TEAM AND TEAM MANAGEMENT - A PRACTICAL APPROACH

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Abstract: *A great challenge for today's leaders and managers is to develop and manage effective teams. Understanding the way teams are built requires awareness of the fact that this process vary through some developmental stages. Teams develop and change, and what is significant at some point in their evolution is replaced later by new influences. Therefore, understanding team operation requires understanding its development over stages. This paper addresses the issue of building a team across the five developmental stages of Tuckman's theoretical model (1965) with a focus on leader's practical actions. The paper presents some examples of activities that a leader can run with his team members so that they could be aware of the processes that occur during their team development.*

Keywords: *team, team management, practical activities, developmental stages*

1. Introduction

In recent decades, organizational psychology professionals, and managers alike focused their research efforts on a field of utmost importance, namely, management and development of professional relationships. The harmony of relations between the one's self and others (both personal and professional) is the axis for a fulfilled life. The constructive, fruitful personal and professional relationships are an emerging feature of success and progress. One of the fundamental human inclinations and motivations relate to training and maintaining meaningful relationships, positive and sustainable, translated by a sense of belonging to a group, which gives to the individual stability and continuity, affirmation and enhances opportunities for progress and improvement, opportunities for interaction, protection and social support. In the organizational context, poor quality of professional relationships involves a number of problems such as: excessive competition, lack of social support (informational, instrumental and emotional), lack of feed-back and particularly constructive and motivating feedback, rivalries between colleagues, unwillingness to solve problems through cooperation. Team (i.e. teamwork) is that which can increase the cohesion level of individuals, is that which highlights the importance of social relations, the

one that values individuals and the social ties that individuals establish and develop. Promoting such a culture, of teamwork, can avoid the gaps between members, can avoid unnecessary rivalries and the feeling of marginalization experienced by some individuals.

2. Team conceptualization

The team is *a small group of people* who have *complementary abillities*, *common purpose / common goals* and a way to act in *a consistent / common manner* which implies *interdependency* among its members (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993).

Team can be defined in terms of the "5 P": *purpose* (why is needed the team, what is expected to do), *place* (how it fits into the structure of the organization), *power* (which is the area of responsibility and the authority level of the team), *plan* (refers to the team structure, the way it will assume the responsibilities outlined and will manage the authority at the team level), *people* (who are those who belong to the team, how many and what qualities, knowledge, skills, experience must they have) (Holpp, 1999).

Team features (adapted from Neculau, 2007, p. 107, quoting Mucchielli, 1984):

➢ *interdependence* between team members;
➢ team is presented as an *intentionality towards an accepted and desired common goal* by all members, *cooperation* takes the form of accountability;
➢ *work results* are obtained through the *collective effort* of the team;
➢ *sinergy* – ownership of the team, the whole is more important than the sum of elements;
➢ a *small number* of members, condition to increase efficiency;
➢ *action planning* before action;
➢ *quality of interpersonal relations,* expressed through a network of lively links, which are formed during team activities;
➢ relationships based on *affection, respect, trust, mutual support*; the proprey of team cohesion;
➢ effective communication;
➢ *personal commitment* which expresses the fact that the team is not simply a collection, a gather of individuals, but a lively and evolving psychosocial group, a conscious interdependence where everybody comes with its competence, a unity of action;
➢ team is *a specific structure in process*, which permanently consolidates its configuration; an evolving organism;
➢ respect for the diversity of team members;
➢ *constraints* within the team are the result of common goal orientation which implies certain renunciations, collective coordination and organized discipline;

> ➤ *organizational structure* varies depending on the type of action, objectives and context; the tasks are distributed according to the members'competencies;
> ➤ free circullation of information/ information is available to all.

3. The need for team and teamwork

	YES	NO
When we need/ don't need the team?	➤ when we are dealing with unusual problems for which no one knows the answer / or there isn't a simple, standard answer; ➤ when there is a high level of uncertainty regarding the task (there is the need of sharing the doubts with others); ➤ when there are tasks that require creativity (organizing an event, developing a new product, improving services offer); ➤ when the task is extremely complex and requires different skills and expertise;	➤ the task is simple, the degree of incertitude is low; ➤ repetitive tasks, for which there are clear procedures; ➤ when the team has a very good reputation and they are „taking all for granted" ➤ when solving task should be done very quickly (within a very short time);
Why we need/ don't need the team?	➤ obtains better results than individuals which are working alone; ➤ is more flexible than a large group; ➤ assumes more risks and explores areas that single individuals would avoid; ➤ generates a greater variety of ideas than single individuals; ➤ members help each other, reinforcing the development of skills and self-confidence; ➤ members demonstrate commitment /	➤ social phenomena occur, that disrupts the activity: „groupthinking", „social laziness", status effect, social compromise, satisfaction with minimum; ➤ concern for solidarity (cohesion) of the team which overshadows team effectiveness of performing the task (ex .: See peer evaluation which gives its members the maximum score regardless of contribution to the task); ➤ takes time for training and building relationships;

responsibility not only to the task, but also to each other; ➢ members are motivating each other.	➢ requires the transformation of people, and some of them are not willing to give up some beliefs and habits (negative and highly critical attitude, handling, dominant behavior, superior, personal attacks).

4. Stages of team development

4.1. Description of the stages and leader' actions in correspondence with the specifics of each developmental stage

Understanding of how to build teams requires awareness of the fact that processes vary through developmental stages. Teams develop and change, and what is significant at some point in their evolution is replaced later by new influences. Understanding team operation therefore requires understanding its development over stages. Like any other form of life, teams are born, grow and change, through specific stages of development.

The most common model for analysis of the team development is Tuckman's model (1965) which includes five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning (fig. 1).

Developmental stage	Leader's actions
1. FORMING The main concern is the initial entry of members into the team. During this stage individuals ask themselves a series of questions as they begin to identify with other team members and with the team itself. Their concerns may include "What could the team offer me?", "What would be my contribution and what I will be asked to do?", "Can I have my needs met while I contribute to the team?". Members grope, while waiting to see the other's approach. They are interested in getting to know each other and discover what is considered acceptable behaviour. In the same time, members seek to determine the actual tasks of the team and to define the objectives and the rules. Team productivity is very low. In this stage.	➢ to select the members according to the tasks to be solved; ➢ to clarify members expectations; ➢ to clarify the members' roles according to the team tasks; ➢ to create contexts for the members to know each other; ➢ to carry out the first meeting of the team in an unofficial context; ➢ to provide for the team members the opportunity to choose their mates; ➢ to create a comfortable atmosphere and a climate of trust;

	➢ to communicate the expected results.
2. STORMING It's an emotional and full of tension period for the the members. There may be some hostility and fights, and the group is experiencing many changes. As individuals struggle to impose preferences on the team or to reach the desired position, it can appear coalitions within the team. External requirements, including premature expectations for good results can create pressure upon the members. Within the process, members tend to clarify expectations and attention is directed to the obstacles that may stand in the way of achieving the objectives of the group. Individuals begin to understand their personal working styles and make efforts to achieve both group objectives and personal needs. The conflict in this stage should be managed so that energy, engaging and vindictive attitudes to be directed towards the achievement of the objectives.	➢ to accept natural tensions as part of the team building process; ➢ to look for signs or symptoms of conflict and for people often involved in conflicts (body language, different reactions); ➢ to solve conflict situations as soon as they appear, in order to prevent the occurrence of frustration among the members; ➢ to be aware of the rumors among members; ➢ to pay attention to members that are not satisfied; ➢ to invite/ encourage team members to openly discuss any matter of the team and beyond; ➢ to be supportive, to listen actively, to generate ideas and explain decisions; ➢ to value diversity.
3. NORMING Also called initial integration, *norming* is the moment where the group really starts to come together as a coordinated unit. It is the phase of creating and increasing the team cohesion, the spirit of communion. Clear rules of interaction are established and are strengthened the feelings of responsibility and the cooperative behaviours (positive feedback). With a new sense of harmony team members will try to maintain a positive balance. To keep the group together may be sometimes more important than working successfully on the group tasks. Minority point of views, deviations from the team direction and	➢ to clarify the team rules (limits of competence, authority limits, allowed language or allowed behaviours, etc.); ➢ to allow the team members to organize themselves in order to practice their roles and responsibilities; ➢ encourage members to be aware of how things work (team reflexivity); ➢ to create opportunities for members to rememorize the team values and common goals;

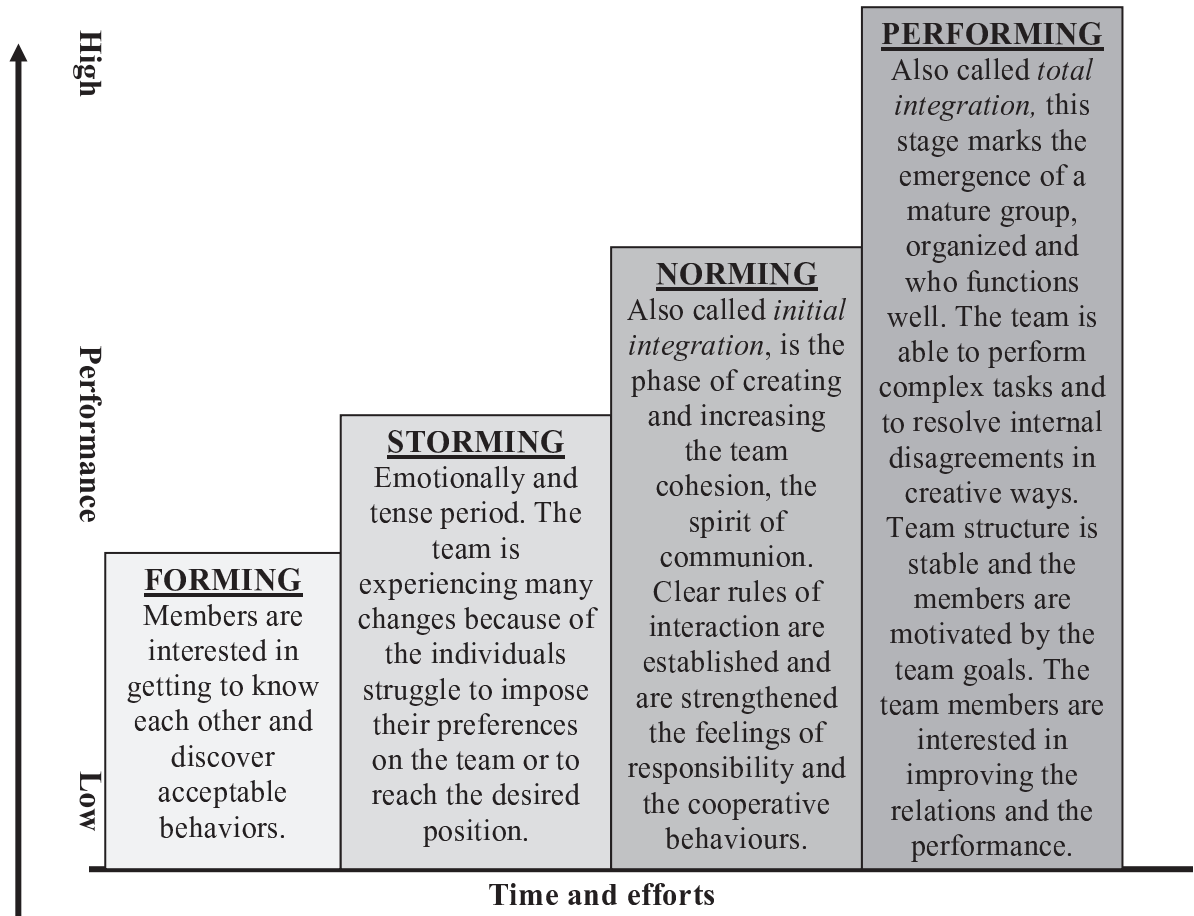|	
criticism may be discouraged as team members experience the closeness. Some members will wrongly perceive this stage as one of complete maturity. In fact this is just the beginning for the next phase, the highest of the team development.	➢ to facilitate the development of consensus; ➢ to provide permanent feedback.
4. PERFORMING Also called *total integration,* this stage marks the emergence of a mature group, organized and who functions well. The team is able to perform complex tasks and to resolve internal disagreements in creative ways. Team structure is stable and the members are motivated by the team goals. The main challenges concern the improvement of relations and team performance. The team operates at high levels of trust, as the relations are developing and the team loyalty is increasing. Members support each other's efforts and come to recognize that interdependence is essential.	➢ to provide creative and enthusiastic tasks for the team; ➢ to encourage humour, mood, and mutual support; ➢ to encourage competences improvement; ➢ to encourage the competition with other teams; ➢ to recognize efforts of the team members; ➢ to provide new challenges for the team.
5. ADJOURNING A well-integrated group is able to dissolve itself if necessary or if the task was accomplished. Adjourning stage is especially important for groups who have a temporary existence in the workplace. Members of these groups must come together quickly, do their job in a definite time and then dissolve maintaining the opportunity to meet when necessary. Members wish to dissolve when the task is finished and the ability to reunite in the future is an important test for the success of the group.	-

FORMING
Members are interested in getting to know each other and discover acceptable behaviors.

STORMING
Emotionally and tense period. The team is experiencing many changes because of the individuals struggle to impose their preferences on the team or to reach the desired position.

NORMING
Also called *initial integration*, is the phase of creating and increasing the team cohesion, the spirit of communion. Clear rules of interaction are established and are strengthened the feelings of responsibility and the cooperative behaviours.

PERFORMING
Also called *total integration,* this stage marks the emergence of a mature group, organized and who functions well. The team is able to perform complex tasks and to resolve internal disagreements in creative ways. Team structure is stable and the members are motivated by the team goals. The team members are interested in improving the relations and the performance.

High

Performance

Low

Time and efforts

Fig. 1. The team developmental stages

4.2. Examples of activities for each developmental stage
a. Forming stage:

At this stage, there is often a degree of anxiety that comes from the fact that individuals do not know each other and do not know exactly what role they play within the team. Therefore, individuals seek information about the other members, especially related to their background and experience related to the task the team must accomplish. A useful exercise in facilitating the inter knowledge is *Life curve* in which participants are invited to examine their past and to represent it in an exciting manner. The exercise encourages participants to share with other what they think and feel about their most significant experiences, positive and negative. The exercise consists in the following steps:

- Participants are asked to draw a time axis, the left representing the past, and the right representing the present.

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- Participants are asked to go back in time and to represent their experiences in the form of a curve. The positive experiences are figured over the time axis (like a mound, a mountain) and the negative, below the line, like a valley. If the impact of the experience on individuals live was great, the curved line is higher, respectively deeper (fig. 2).
- To make the curve clearer, the significant moments can be labelled and dated.
- After each member has completed his timeline with relevant experiences, participants are asked to share and explain to the others their life curve. Others may ask questions for clarification.
- The exercise is followed by a reflection phase where it could be addressed the following questions:
  - How did you feel solving this task?
  - What have you learned from your own life curve?
  - What experiences would you like to relive? Why?
  - What experiences you wouldn't like relive? Why?
  - Have you identified similarities/ differences between your personal life curve and others life curves?
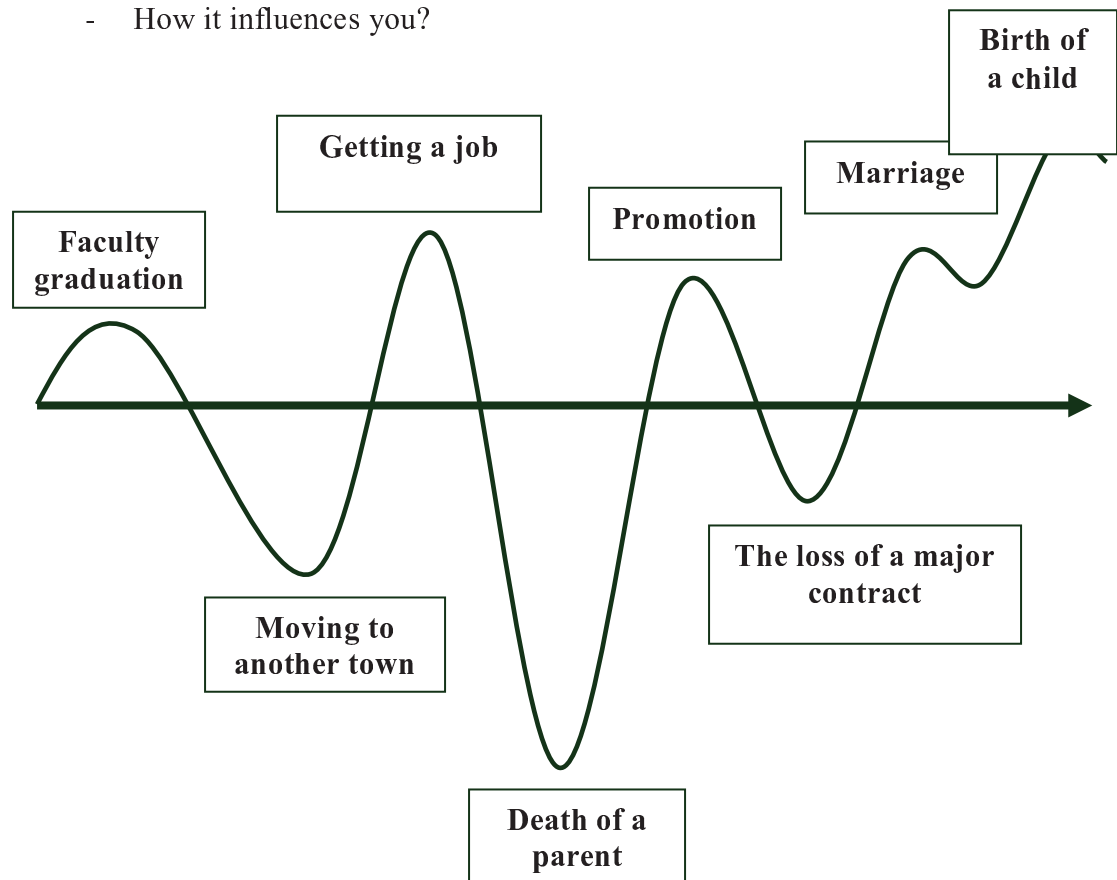 - How it influences you?

Birth of
a child

Getting a job

Faculty
graduation

Promotion

Marriage

Moving to
another town

The loss of a major
contract

Death of a
parent

Fig. 2. "Life curve" – an example

b. Storming stage

This stage is marked by conflicts and latent tensions that come to the surface. Members should be encouraged to resolve disputes in an honest and open manner in order to focus on common goals. An exercise for this stage is "Mind the gap" (adapted from Tizzard, 2006). The exercise is conducted as follows:

- The team or group is splited into smaller numbers (threes being the ideal).
- The participants are asked to produce an outcome statement for 6 months (or other period) from now, using outcome terminology, eg: 'We are a successful team, we are meeting our targets, and we get on well together', etc. (In other words, expressed as if it is already happening.).
- Each team presents to the others the statement.
- The participants are asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 where they are in relation to the statement that they have just made (10 = nearly there; 1 = nowhere near).
- The participants are asked the following questions:
  - What is the gap between the statement and the current state of the team?
  - What would need to happen to close the gap?
  - What prevents you reach the desired state?
  - What short-term goals you can propose, every day, to get as close as possible to the desired state?
  - What do you think it should be done to go from 5 to 6, for example (or any other two numbers between which there is only one level)?

c. Norming stage

The major risk of this stage is that, once there, the team could reach a dead end, or a plateau phase. Specific exercises of this stage should focus on the awareness of the team members of the objectives in order to facilitate progress in the upper stage. Such an exercise is *Nominal group technique* (adapted from Tizzard, 2006). The exercise is as follows:

- Each group member receives 3 post-its, and is asked to note three issues on which they would like to focus on or to discuss. Each individual completes one question on each post-it.
- Participants are informed that the information will be confidential; therefore, they need to try to be as open and honest as possible.

- When they have completed their post-its, are asked to come and stick them up randomly on the wall or flipchart.
- A participant is asked to read aloud all the noted problems and, together, will try to classify these problems into categories.
- Each category is given to a team to be analyzed. The team has to find solutions in the short and long term for each problem exposed.
- Then, teams are invited to share with other the solutions they found.
- The trainer compiles all the solutions and together with the participants will set a deadline for putting them into practice.
- The exercise is followed by a phase of reflection:
    - What are mobilizing forces, which could help you to adopt these solutions?
    - What are inhibitory forces that could prevent you from applying these solutions?

d. Performing stage

In this phase the members begin to see the results given the fact that they have focused their constructive energy on common task. Individuals are effective, learn from experience, and reflect on their weaknesses and strengths. The climate is relaxed, based on constructive feedback and mutual support. Specific exercises this stage focuses on the strengths of the team to be acknowledged and valued. Such an exercise is *6 Thinking Hats* (adapted from Tizzard, 2006), which is as follows:

- The participants receive Eduard de Bono (2006) model of the *6 thinking hats* (Oprea, 2008):

	Hat	Specific questions
	White hat Thinks like a white sheet that is neutral and carries information	What information do we have? What information is missing? What information do we want to have? How can I get information?
	Red hat Expresses emotions, fears, intuitions, feelings; Does not justify them;	Putting my red hat, look how I see at things ... My feeling is ... I do not like how it was done. Intuition tells me that ...

	Black hat Critical judgment; logical and negative thinking; Warns on what it cannot be done, risky or dangerous aspects;	What are the errors? What are the obstacles? To what risks are we exposed? We allow regulation?
	Yellow hat Thinks in an optimistic, logic and positive manner; Explores the benefits and the opportunities; Imagines the light and the shine of the sun;	What are the objectives? Why would we rely on these ideas? What are the benefits? How will we get these views?
	Green hat Creates new options, alternatives, resources, structures, methods, ideas; Analogy with fresh vegetation, abundance.	The chance of success is if ... How could handle the problem in another way? Can we find another explanation?
	Blue hat Controls the thought process for it to become more productive Organizes the process; Oversees, systematizes conclusions comments, directs and leads to the next step.	Can we summarize the views exposed? What's the next step? What are the main ideas? Do not waste time and focus on ..., don't you think that…?

- Participants are asked to reflect on their own work and to identify what type of hat they tend to use more often as a team.
- Then, are asked to reflect on individual work style and select one or two types of hats they prefer to use in their thinking. They are asked to motivate these preferences (cognitive and emotional).
- Once everybody has realized its mode of thinking and preference for a particular type of hat, it will be addressed the following questions:
    - What type of hat do you want to "wear" more often in the next team meetings?
    - If you should fall agree on the order of "wearing" hats in meetings, what would it be? Give some arguments.

3. Conclusions

Professionals have given an increasing importance in analyzing the group in terms of its dynamics, its evolution in relation to changes that occur during

the stages of its existence. Understanding its developmental stages can help managers and leaders to develop high performing teams. As a team develops, relationships between members become more stable and the team increases its ability to obtain high quality results. The amount of time that a team spends in each stage and the number of times they cycle back through the stages will vary depending, first of all, on the leadership. Based on what stage of development the team is in, the leaders will change their leadership approach to best meet the needs of the team (Thorman and Mendonca).

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