

# Team Development

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Many so-called teams are team only in name. They may be physically co-located yet never move beyond the forming stage, partly because the name 'team' seems to them to require no special effort and they are unwilling or unable to tackle emotional issues. If this is true of the senior management team their lack of developmental dynamism is likely to cost their organisation dearly.

Intelligent team development will do much more than leave the learning to chance. Experiences will be carefully pitched to match each person's learning needs and the learning needs of the whole team. Each experience will be reviewed so that the learning is made conscious. Each review will probe beyond the superficial and obvious (did we have a leader? Did we read the brief? etc) to more subtle aspects of relationship and behaviour (What behaviours helped us develop good ideas? How conscious were we? How was everyone enabled to uniquely contribute? etc).

In these reviews a skilled facilitator will be looking for 'critical moments' when we did or did not respond in a useful way to behavioural difficulties, to insightful ideas or incoming information that changed the game. Through such experience and review, teams learn how to learn in a way that is immediately applicable in any situation that demands "performance", especially back at work.



Such developmental experiences take place off-site so that they are independent of business risk and also so habitual behaviours become more visible to team members. Apart from anything else there needs to be a space that is free from the props that support mindset and status quo, and, free also from interrupting emails, mobile phone calls and text messages.

In good workshops, work is not separate from the process but is woven into it, so that, in the creative space such processes provide, teams can have the opportunity to redefine their purpose, vision and values.

More than that, they learn how to raise their game. Even mature teams are prone to accepting a level of performance that has become comfortable, even habitual. It is necessary to go right through Tuckman's stages of team development all over again. Indeed, teams should expect to do so whenever there is a change of membership or environment. Not to do so, is to drift towards complacency. Experienced team players will expect to rebuild and will be adept at opening themselves to the influence of others – they will practise open behaviour thus enabling the team to develop quickly.

Tuckman's stages of team development (forming, storming, norming, performing) correspond to physical, emotional, mental and aspirational intelligences. Development processes must address the whole person: body, mind and spirit. To avoid confusion, people need theoretical frameworks to hang new experience on, though such frameworks will be kept to a minimum.



If people aspire to become a team, they will be prepared to deal with emotional matters (storming) which otherwise remain unresolved. At the next stage (norming) they can begin to think together. Unfortunately few people have learned to think very well, so thinking together can lead to misunderstanding and take us right back to storming. Most teams need a lot of support here and good trainers will introduce thinking exercises and thinking methods. At CMC we use Logo-Visual Technology (LVT) as we find this really helps people contribute, provides a 'level playing field' and helps them think new thoughts. It is a simple combination of physical objects (Magnetic notes and whiteboards) with software. It works because people deal with fragments of ideas drawn variously from memory, observation, research or imagination, which they organise collectively to make new sense. The five-stage process helps



people think more creatively and positively, actively shape their skills, solve problems, work co-operatively, learn about complex work, improve communication and think critically, analytically and creatively. As higher order thinking develops, the mind of the team is expanded.

Team development needs good design – right from the very first interaction that prepares people to attend, through clear

contracting, a quality off-site environment conducive of creative interaction, a programme that integrates the flow of theory, experience, reviews, dialogue, visual thinking, and clear next steps. This in turn leads into support and review as people perform back at work. Trainers and facilitators must offer a level of thinking higher than that at which the client's issues exist. The challenge is to elevate thinking to new levels.