

- Established a customer communication strategy based on the behavioral profile of the customer.

## The Behavioral Side of Team Development

Team development is an iterative process. This is readily understood when we look at the 'forming-storming-norming-performing' model for team development that has become a standard team development model since Bruce Tuckman introduced it in 1965. [5] The following is a brief description of each phase.

### **Forming: the phase of anticipation.**

The team first comes together with high energy and expectation. There is limited knowledge of the detail of the team at this time.

### **Storming: the phase of anxiety.**

Individuals start jockeying for position and recognition. Questions arise regarding why and how decisions are made that affect 'me'.

### **Norming: the phase of stabilization.**

Goals are established, plans are developed, roles and responsibilities are defined.

### **Performing: the phase of application.**

Plans are implemented, outputs are generated. The work gets done.

Whenever something impacts the team i.e. the introduction of a new team member or team leader, a change in focus or plan, or a change in the organization that affects the team, the team has to reform, a Re-forming phase. Teams, by nature, are not stable; they continually re-form and begin the team development cycle again....and again, and again.

Every team must go through each phase, whether they like it or not.

The problem arises when a team decides to skip over a phase because it doesn't like or value it. The decision to skip a phase is generally not a conscious one, but rather a subconscious rationalization of why some other phase or activity is more important or urgent. In many cases it's as simple as subconscious avoidance. Most people don't flock to take part in an activity they find uncomfortable. Unfortunately, if a team tries to skip a phase, it comes back to haunt it. The storming phase is the phase that many project teams tend to minimize or skip entirely. The storming phase can be contentious, conflict ridden and downright painful. Team members will compete for position and recognition. This is where factions and cliques form and power struggles arise. This phase is behaviorally centered. Teams that lean toward logic and analysis find the 'storming' phase the most uncomfortable and distasteful.

A similar phenomenon occurs in another recognized team development model, the Katzenbach and Smith high performance team development model. Katzenbach and Smith identified the pseudo-teaming phase. [6] Pseudo-teaming is characterized by the team members acting, or pretending to be a team. They say all the right words but their actions and motives are contentious and counterproductive.

In both cases, storming and pseudo-teaming, if a team doesn't work through the phase, it will never get past the phase. Both cases are behaviorally based and the lack of the project manager's understanding of this has been the downfall of many a team before it ever really got going.

Once a project manager understands this phenomenon, s/he can leverage it to build a strong, sustainable and high performing team.

## Leveraging Behavioral Styles

Each team member has a unique style. Some prefer high levels of personal interaction, others prefer to work alone. Some prefer to work steadily and methodically, while others prefer to jump in and figure it out as they go. Some prefer data and analysis, some prefer instinct and intuition. Which of these styles is the best? All of them and none of them. Certain behaviors are more appropriate in certain situations, more inappropriate in others.

The effective project manager has the ability to understand both the situation and the appropriate style to match it. The ability to do this is a trainable skill.

## The Three Steps to Leveraging Styles

### **Step one**

*Accept the reality that any one style is no better than any other style.*

It's our own perceptions that assign values like better and worse. Is an analytical person a nit-picker or a master of precision? If I agree with or relate to this person, s/he's probably a master of precision, if I disagree or it rubs me the wrong way, she's probably a nit-picker. It's all a matter of perception.

### **Step two**

Think '*leverage*'.

There is a tendency to think of people with styles that oppose our own in negative terms. This is a frequent cause of conflict. When understood, these differences become