



Developing Your Group

As a group or organization forms, it goes through certain predictable stages, progressing from a collection of individuals to a cohesive group working together for a common cause. Two dimensions are present in any group and influence its development-task functions and personal relations.

Four Stages Of Group Development

Stage I

Personal relations are characterized by dependency on the leader to provide structure.

Major task functions concern the orientation of group members to the work they are being asked to do. The issues have to be specified.

Common behavior at this point is questioning why we are here, what we are supposed to do, how are we going to get it done, and what are our goals.

Stage II

Personal relations: conflict and confrontation among group members; who is responsible for what; what are going to be the work rules; what are going to be the limits; what is going to be the reward system; what is the criteria?

The variety of organizational concerns that emerge reflect conflict over leadership structure, power and authority.

It is important that strategies are implemented to help members move constructively from conflict toward renewed commitment to the group. If this does not happen, members may isolate or even remove themselves from the group during this phase.

Stage III

Personal relations are marked by cohesion; people begin to experience a feeling of belonging to the group.

They begin sharing ideas, feelings, giving feedback to each other, soliciting feedback, exploring actions related to the task and sharing information related to the task.

This becomes a period during which people feel good about being a part of a group and there is a brief abandonment of the task and a period of play--the enjoyment of the cohesion that is being experienced.

Stage IV

Interdependence is achieved by group members; members can work autonomously, in any sub-groupings or as a total unit. They are highly task and people oriented.

Group's tasks are well defined, there is high commitment to common activity and support for experimentation with solving problems.

A collective, interdependent organism is the final outcome of the process of group development.

Possible Courses Of Action (Or What A Leader Can Do)

Stage I

Leader should provide as much structure as possible; team building is important here.

Stage II

Leader may need to provide clarification or justification to group members; leader may also spend time with individual members to help them clarify their feelings about group involvement.

Stage III

Leader should identify the transition and capitalize on it; members are ready to work hard, so the leader must provide opportunities for this to occur.

Stage IV

Leader can take a less active role and allow the group considerable autonomy. Member's interdependence, flexible approaches to task accomplishment, commitment to self-assessment and appropriate adjustment or adaptation readily occurs.

Reference: Sara Boatman, Group Development; Pfeiffer/Jones