

TEAMBUILDING with The MAZE

Teambuilding Basics

Creating and sustaining a successful team requires knowledge of basic team concepts. The following discussion will give you a quick overview that, if followed, will improve your team's performance.

Team Development Stages

All teams go through four predictable development stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. In the **forming stage**, the team simply comes together for some purpose. Team members are usually excited, but apprehensive, about what is required and how they will work together. In the **storming stage**, disagreements arise over details such as the team's mission, operating processes, roles, and more. Team members are frequently angry and frustrated in this stage. The **norming stage** evolves when team members align around a common vision and mission, develop operating processes, and determine *how* they want to work together. Team member commitment and morale become stronger during this stage. The **performing stage** is characterized by high overall performance, open communication, clarity of team member roles, and team harmony. Team members are highly committed to the team's purpose and to supporting each other.

Team Critical Elements

There are four critical elements of team building that help to align team members around a common purpose and structure the team for performance: Team Mission, Operating Processes, Operating Principles, and Team Member Roles.

Team Mission – The team's mission is what the team does...its work. In highly functioning teams, members are clear on its purpose, and all planning and goal setting support accomplishment of the mission. The mission is a written statement that all members agree upon.

Team Operating Processes – The team's operating processes define *how the team accomplishes work* and other team needs. Operating processes relating to the work may include a manufacturing process, administrative process, work schedules, quality inspection, and more. However, the team may have additional processes that support team member relationships, for example, a conflict resolution process.

Team Operating Principles – Operating principles define *how team members will behave* with each other. Usually these are unwritten rules, but sometimes teams decide to write them down in a Code of Conduct or a Values Statement. Examples might include:

- Respect each others' opinions
- Handle disagreements without emotional conflict
- Be on time for meetings

Team Member Roles – Roles define what each team member will do to support the team's functioning. Roles may be formal such as auditor, mechanic, team leader, or computer specialist. Roles may also be informal depending on team member skills. Informal roles may include mediator (mediates disagreements), energizer, gatekeeper (controls the flow of discussion at meetings), rewarder (recognizes other team members' contributions), and more. Teams should discuss members' strengths and natural talents to determine who is best to turn to when a skill is needed.

Strategy for Developing a High-Performance Team

We have discussed a basic structure comprising the key elements of team functioning. To become a successful, high-performance team, have your team members discuss these elements and reach agreement on how they wish to incorporate them. Come to agreement on the mission, goals, and objectives of the team. Jointly develop operating processes and principles, and continually improve them. Define and gain clarity on team roles. Above all, keep communication open and honest, so that issues surface as needed to keep the team on track. Pay attention to these principles and your team experience will be memorable and rewarding.