

Leadersheet

Developing Your Group

As a group or organization forms, it goes through certain predictable stages, progressing from a collection of individuals to a cohesive group working together for a common cause. Two dimensions are present in any group and influence its development-task functions and personal relations.

Four Stages of Group Development

Stage I

- Personal relations are characterized by dependency on the leader to provide structure.
- Major task functions concern the orientation of group members to the work they are being asked to do. The issues have to be specified.
- Common behavior at this point is questioning why we are here, what we are supposed to do, how we are going to get it done, and what our goals are.
- **What you can do:** Provide as much structure as possible; team building is important here.

Stage II

- Personal relations: conflict and confrontation among group members; who is responsible for what; what are going to be the work rules; what are going to be the limits; what is going to be the reward system; what is the criteria?
- The varieties of organizational concerns that emerge reflect conflict over leadership structure, power and authority.
- It is important that strategies are implemented to help members move constructively from conflict toward renewed commitment to the group. If this does not happen, members may isolate or even remove themselves from the group during this phase.
- **What you can do:** Provide clarification or justification to group members; leader may also spend time with individual members to help them clarify their feelings about group involvement.

Stage III

- Personal relations are marked by cohesion; people begin to experience a feeling of belonging to the group.
- They begin sharing ideas, feelings, giving feedback to each other, soliciting feedback, exploring actions related to the task and sharing information related to the task.
- This becomes a period in which people feel good about being a part of a group, and there is a brief abandonment of the task and a period of play--the enjoyment of the cohesion that is being experienced.
- **What you can do:** Identify the transition and capitalize on it; members are ready to work hard, so the leader must provide opportunities for this to occur.

Stage IV

- Interdependence is achieved by group members; members can work autonomously, in any sub-groupings or as a total unit. They are highly task and people oriented.
- Group's tasks are well defined; there is high commitment to common activity and support for experimentation with solving problems.
- A collective, interdependent organism is the outcome of the process of group development.
- **What you can do:** Take a less active role and allow the group considerable autonomy. Member's interdependence, flexible approaches to task accomplishment, commitment to self-assessment and appropriate adjustment or adaptation readily occurs.