

UNDERSTANDING GROUP DYNAMICS



Leadership is about people coming together to work towards making a positive change – we need to further enhance our abilities to work within groups and understand group dynamics within our organizations if we want to be successful. Groups typically experience the following processes and phases when they come together - understanding these will help you and your organization work through planning, conflicts and emerge a stronger, more cohesive organizations. These processes called Forming, Storming, Norming & Performing. Tips for aiding these processes are detailed below.

Forming	Characteristics:	Things to do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange information • Orientation • Understanding purpose, mission • Building trust within relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tentative interactions • Polite discourse • Concern over ambiguity • Silence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icebreakers • Retreat or workshop • Discuss expectations in participants • Share history of organization
Storming		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissatisfaction with others • Competition amongst members • Conflict • Disagreement over procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas are criticized • Speakers are interrupted • Attendance is poor • (New ideas can emerge) • (Can be destructive to group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop members confrontation and conflict mediation skills • Review mission statements and purpose • Developing rebuilding activities
Forming		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the group structure • Increase cohesiveness and harmony • Establishment of roles and relationships • Establish patterns of how to get work done • Developed group culture – always late, people get selected to participate etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on rules • Consensus seeking • Increasing supportiveness • “We” feeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop group identity – tee shirts etc. • Develop group develops its own new program to develop traditions • Review new goals and objectives • Maintain relationships
Performing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on achievement • High task orientated • Emphasis on performance and productivity • Revisit other stages when new members join or new programs arise or old ways no longer working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making, problem solving • Increase cooperation • Decrease emotionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that everyone is involved • Open to constructive criticism, feedback • Step back and allow the group to perform

Resources

Learn more about group dynamics and other issues that affect groups and student organizations by taking credit-bearing leadership courses, workshops such as the Emerging Leaders Program, as well as by using ASU staff and resources. To get started check out the following:

www.asu.edu/mu/slp
Student Leadership Programs –MU 340

www.asu.edu/provost/intergroup/
Intergroup Relations Center- Student Services 294

And look into the Student Leadership Library on the 3rd floor of the Memorial Union- you can even check materials out!

And check out these other *Best Practices* that will help you with your student organization:

- *Starting a New Student Organization*
- *Collaboration with Student Organizations/ Coalition Building*
- *Conflict Mediation*

And remember...

Whether you are working on a class project or leading a student organization, when people come together it can be both awesome and challenging. Understanding group dynamics and addressing them will help your group stay the course and accomplish its mission!