

Bruce w. Tuckman's Four Stages of Group Development

Knowing and understanding the intricacies of how a group develops and works together will benefit your student organization. Understanding Tuckman's model may assist an organization to reach effectiveness more quickly.

STAGE 1 - FORMING

Description

*"Groups initially concern themselves with orientation accomplished primarily through testing. Such testing serves to identify the boundaries of both interpersonal and task behaviors. Coincident with testing in the interpersonal realm is the establishment of dependency relationships with leaders, other group members, or pre-existing standards. It may be said that orientation, testing and dependence constitute the group process of forming."**

How does it apply to student organizations?

The fall is the time student's start looking for ways to get involved. They seek out student organizations that interest them resulting in a mixture of experienced and inexperienced student leaders. The inexperienced student will depend on the experienced students and the advisor for guidance and direction. Individual roles and responsibilities are unclear. Processes are often unknown and the students will test the system, leader, and the advisor.

Role of the advisor in this stage

In this stage the consistency and continued support of the advisor will be vital. The advisor must be prepared to answer lots of questions regarding the organization's purpose and objectives.

STAGE 2 – STORMING

Description

*"The second point in the sequence is characterized by conflict and polarization around interpersonal issues, with concomitant emotional responding in the task sphere. These behaviors serve as resistance to group influence and task requirements and may be labeled as storming."**

How does it apply to student organizations?

Late in the fall the students are usually still struggling within their organization. Decisions don't come easily, and members vie for position as they attempt to establish themselves in relation to the other members. New leaders or potential leaders may be emerging. Clarity of purpose increases but plenty of uncertainties are still present. Cliques may be present and there may be power struggles.

Role of the advisor in this stage

In this stage the advisor may need to remind the organization to focus on their goals and objectives. Possibly have the group participate in some communication team builders. The understanding of different communication styles may deepen their understanding and appreciation of each other.

STAGE 3 – NORMING

Description

*"Resistance is overcome in the third stage in which in-group feeling and cohesiveness develops, new standards evolve, and new roles are adopted. In the task realm, intimate, personal opinions are expressed. Thus, we have the stage of norming."**

How does it apply to student organizations?

Agreement and consensus begins to form among the organization and they respond well to facilitation by the leader and settle into their roles and responsibilities. Decisions are made by the group and delegation is accepted. Commitment and unity is usually strong at this point. The students hopefully are engaged in the organization and are having fun and participating in social activities as well. There is general respect for the leader and some of leadership may be shared by the other members of the organization.

Role of the advisor in this stage

This is a good time for the advisor to have the students discuss each others working style and how the group should develop processes and tasks to get their goals accomplished.

STAGE 4 – PERFORMING

Description

*"Finally, the group attains the fourth and final stage in which interpersonal structure becomes the tool of task activities. Roles become flexible and functional, and group energy is channeled into the task. Structural issues have been resolved, and structure can now become supportive of task performance. This stage can be labeled as performing."**

How does it apply to student organizations?

The members are more strategically aware of their goals and objectives and are clearly focused on their completion. The students have a shared vision and are able to function with no interference or participation from the leader or advisor. The organization has a high degree of autonomy. Conflicts may occur but now they are resolved within the organization positively, and necessary changes to processes and structure are made by the members.

Role of the advisor in this stage

This is a very rewarding experience and the advisor will naturally be in the background for guidance and support. The group at this stage is accomplishing their goals and moving in a positive forward direction.

This model is not a linear one. At times the organization may regress to the previous stage, especially if membership changes. Patience and diligence by both the members and the advisor will keep the group moving in the right direction.