>
<p>☰ Performing</p>	<p>Teams have a shared vision of the team and work efficiently together.</p>
<p>☰ Norming</p>	<p>Sometimes called 'mourning' members may feel a loss as the project ends.</p>

# Other Models of Team Development

Although Tuckman's model is well established and widely used, it is not without its limitations. There are a few key criticisms that must be considered.

1. Team development is presented as a **linear process** and assumes that all teams move through all phases
2. The team is largely viewed in a **closed system**
3. Minimal consideration is given to how teams **continue to grow** and develop over time

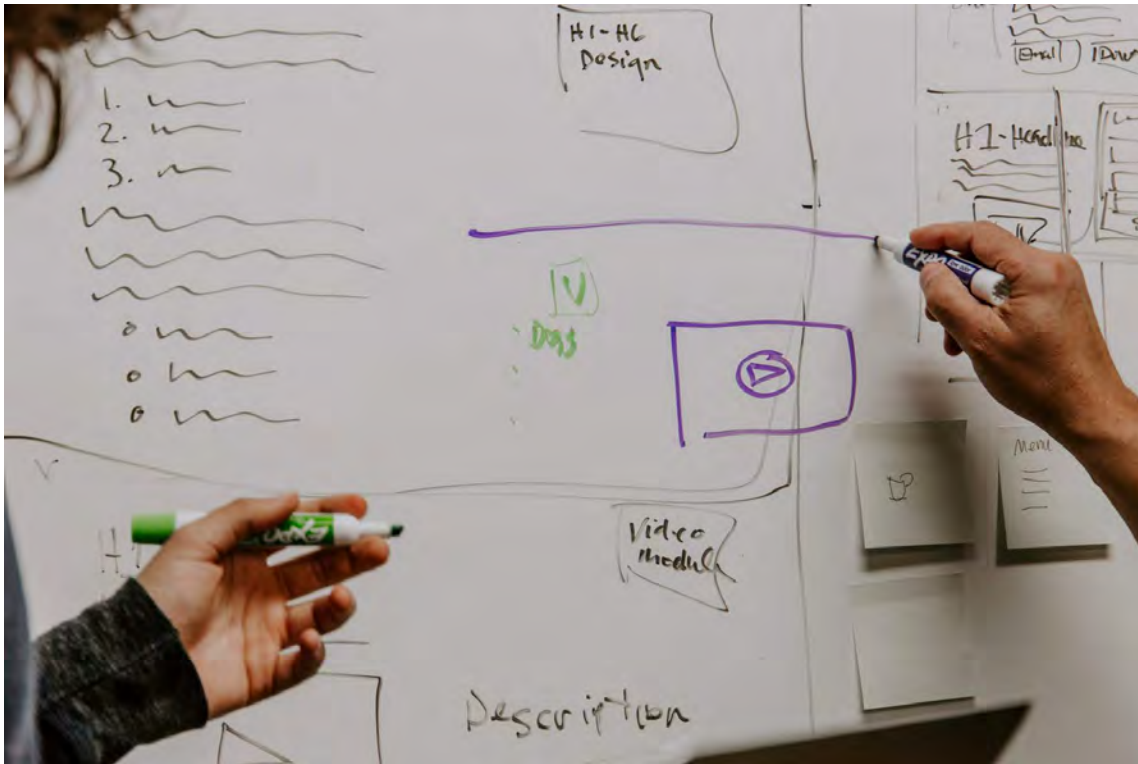
Other models of team development have been proposed over the years. Although there are differences among them, each recognizes distinct phases that teams work through together.

## Tubbs' System Model of Group Development

Developed by Stewart Tubbs, the Tubbs Systems Model considers the evolution of a team across four linear stages. The model looks at teams from a systems perspective, with three broad inputs that interact with one another: relevant background factors, internal influences, and consequences. Teams are seen as fluid, evolving as they encounter obstacles and integrating feedback to complete their objectives. Explore the four stages of Tubbs' Systems Model below.

Orientation

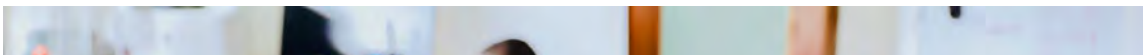
Members identify task expectations and emerging strategies to address the task/work in front of them. The group begins to form connections and establish how the group will work together.



## Conflict

With the team more comfortable with the internal relationships, the team now shifts their focus to the tasks. Greater commitment to the project inevitably results in friction and conflict. Conflict is seen as a necessary part of group development, allowing the group to consider and evaluate ideas.







## Closure

At *Closure*, the team has completed their objective(s) and members leave to focus on other projects and teams.





CONTINUE

# Scenario

You will now be presented with this module's version of the shared HPT scenario.

Please read through the following scenario slowly, allowing each sentence to "sink in."

After the scenario, you will be asked a number of questions about your thoughts and intentions for managing the issue at hand, as it relates to this module (applying your knowledge of this module's content).



**High-Performance  
Teams Scenario**

# Teams Scenario

## Scenario Questions

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**Which of Tuckman's Stages of Team Development is *your* team in?  
What are the key features of this stage?**

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**What potential activities can you engage the team in to support their development at this stage?**

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**If you are in a team lead position (or imagine yourself as the team lead), what approach would you take to best support the team in this stage?**

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**Following this stage, what do you anticipate that the team will experience next? How might you prepare for this next stage in the team's development?**

# References & Resources

## Books

- Tubbs, S. L., & Cooper, D. H. (2009). *A systems approach to small group interaction*. 10th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

## Reports

- Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 63(6), 384–399. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0022100>

## Websites

- *How to use the 5 stages of team development (and build better teams!)*. SessionLab. (2021, February 11). Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://www.sessionlab.com/>.