

MODULE D BACKGROUND INFORMATION PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Background Information

Effective Teams

In everyday life, whether at school, at work, or at home, we seldom work, function, or perform in isolation. At some point, individuals work within a team to accomplish an individual or team goal. To interact with others effectively, it is important to understand the characteristics of effective teams, which enable us to feel connected to others and maximize the opportunities that teams offer. Being able to function as a team member is consistently identified as a skill necessary for success in the workplace, in sports, in family units, and so on.

Teams and Teamwork Skills

Teamwork takes place when two or more people coordinate their contributions and work toward achieving a common goal. This does not mean that the individual is no longer important; however, effective and efficient teamwork goes beyond individual achievements. Team members understand the team goals, have a sense of ownership for the goals, have trust in the other members, are honest and respectful of others, are valued for their knowledge and skills, and share in the decision-making process.

Teams differ significantly from uncoordinated groups, which are assemblies of individuals who tend to operate independently in working toward meeting their own goals. In these groups, members may be cautious about what they say, mistrust others, have closed relationships with other members, be bothered or threatened by differences of opinions, and may not participate in group decision making.

Given the differences between teams and low-functioning groups, it quickly becomes apparent why organizations and businesses place a premium on teamwork skills when considering a person for employment. Well-functioning teams exhibit certain characteristics that promote and enhance both individual and team goals.

The Conference Board of Canada, in its *Employability Skills 2000+*, identifies teamwork skills as employability skills, which are needed both in the workplace and in a range of daily activities. These skills are identified in RM S1-2: *Employability Skills 2000+* in *Senior 1 and Senior 2 Physical Education/Health Education: A Foundation for Implementation* (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth).

Common Characteristics of Effective Teams

The following are some common characteristics of effective teams:

- **A team has a clear purpose:** Team members understand why the team exists and share in the creation and accomplishment of team goals.
- **Team members understand the team process and priorities:** The team is clear on what needs to be done next, by whom, and by when. Team members understand that the accumulation of completed tasks leads to the effective and successful achievement of their final goal.
- **Team members know their roles:** Team members know and carry out their roles for getting their tasks completed and they seek assistance from and give assistance to others, as required.
- **Team members have a collaborative and collective commitment:** Collaboration among team members, with high levels of commitment, is achieved through shared decision making in a climate of trust created by open and honest communication and by consistent and respectful behaviour. Team norms for working together are established and regarded as standards for every team member.
- **Conflicts and disagreements are openly resolved:** Conflicts and disagreements are considered important to team decision making and personal growth. Reasons for conflicts and disagreements are examined and resolutions are sought. Some disagreements cannot be resolved, resulting in the need for compromises that do not block the team's efforts.
- **Constructive criticism and encouragement are extended to team members:** Criticism is never directed at team members but is focused on ways of removing obstacles and maintaining high performance standards. All members are consistently supported and encouraged as a way of maintaining high levels of motivation.
- **Success is shared:** Team members are made aware of their successes, and the team shares equally and proudly in the accomplishments.

Leadership is shared: Leadership shifts from time to time within an effective team as team members take on certain tasks and roles. Effective leadership is evident when the actions of the leader move the team closer to the final goal without personal gain or recognition

Team Development

Effective teamwork has become essential in today's world. A newly formed team cannot be expected to perform exceptionally well from the very outset, however. Becoming an effective team takes time, and usually follows some easily recognizable stages. A team will journey through these stages as it progresses from being a group of strangers to becoming a united team with a common goal.

Team Development Stages

Psychologist Bruce W. Tuckman first came up with a team development model in 1965 that is still used today. The stages of this model, referred to as the *Forming*, *Storming*, *Norming*, and *Performing* stages, describe the path to high performance that most teams follow. Later, Tuckman added a fifth stage that he called *Adjourning*. Tuckman's model is one of the best-known team development theories and has formed the basis of many further ideas since its conception.

Tuckman's model focuses on the way in which a team tackles a task, from the initial formation of the team through to the completion of the project. The theory is particularly relevant to team-building challenges, as the stages are relevant to the completion of any task undertaken by a team. One of the very useful aspects of team-building challenges is that teams have an opportunity to observe and discuss their behaviour within a short period of time.

Each stage of Tuckman's team development model is briefly outlined below:

1. **Forming**

- The team is assembled and the task is determined or assigned.
- Team members are generally positive and polite.
- Team members tend to behave independently and, although friendliness may exist, they do not know each other well enough to trust one another unconditionally.
- Some members are anxious, as they are not yet clear as to what work will be involved.
- Some members are excited about the task ahead and want to get started.

2. **Storming**

- The team members begin to address the task by suggesting ideas that may compete for recognition and ultimate acceptance.
- The ways of working as a team begin to be defined, which creates discomfort for some members who may disagree with the approach being used or who feel overwhelmed with the amount of work to be done.
- Some members may react by questioning how worthwhile the goal of the team is and resist taking on a task.
- In extreme cases, the team can become stuck in the *Storming* stage.
- If a team is too focused on reaching consensus, it may decide on a plan that is less effective in completing the task for the sake of the team.
- Some members feel they are on an emotional roller coaster as they try to focus on the task without the support of established processes or relationships with their team members.

3. Norming

- During this stage, the team moves toward harmonious working practices, with members agreeing on the rules and values by which they operate.
- The members are developing a strong commitment to the team goal, and they begin to see good progress toward reaching it.
- In the ideal situation, team members begin to trust each other during this stage as they accept the vital contribution of each member to the team. Now that the team members know each other better, they may be socializing together, and they are able to ask each other for help and provide constructive criticism.

4. Performing

- Not all teams make it to this stage, which is essentially a time of high performance.
- Strong teams are identified by high levels of interdependence, independence, motivation, knowledge, and competence.
- Decision making is collaborative and dissent is expected and encouraged, as there will be a high level of respect and trust in the communication between team members.
- Team members understand that hard work leads directly to progress toward their shared vision and goal, supported by the structures and processes that have been established.
- Individual team members may join or leave the team without affecting the performing approach of the group.

5. Adjourning

- This is the final stage that ends the project and sees the disbanding of the team.
- This stage is also referred to as the *Mourning* stage, as it reflects the feelings experienced by team members at the conclusion of their work.

Note that a team can return to any phase within the team development model if they experience a change (e.g., a review of the project or goals, a change in members). When a member leaves or a new member joins a successful team, the team will revert to the *Forming* stage, but this stage may last for a very short time as the new member experiences the team culture.

Team-Building and Communication Skills

Team Roles

A team is made up of all sorts of people. How these people interact and relate to one another is a key factor in determining how successful the team will be at achieving its goals. Some people are primarily concerned about getting the work done, others are helpful and supportive to team members, and still others can cause dissension or conflict within the team.

High-performing teams don't just happen. They develop because the team members pay attention to the tasks and to team interactions. High-performing teams get the job done and enjoy the process along the way. The team members are energized and hard-working, and manage themselves in their respective roles. The team's end product is characterized by excellence in quality and quantity.

Functional Roles of Team Members

Kenneth D. Benne and Paul Sheats, two theorists on group behaviour, wrote an influential article titled "Functional Roles of Group Members" in 1948. In this article, the authors defined various roles based on behaviours that can be played by one or more people within a group or team. Benne and Sheats defined three categories of roles: task roles, personal/social roles, and dysfunctional or individualistic roles.

In this lesson, the following three categories are used as the framework for understanding and strengthening a given team:

- **Task roles/actions** move a team toward accomplishing their objectives. These actions include setting goals, identifying tasks, gathering facts, providing information, clarifying and summarizing ideas, and building consensus. The possible roles within this category are those that may be needed to advance a team from the *Forming* to the *Performing* stage of team development.
- **Interactive roles/actions** are directed at the operation of a team or how the team is working together. These actions include encouraging participation, expressing feelings, reconciling disagreements, keeping communication open, setting and applying standards for group performance, and building on each other's ideas. It is through these actions that teams function positively and effectively.
- **Self-oriented roles/actions** put the needs of the individual ahead of the needs of the team. They include dominating the discussion, interrupting, wasting time, not listening, withdrawing from the conversation, and holding side conversations. A team that has individuals demonstrating these behaviours is in jeopardy of not realizing its goals/objectives. Well-established teams will be able to manage these behaviours. Newly formed teams may require leader intervention.

Knowing the behaviours that can move a team forward or hinder its progress can be helpful to all team members.

Individual Communication Skills

Now that students have examined and experienced the characteristics of effective teams, it is important to determine the individual communication skills required to establish team relationships that support these characteristics. The individual communication skills include the following:

- **Listening:** Listening actively involves looking directly at the person who is speaking (taking into consideration cultural appropriateness), focusing intently on what is being said, and nodding to indicate attentiveness, understanding, or approval. Effective communication is a vital part of any team, so strong listening skills are highly valued.

- **Contributing ideas and solutions:** Sharing suggestions, ideas, solutions, and proposals with team members is another important communication skill. The ability and willingness to share increase when levels of trust are high. Reporting on individual and team progress is another way to contribute to team success.
- **Respecting and valuing:** All forms of communication are enhanced within a team when the members respect and value each other, regardless of their strengths and/or weaknesses. Team communication is strengthened when members encourage and support the ideas and efforts of others.
- **Questioning and clarifying:** If there is uncertainty about something being said, it is important to ask for more information to clear up any confusion before moving on. Asking probing questions and paraphrasing points that have been made (restating them in different words) are also effective ways to ensure deeper understanding and clear and accurate communication.
- **Persuading and defending:** The power of positive communication is evident when members exchange, defend, and rethink ideas. Presenting points of view and the reasons for them improves the decision-making process. At times, compromising may be necessary to avoid blocking team progress.
- **Helping and caring:** Seeking and giving assistance strengthens team cohesiveness. Asking for help should be viewed as a valuable skill necessary for the advancement of a team goal. Successful teams have members that freely seek help and willingly offer help to others. Helping and caring contribute to building positive, cooperative, and collaborative relationships.
- **Participating and committing:** Each team member demonstrates dedication to the goals of the team by participating in and committing to completing assigned tasks to a high standard. These skills are often forms of non-verbal communication indicating to others the willingness to be an active participant in finding the solution to a problem.

These communication skills may seem relatively straightforward; however, once a conversation begins among team members, not all participants hear or understand the information in the same way.

What Is Leadership?

Leadership is any behaviour that influences the actions and attitudes of others to achieve certain results. Leadership in itself is neither good nor bad. Societal values determine whether the leadership of an individual is positive or negative, based on the goals and results being pursued and on the means used to influence others. There are many examples of “good” (e.g., moral, noble, virtuous) and “bad” (e.g., corrupt, immoral) people who have been extremely effective leaders.

How Do People Become Leaders?

Broad categories such as the following can be used to illustrate how people attain leadership positions. Examples are given for each category described below.

- **Qualified:** Some people become leaders because they achieve the necessary certification or credentials for a position. They may otherwise meet established criteria or prerequisites that persons in authority over them associate with the leadership position.
Examples: lifeguard, teacher
- **Merited:** Some people become leaders primarily through faithful and enthusiastic participation and competent performance over time. These leaders may be considered to have “paid their dues.”
Examples: Olympic flag bearer, captain of a high school football team
- **Captured:** Some people become leaders by campaigning for a position, being “political,” or otherwise manoeuvring themselves into a position. Leaders in this category may also take possession or seize the position through positive or negative means.
Examples: school principals, city mayor, dictator
- **Identified:** Some people become leaders because they possess personal or professional qualities that are recognized as beneficial and undeniable, and are appropriate for meeting the team’s needs at a particular time.
Examples: project manager of a business, military general
- **Defaulted:** Some people become leaders simply because other team members are unwilling or unable to accept the position or responsibility.
Example: someone in a small discussion group needs to lead the discussion

The categories also overlap, resulting in many ways that someone can attain a leadership position. Leaders can perform at high levels and make valuable contributions to their teams, regardless of how they were selected or designated as leaders.

Qualities of a Leader

It is generally understood or accepted that some form of leadership is required for a team to be effective and that a leader must possess certain qualities/characteristics, as well as skills/abilities, to lead effectively. The degree to which an individual possesses these attributes will depend upon the individual’s experience. In other words, not all leaders will possess the same qualities/characteristics or skills/abilities, and, if there are similarities, the level to which these are demonstrated will vary from leader to leader and from situation to situation.

Qualities of a Leader

The following table offers a list of attributes that a leader may possess.

Qualities/Characteristics	Skills/Abilities
<p>A leader can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assume responsibility ▪ take initiative <p>A leader is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ achievement-orientated ▪ adaptable to situations ▪ alert to social environment ▪ assertive ▪ competent ▪ cooperative ▪ courageous (risk-taker) ▪ decisive (good judgment) ▪ dedicated (committed) ▪ dependable ▪ energetic (high activity level) ▪ enthusiastic ▪ honest (high integrity) ▪ optimistic ▪ persistent ▪ self-confident ▪ tolerant of stress or anxiety (resilient) 	<p>A leader can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ communicate well ▪ listen openly to others ▪ resolve conflict <p>A leader is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ broad-minded (seeks diversity) ▪ clever (intelligent) ▪ conceptually skilled (holistic view) ▪ creative (imaginative) ▪ diplomatic and tactful ▪ extraverted (outgoing) ▪ fair-minded (just) ▪ forward-looking (vision) ▪ knowledgeable about team/group tasks ▪ motivational (inspirational) ▪ organized ▪ persuasive (influential) ▪ socially skilled ▪ technically skilled ▪ well-spoken (good speaker)

Leadership Styles

A leader is someone who has a goal or focus/belief and is able to convince or influence others to follow it. It would then seem logical that leaders have some form of power by which they are able to persuade or convince others to achieve the same goal or adopt the same focus/belief.

Various leadership theories have emerged over the years in attempts to explain the complexities of leadership. The following theories offer a diverse and representative view of leadership:

- **“Great leader” theories:** “Great leader” theories assume that great leaders are born, not made.
- **Trait theories:** Similar in some ways to “great leader” theories, trait theories assume that people inherit certain qualities and traits that make them suited to leadership. Trait theories often identify particular personality or behavioural characteristics common to leaders. This view has been challenged since key characteristics of leaders are also exhibited by team members who are not leaders.

- **Situational theories:** Situational theories propose that leaders will demonstrate a particular style of leadership depending on the given situation.
- **Behavioural (functional) theories:** Behavioural theories of leadership are based on the belief that leaders are made, not born (the opposite of the “great leader” theories).
- **Transactional theories:** Transactional theories focus on the principle that followers are motivated by a system of risk and reward. If individuals or teams achieve their identified goal(s), they will be rewarded; if they don’t succeed, they will be punished.
- **Transformational theories:** Transformational theories are based on the idea that leaders motivate and that team members or followers will be inspired to perform for the good of the team.

The Role of Leaders

Based on the *situational theories* of leadership, the role of team leaders should evolve as teams develop through the different stages identified in Bruce Tuckman’s team development model. Effective leaders are aware of the stages and carry out the necessary actions required at each stage that will enable the team to be successful.

Some concerns that effective leaders need to be aware of and the actions they can take to deal with them at the various stages of team development are briefly outlined below:

Forming

- Leaders play a dominant role at this stage. Other team roles and responsibilities are not as clear.
- Leaders should provide the team with clear direction and establish easily identifiable and understood objectives/outcomes.
- Team members need to get to know one another and spend time planning, collecting information, and bonding. This can be frustrating for some members who simply want to get on with the team task.

6. Storming

- This stage can be very destructive for the team if it is poorly managed. It is in this stage that many teams fail.
- Leaders need to help team members overcome feelings of discomfort and be aware of any members who may feel overwhelmed.
- Leaders establish team processes and structures, and work to resolve conflict and build good relationships between team members. Relationships among team members will be made or broken in this stage, and some may never recover.
- The leader’s authority may be challenged as members position themselves within the team and clarify their roles. Leaders need to remain positive and firm in the face of challenges to their leadership or to the team’s goal.

7. Norming

- Team members come to respect the leader's authority, and some members demonstrate leadership in specific areas.
- Team leaders can take a step back from the team at this stage as individual members take greater responsibility. This is also when team hierarchy is established.
- Team members may become complacent and lose either their creative edge or the drive that brought them to this stage.
- There is often a prolonged overlap between *Storming* and *Norming* behaviour. As new tasks come up, the team may lapse back into typical *Storming* behaviour, but this will eventually diminish.
- This is a good time to arrange a social or team-building event.

8. Performing

- Leaders are able to delegate much of the work and can concentrate on developing the skills and abilities of individual team members.
- Leaders should have as "light a touch" as possible once the team has achieved high performance.
- Being part of the team at this stage feels easy and comfortable compared with the earlier stages.

9. Adjourning

- Teams may organize a celebratory event at the end of a project. Team members will likely leave with fond memories of their experience.