

tuckman forming storming norming performing model

Bruce Tuckman's 1965 Forming Storming Norming Performing team-development model

Dr Bruce Tuckman published his Forming Storming Norming Performing model in 1965. He added a fifth stage, Adjourning, in the 1970's. The Forming Storming Norming Performing theory is an elegant and helpful explanation of team development and behaviour. Similarities can be seen with other models, such as Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum and especially with Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership® model, developed about the same time.

Tuckman's model explains that as the team develops maturity and ability, relationships establish, and the leader changes leadership style. Beginning with a directing style, moving through coaching, then participating, finishing delegating and almost detached. At this point the team may produce a successor leader and the previous leader can move on to develop a new team. This progression of team behaviour and leadership style can be seen clearly in the Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum - the authority and freedom extended by the leader to the team increases while the control of the leader reduces. In Tuckman's Forming Storming Norming Performing model, Hersey's and Blanchard's Situational Leadership® model and in Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Continuum, we see the same effect, represented in three ways.

tuckman's forming storming norming performing model - original model

The progression is:

1. **forming**
2. **storming**
3. **norming**
4. **performing**

Features of each phase:

forming - stage 1

High dependence on leader for guidance and direction. Little agreement on team aims other than received from leader. Individual roles and responsibilities are unclear. Leader must be prepared to answer lots of questions about the team's purpose, objectives and external relationships. Processes are often ignored. Members test tolerance of system and leader. Leader directs (similar to Situational Leadership® 'Telling' mode).

storming - stage 2

Decisions don't come easily within group. Team members vie for position as they attempt to establish themselves in relation to other team members and the leader, who might receive challenges from team members. Clarity of purpose increases but plenty of uncertainties persist. Cliques and factions form and there may be power struggles. The team needs to be focused on its goals to avoid becoming distracted by relationships and emotional issues. Compromises may be required to enable progress. Leader coaches (similar to Situational Leadership® 'Selling' mode).

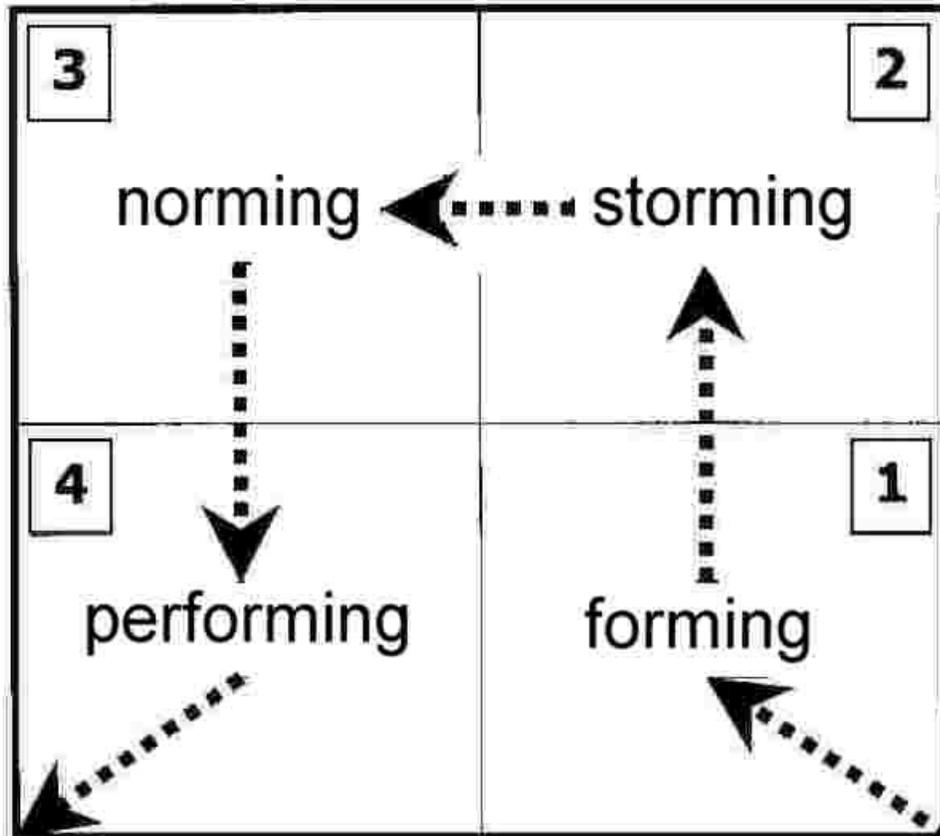
norming - stage 3

Agreement and consensus is largely forms among team, who respond well to facilitation by leader. Roles and responsibilities are clear and accepted. Big decisions are made by group agreement. Smaller decisions may be delegated to individuals or small teams within group. Commitment and unity is strong. The team may engage in fun and social activities. The team discusses and develops its processes and working style. There is general respect for the leader and some of leadership is more shared by the team. Leader facilitates and enables (similar to the Situational Leadership® 'Participating' mode).

performing - stage 4

The team is more strategically aware; the team knows clearly why it is doing what it is doing. The team has a shared vision and is able to stand on its own feet with no interference or participation from the leader. There is a focus on over-achieving goals, and the team makes most of the decisions against criteria agreed with the leader. The team has a high degree of autonomy. Disagreements occur but now they are resolved within the team positively and necessary changes to processes and structure are made by the team. The team is able to work towards achieving the goal, and also to attend to relationship, style and process issues along the way. team members look after each other. The team requires delegated tasks and projects from the leader. The team does not need to be instructed or assisted. Team members might ask for assistance from the leader with personal and interpersonal development. Leader delegates and oversees (similar to the Situational Leadership® 'Delegating' mode).

tuckman's forming storming norming performing model



Tuckman's fifth stage - Adjourning

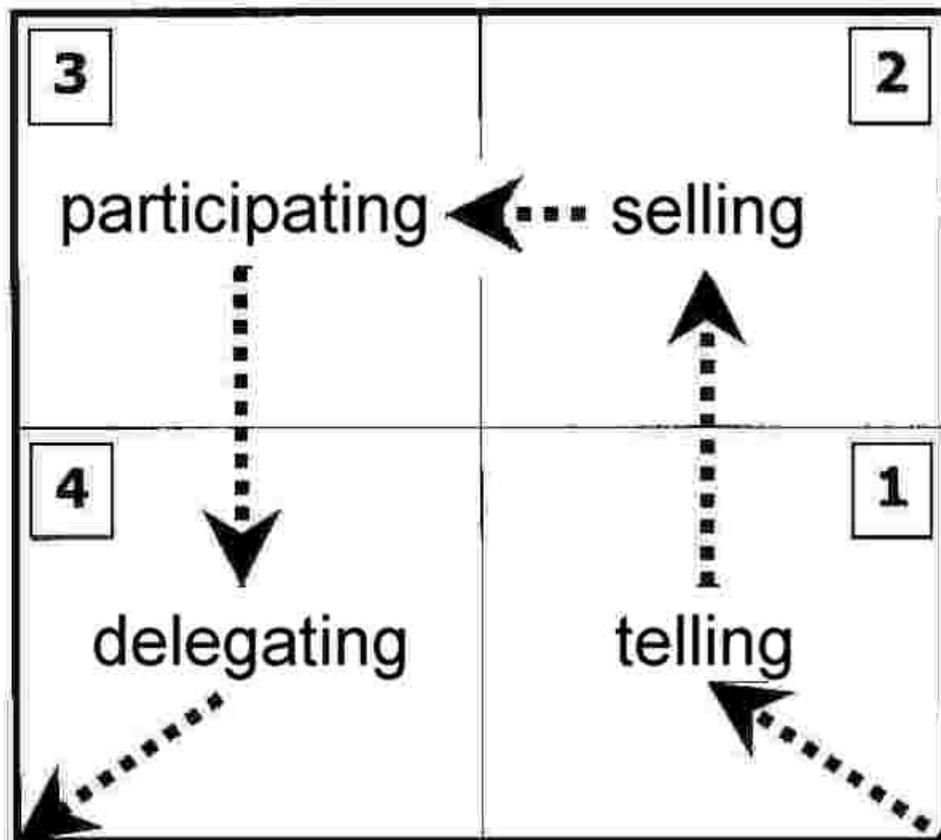
Bruce Tuckman refined his theory around 1975 and added a fifth stage to the Forming Storming Norming Performing model - he called it Adjourning, which is also referred to as Deforming and Mourning. Adjourning is arguably more of an adjunct to the original four stage model rather than an extension - it views the group from a perspective beyond the purpose of the first four stages. The Adjourning phase is certainly very relevant to the people in the group and their well-being, but not to the main task of managing and developing a team, which is clearly central to the original four stages.

adjourning - stage 5

Tuckman's fifth stage, Adjourning, is the break-up of the group, hopefully when the task is completed successfully, its purpose fulfilled; everyone can move on to new things, feeling good about what's been achieved. From an organizational perspective, recognition of and sensitivity to people's vulnerabilities in Tuckman's fifth stage is helpful, particularly if members of the group have been closely bonded and feel a sense of insecurity or threat from this

change. Feelings of insecurity would be natural for people with high 'steadiness' attributes (as regards the 'four temperaments' or DISC model) and with strong routine and empathy style (as regards the [Benziger](#) thinking styles model, right and left basal brain dominance).

Hersey's and Blanchard's Situational Leadership® model



The classic Situational Leadership® model of management and leadership style also illustrates the ideal development of a team from immaturity (stage 1) through to maturity (stage 4) during which management and leadership style progressively develops from relatively detached task-directing (1), through the more managerially-involved stages of explanation (2) and participation (3), to the final stage of relatively detached delegation (4), at which time ideally the team is largely self-managing, and hopefully contains at least one potential management/leadership successor.

The aim of the leader or manager is therefore to develop the team through the four stages, and then to move on to another role.

Ironically this outcome is feared by many managers. However, good organisations place an extremely high value on leaders and managers who can achieve this.

The model also illustrates four main leadership and management styles, which a good leader is able to switch between, depending on the situation (ie., the team's maturity relating to a particular task, project or challenge.)

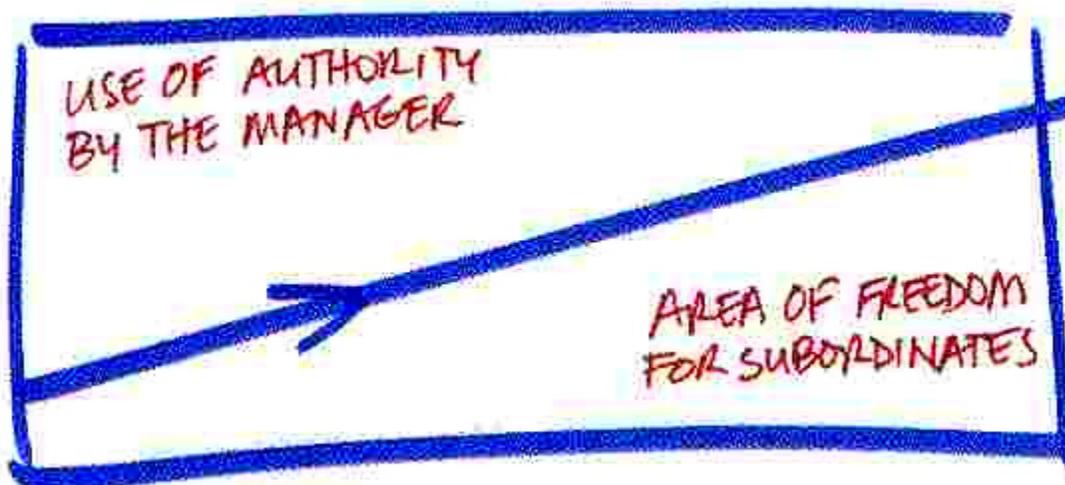
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Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum

The Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum also correlates in a way to the models above - essentially that management style tends to offer more freedom as the group matures.

The diagonal line loosely equates to the dotted line on the other two models. As the team matures and becomes more self-sufficient and self-directing, so the manager's style should react accordingly, ideally becoming more detached, more delegating, encouraging and enabling the group to run itself, and for a successor (or if you are a good manager or a lucky one, for more than one successor) to emerge.



See the [Tannenbaum and Schmidt](#) page for more detailed notes about this model.

This is merely an overview of the Tuckman forming storming performing norming model - if you need to know more there are various detailed Tuckman model pages on the web.

There is also an excellent [free test](#) at Don Clark's Big Dog site, to indicate whether your team is forming, storming, norming or performing.

Refer also to the [Johari Window model](#) for personal and inter-group communications and awareness development.

For an additional and useful perspective on human development see [Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory](#).

The [personality models and theories](#) section explores behaviour and style of individuals, with obvious implications for managing groups, as does the [learning styles and multiple intelligences](#) section.

Also relevant to individual employee and leadership development:

[Conscious Competence Learning Stages Model](#)

[Motivation theory](#)

[Employee motivation](#)

And lots more about [personal development on the main site](#), if you are not already there.

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© Bruce Tuckman 1965 original 'Forming-storming-norming-performing' concept; Alan Chapman 2001-2007 review and code.