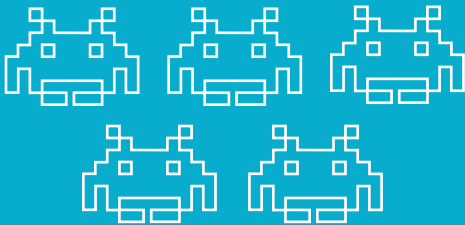UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING
Institute for Leadership Education in Engineering

Team Development

Handbook for Student Leaders

Vision, Mission & Strategy
Motivation & Delegation
Personal Development & Mastery
—**Team Development**
Recruitment
Reflection & Awareness
Transition & Succession
External Relations
Leadership Styles
Purposeful Leadership

Who does what and why?
Where are the relationships and synergies?
Where are the bottlenecks?
How does a team learn to work together?
How can you get a high performance team?

Five Stages of Team Development

1. Forming. The individuals in a group focus on trying to be accepted and usually avoid stepping outside of their comfort zones.

—*Objectives and responsibilities should be clearly defined. Team likely needs some direction.*

2. Storming. Issues that may be difficult to address start to be discussed. As people begin to step outside of their comfort zone, some may lose patience earlier than others, and minor confrontations may arise that are quickly dealt with or glossed over.

—*Work to overcome conflict. Focus on building relationships. Ensure that processes are clearly established.*

3. Norming. The scope of most of the group's tasks or responsibilities is clear and agreed upon.

—*Maintain energy and relationships. Leader steps back to allow team to take responsibility for accomplishing goals.*

4. Performing. This stage is characterized by a state of interdependence and flexibility. Everyone knows each other well enough to be able to work together, and trusts each other enough to allow independent activity.

A good starting point for thinking about team development is the "Five Stages of Team Development" model, which describes the process that most teams will go through.[1]

—Create space for others to take initiative. Watch for risks that could lead to further conflict (and back to storming).

5. Adjourning. This stage is about completion and disengagement, both from the tasks and the group members. Individuals will be proud of having achieved much and be glad for the enjoyable experience.

Common Challenges Faced with Organizational Structure

1. Flow of Information

Many groups face the challenge of how to keeping everyone in the organization informed without overloading them with emails. How does information flow in your organization? Are the key people getting a chance to talk to each other frequently? If not, what structural changes can be made?

2. Decision Making Processes

How are the most critical decisions made? How much weight does the president/chair have? Executives? General members? People are motivated by having real influence on decisions that affect the work they do with an organization, but does your structure allow for this? A useful spectrum to help you evaluate yourself is to ask how centralized vs. decentralized is your structure?

Some student groups that are extremely centralized find that general members and even certain executives feel excluded from decision making and are thus less committed to the group. On the other hand, very decentralized groups have a difficult time seeing the "whole" of the group, and aren't able to come to a consensus on organizational decisions. Where on the spectrum does your group lie?

An important thing to remember about organizational structure is that "it's all made up." Tasks were divided in a certain way at some point in history, but it doesn't mean they have to stay that way.

3. Matching People to Positions

As discussed in the Motivation & Delegation section of the Handbook for Student Leaders, people often contribute their best when they truly care about their role and have the skills needed for success. This idea surfaces some questions about the flexibility or rigidity of organization structures: Are role definitions set in stone? Are people forced to change and adapt to match their role? Is there space for redefining role and, shifting some responsibilities over to someone with strengths or interests in that area? How often does the group structure change, and how (if at all) are new positions created? These questions have very strong links to recruitment: New members are much more likely to stay engaged and commit themselves to an organization if they are in a role that suits their skills and interests. This often requires flexibility and change in real time or else that person may join a different club.

4. Collaboration and Teamwork

While a constitution or organizational chart may define which executives need to collaborate and work with each other, in reality these people may think very differently about things. Team dynamics also complicate thinking around what the best organizational structure is—what looks more effective on paper may fail miserably because of uneasy relationships between executives.

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[1]Developmental Sequence in Small Groups – B.W. Tuckman, 1965. Psychological Bulletin, 63, 384-399.