



Four steps to instill real team momentum

Stakes

Simply gathering a diverse set of individuals with complementary skills is not enough to guarantee they will function productively as a team. Momentum must be created to enable people to confront their viewpoints constructively and find solutions that capitalize upon these diverse perspectives. The findings of psychologist Bruce Tuckman show that high-performance teams go through several intermediary stages.

Four unavoidable stages

For teams to reach their full potential, they must be guided successively through the following four stages:

Stage	Description	Objectives	Tips for the leader
Forming	Team members try to find their bearings and wonder whether devoting energy to the team will be worth the effort	Define a framework for working together and motivate each member to get involved	• Clarify why each member was selected and their expected contributions • Remind everyone how they are each concerned by the success of the mission • Specify the operating principles governing the team • Encourage the members to establish good relationships with one another • Encourage debate to get the members used to confronting their viewpoints
Storming	Initial work underlines differences among the members and provokes conflict	Help the team learn to manage disagreements constructively	• Don't rush to relieve tension immediately; the team must learn to manage conflict on its own • Guide the team in resolving disagreements, without imposing your own solutions • Help the most withdrawn members express themselves • Combat polarization, by helping to reconcile opposing viewpoints
Norming	The participants have learned to appreciate the contributions of the other members and are happy working together	Direct efforts in the right direction. Avoid "groupthink," by focusing on performance rather than the pleasure of working together	• Channel collective energy in the right direction by setting specific objectives and allocating tasks • Push the team outside of its comfort zone; insist on quality standards, ask destabilizing questions • Remind people that disagreements must be expressed for a team to perform well
Performing	Efforts are focused on maximizing performance, rather than on individual or collective well being	Maintain motivation and the continuous search for excellence	• Manage the risk of complacency; exercise discipline in assessing performance; don't mask dysfunctions or disagreements • Celebrate successes to maintain momentum and motivation • Manage the dip that follows initial enthusiasm, as the first constraints and problems begin to appear.