Title: **T.E.A.M.S**.: **T**eam **E**ffectiveness and **A**ssessment to **M**anage **S**tudents

**Abstract**

Teams are topically and structurally a part of many Management courses. However, student teams often fail to live up to their potential. This symposium argues that success should not be measured by grades or the absence of student complaints. Rather, successful teams are those that function well and where students develop their skills and understanding of how to be more effective team members. In this interactive symposium, participants will participate in lively discussions, engage in team-oriented activities, and leave with a better understanding of how to promote effective student teams in their courses along with tools to improve their function.

**Keywords**: Team activities, Team building, Team management

**Introduction**

Student teams have become ubiquitous in management classes both as a theoretical concept and a pedagogical tool (e.g., Morgan & Stewart, 2019). Among the many reasons that teams are so frequently used is that employers want employees who are able to work in teams; it is something they value and look for when hiring graduates (e.g., Ettington & Camp, 2002; Lane, 2011). However, too often instructors take a sink or swim attitude towards the teams in their classes (Hunsaker, Pavett, & Hunsaker, 2011; Tombaugh & Mayfield, 2014) without providing developmental activities to help students learn vital team skills. The purpose of this symposium is to have participants discuss methods and engage in activities to promote the effectiveness of teams and help student develop good team skills in face-to-face class and online class settings.

**Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications**

The main theoretical foundation for this symposium is Tuckman’s model of team development (e.g., Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), which has been one of the most influential theories of team development in the last 50 years (Miller, 2003).  The theory focuses on interpersonal relationships and task activity within group development. Initially Tuckman (1965) summarized this model of team development with four stages: Forming, storming, norming, and performing. The adjourning stage was added in 1977 (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) thus reflecting the five-stage group life cycle model of team development that is currently taught. While we recognize there are several approaches to team development that may complement Tuckman's model (e.g. Gersick, 1988), and that critiques of the linear model argue it doesn't fully address the complexity of team development (Miller, 2003), we believe using Tuckman's stages is a good starting point to understand and discuss team dynamics (Bonebright, 2010). Many students will have been introduced to it in an introductory Management or Organizational Behavior course making it an easy way to teach and reinforce a basic understanding of how teams work.

The greatest challenge and advantage, from an experiential learning perspective, is the short lifespan of student teams. Without opportunities to engage in activities that navigate students through the stages of team development, the abbreviated lifespan of student groups (e.g., Ettington & Camp, 2002) challenges students to fully experience the *Forming*, *Storming*, *Norming*, and *Performing* stages (Tuckman, 1965). Gersick’s (1988) punctuated equilibrium model of group development further highlights the difficulties inherent in group development of project teams. Add in the varied experience levels of students, and it becomes ever more important that instructors provide support and guidance that promotes experiential learning to develop team effectiveness. On the positive side, because teams typically do not extend beyond a single course, students can experience the entire life cycle, including adjourning with the help of experiential activities that engage and promote the mechanisms of each stage of development.

**Symposium Overview**

In this symposium we will discuss and present different activities and strategies to promote team effectiveness and student learning, roughly following Tuckman’s (1965) stages of group development. The symposium will start with a brief discussion of the various methods for assigning students to teams. Next, participants engage with smaller groups and have the opportunity to learn about and experience the activities and methods to promote learning and team effectiveness during the various stages. After debriefing these activities, we will engage in a discussion of assessment activities, which cannot be conducted in the symposium. Discussions will include the implementation and relative merits of each method or activity. While this symposium is geared toward exercises in a face-to-face sitting, at each stage we will also discuss implications for teaming in an online setting.

**Selection Methods**

* Self-selection – students form their own teams;
* Instructor-selection – discussion of what criterion are used to form teams;
* Hybrid selection – examples include having students pick/rank topics and then faculty sorts into teams.

We will briefly discuss the merits and challenges with each of these selection methods.

**Stages of Development**

**Forming**. The initial stage is a time for team members to orient themselves to one another and the tasks. In this stage members are concerned with understanding task and role expectations. It is a time when member test boundaries and jockey for status within the group.

**Ice Breakers (Forming Activities)**

* **Judging a Book by its Cover** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Each member, using their initials and birthdate, must find the book that corresponds to that call number. For example, John Smith born in 1999, would be JS 1999. His book would be “Governing Metropolitan Toronto”. Students then share with each other and decide who has the most representative book.
* **Two Truths and a Lie** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Each member of the team shares three facts about themselves, only two of which are true and the other team members must guess which one is the lie.
* **What We Have in Common** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Each team must come up with one to two non-obvious characteristics that they all have in common. For example, they can’t use *we are all students at “Our University”*. However, *we’ve all been to the Grand Canyon* or *we all love pizza* are acceptable. Then the team comes up with a team name that incorporates their list. For example, Will Travel for Pizza. The class can then vote for the most creative name. The winning team gets to be the first to choose their presentation date.
* **Fit Figure** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Group members draw a human figure and place things that help teamwork inside the figure and things the hinder teamwork outside the figure. Students post their work and discuss as a class.

**Storming and Norming**. The second stage is typified by intergroup conflict. During this stage, members may become hostile toward one another or the authority figure (e.g. professor, therapist, trainer). Emotional responses to tasks and goals are common.   The third stage marks a time of developing group cohesion. Dysfunctional conflict and polarization are replaced with acceptance and a sense of safety to express opinions. Roles and norms in this stage are firmly established and effective ways of working together are found. The group has a sense of in-group comradery and seek to maintain this.

**Team and Time Management Methods (Storming and Norming Activities)**

* **Assignments and Timeline** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* the team assigns tasks to each member as well as establishing expectations/timeline for meetings and deliverables. This works well if incremental deliverables such as an outline and first draft are required. This can quickly give students an opportunity to see which team members are taking an active role in the team. Early deliverables help teams identify early signs effective and ineffective member involvement.
* **Team Charters/Contracts** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Students develop rules and expectations for team members and can include sanctions for those that do not live up to their obligations. Included in this can be the option to fire team members if they do not fulfill the team expectations.
* **Gravity Only Works When You Communicate** –Team members, facing opposite each other, hold one index finger out and line up across the length of a stick (about the length of a broom) or around a hula-a-hoop. The team is told to lower the stick/hoop to the ground without talking. The team is given two tries. Usually, the stick will rise instead of lower. On the third try, allow the team to communicate. This is a good exercise during the storming stage to experience the power of communication.
* **Story Boarding** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* This exercise enables groups to visualize how their team will work together and set the tone for group norms. They can make a collage, a story book, or a story board to discuss their group process. PowerPoint can be used and shared in an online setting.
* **Team Roles and Communication** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Teams can assign roles which rotate during each meeting such as: Leader/Facilitator, Devil’s Advocate, Tabler and Scribe. The leader/facilitator creates the agenda, leads the meeting, and ensures everyone has the opportunity to speak. The Devil’s Advocate poses differing opinions and encourages critical thinking. The Tabler defers conversations that are not on the agenda or tangential conversations. The Scribe takes the meeting minutes. Other roles can be assigned based on the size of the group.
* **Mining for Conflict** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Based on the work of Lencioni (2002), this activity involves each group member completing a conflict style inventory and then using this as a basis for discussing conflict within the team.

**Performing and Adjourning**. Not all teams make it to the performing stage. In the fourth stage the team is cohesive and synergistic, working effectively and together. The team structure and team roles are flexible and team members adapt in service of task completion. The team life cycle culminates with team members separating after the task completion.

**Performing and Adjourning Activities**

* **LEGOs and Group Decision Style** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* This exercise highlights different group decision processes and helps team members understand the pros and cons of each style to impact group effectiveness. Each group is assigned a different decision style and presented with LEGO construction instructions that are purposefully vague to see the impact of the style on group outcomes. In an online setting students find pictures online and create a story board on PowerPoint.
* **Contribution Mapping** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Group members take notes during a meeting, using a checklist to mark areas of contribution to team building and maintenance roles by each group member. After, the group takes a few minutes to discuss the roles each member plays and determines if any roles are missing and their impact.
* **Leveling** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Each group member writes a list of three to five adjectives describing another team member (tell team members that not all the adjectives can be positive). Then, each team member sits facing the group as the members read off their adjectives. The team member receiving feedback then discusses their feelings and level of agreement with the feedback. Then, the group moves to the next member. After all group members have completed their turn, the group reconvenes with the class to debrief the exercise.
* **Post Project Review** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* After the group has performed their task, the group members meet to discuss what went well in their group, and what didn’t, with a focus on takeaways for future activities or teams.
* **My Future Self** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* Each member draws and shares with their team a picture of a goal they want to accomplish the next time they are on a team (academic or professional) Members of the team ask open-ended questions about how this person will accomplish their goal: limitations, strengths etc. Team members are encouraged to offer suggestions about the person’s strengths and limitations as it pertains to their goal and help the person come up with specific actions they can take to achieve the goal.

**Assessment Activities**

* **Descriptive Feedback** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* students share the strengths, weaknesses, and assess the contributions of each team member.
* **Reflection Papers** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* this is a descriptive self-assessment of the student. These are often used to guide the students’ reflection and deepen the learning after a particular group experience.
* **Point/Grade Allocations** – *Can be conducted online and face-to-face.* students are given an opportunity to reward or punish students based on their level of contribution to the team’s performance. Non-point sanctions can also be used. For example, if a person did not submit their part on time, they must wear a team made hat for the day or to class.

**Session Description**

Introduction of Topic and Panel 5 minutes

Discussion of Selection Methods 5 minutes

Experiential Exercises for Each Stage of Group Development 50 minutes

Debriefing Exercises and Sharing Activities 15 minutes

Discussion of Assessment Activities 10 minutes

Summary/Concluding Thoughts 5 minutesReferences

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