What Are the Areas of Team Development?

Introduction

Sylvia Lafair, PhD. and president of Creative Energy Options (CEO) coaches business leaders and their teams. Her goal is to improve employee relationships in ways that positively impact the company’s bottom line. She does this by helping to cultivate corporate cultures that facilitate trust between employees and managers.

In Dr. Lafair’s brief lecture “What Are the Areas of Team Development?” found here, she outlines the ways in which work conducted by teams tends to evolve as members familiarize themselves with their new roles. This reading will review the key points discussed in her lecture.

Steps of Team Development

The Four Stage Model of group development was first proposed by Bruce Tuckman in 1965. Dr. Tuckman, a psychologist from Princeton University, was instrumental in conducting research into group dynamics, believing that all four stages were essential for groups to achieve maximum effectiveness. This theory has since been expanded to include a fifth stage called transforming. Throughout the business and organizational world, it is common to use the process of five stages. These steps typically include forming, storming, norming, performing, and transforming.

In discussing the areas of team development and the development of relationships among team members in general, Dr. Lafair begins by outlining her perspective on the initial four steps in this process, and she later adds the transforming stage. These steps include:

- Formation of Teams;
- Creation of Norms;
- the Middle; and
- Perform.

In the Formation of Teams stage, team members get to know one another. Enthusiasm is high, while expectations may still be unclear. The focus at this point tends to be on group organization, assignment of tasks, and identification of goals.
During the *Creation of Norms* phase, the team discusses those areas that are in need of problem-solving and how they might coordinate team efforts. At this point, it may become apparent which members are not going to pull their own weight. This phase may be unpleasant for those members who wish to avoid conflict.

*The Middle* phase, identified by Dr. Lafair, comes about when the group begins to share ideas and to work together towards achieving their stated objectives. The team will typically become more cohesive and effective at this stage.

Once these initial steps are accomplished, the team can then enter the *Perform* stage, which she refers to as a “great place.” Dr. Lafair says, “Most teams end their process at this stage, while all is going well.” There is generally a period of time where the teams are performing at their maximum capacity, sales are being made, ideas are being generated and flowing, Internet responses are high, and the procedures put into place by the team are humming along at a steady pace. However, human nature leads us to believe that all good things must come to an end. Teamwork like other endeavors is driven by momentum and the creativity of its members. Productivity cannot stay at this peak level indefinitely, therefore team leaders and coordinators should be able to recognize when a group has completed their objectives and bring the project into conclusion, or assign a new set of goals.

The fifth stage of team development is called *Transforming*. This stage enables teams to go beyond the issues of stagnation and unrest that can occur during the *Perform* stage.

For example, during the *Perform* step, some people may work more quickly than others. They may move ahead, while others may be left behind in the process. While this may be a positive move for those who are ahead of others, it may not be beneficial for those who are not progressing as quickly. These people might become disaffected and may revert back to old patterns that existed prior to team formation. They may feel less important than their partners, and the whole team may end up suffering as a result.

At this point, managers and leaders must step in to stop the process, examine the areas that have caused the breakdown, and begin to rethink what the team is doing. This is where the *Transforming* process takes place. Several activities can contribute to the success of this step. Celebrating group and individual accomplishments will aid in bolstering attitudes and performance. Also, some members might be leaving the group and may need this time to plan for their new responsibilities. Additionally, for long-term or continuous teams, new members may join at this stage, changing the group dynamics and requiring a re-organization. These changes generally results in the team reverting back to a previous phase in the process. Dr. Lafair believes that with trust, integrity, and collaboration, the team can, once again, come together.
Summary

- Dr. Sylvia Lafair is an expert in the field of optimizing workplace relationships, and she works with individuals, teams, and entire organizations to enable maximum productivity.

- Dr. Lafair’s five steps to team development are *Formation, Creation of Norms, The Middle, Perform, and Transforming.*

- During the *Formation of Teams* stage, team members focus on group organization, assigning tasks, and identification of goals.

- During the *Creation of Norms* phase, the team discusses those areas that are in need of problem-solving and how the team will work coordinate their efforts. Issues pertaining to group cohesion will become apparent during this stage.

- During *The Middle* stage, the group becomes more cohesive, coming together to share ideas and to work together towards achieving their goals.

- During the *Perform* stage, the team’s efforts and products are carefully put into place, resulting in sales generation, new ideas, and positive business results. Teams that do not go beyond the *Perform* stage are destined to lose momentum and become stagnant.

- The *Transforming* stage enables teams to move beyond the loss of momentum that signifies the end of the *Perform* stage.

- Extending a hand of generosity, collaborating, and creating a climate of trust and integrity can bring a team back together.