
Field report team development

Team development – old hat or essential success factor? Efficient teams are every organization’s backbone and become increasingly important in organizations that are subject to complex changes more and more frequently. In the future, everything will be about bringing and keeping together more and more diverse staff as a team: permanent staff, freelancers and temporary employees, millennials and experienced knowledge carriers, different cultures, maybe virtually distributed over all time zones and continents; all this in the framework of increasing workloads, modern communication media and new work time models! Work rarely takes place without the others: when it is about sorting out structures or conflicts, organizing changes of leadership or making knowledge and resources usable in a value-adding way, team development is the key to success. Typical applications are groups and teams in the line, product teams, agile scrum teams, virtual teams and management teams.

Every team is different: mutual diagnosis

After a detailed order clarification and a formulation of goals by our customer, we begin choosing methods and creating a design. In the process, we stay in close contact with our clients. Sometimes it makes sense to have interviews before a team development, e.g. in conflict situations. We usually start the team development with a common diagnostic analysis process with the whole team. Here, it is our goal to create high degrees of identification and participation. During the actual team development phase, we work in a process-oriented way towards the goals decided on. After the diagnosis – also including experience-oriented exercises and their common reflexion – and choosing the work priorities begins the common working phase which ends with a concrete agreement concerning the next steps. Sometime after the actual team development phase, we reflect on the experienced team process together with our customer. If necessary, deepening and success monitoring can take place in follow-up meetings.

Getting to the heart of one’s own working environment: Metaphors and emotions

Experience-oriented working with teams (e.g. outdoor) has continually developed since the 1990s and nowadays it has its place in consulting processes as an effective and goal-oriented method. Elements such as problem solving, trust, cooperation and communication are reflected in team tasks and learning experiences are transferred into the everyday working life. In this process, details are important: How well is the consultant able to transform the client’s world into a catching exercise that gets to the heart of the customer’s problem? Does the experience of a problem-solving process cause consternation and emotions? Does it create energy and motivation e.g. to experience new rituals or processes in the team and to get rid of outdated habits and practises? The participants’ working on brief learning projects can immediately show solutions whose reflexion can be directly transferred to the content-based work. Building trust, communication and problem solving culture can find an important starting point in a team development phase.

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With leadership and feedback into the Performing Phase

Until a new group or team really is efficient, it goes through 4 phases: orientation phase (Forming), conflict phase (Storming), norming phase (Norming) and performance phase (Performing). The fifth and last phase is the parting phase (Leaving). This concept was created by Bruce Tuckman and was already described in 1965 for the first time. The team clock is a pragmatic diagnosis tool for self-assessment. Teams can quickly evaluate themselves and decide on the actions that need to be taken for the next level.

Executive managers can notably support the way to the performance phase in the phases before. In a team development, we reflect the team members' roles for them, enable changing e.g. fixed role patterns into new roles. We especially support the team members' feedback to each other and to the manager. Thus, we help the team to reach the performing phase and/or to remain there.

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