NEW TEAM ASSIMILATION

Accelerating Performance for
New Leaders and Their Teams

A Proven Approach for Rapid Transition of

Newly-Formed Leadership Teams

To High Productivity

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All Teams Pass Through Predictable Stages
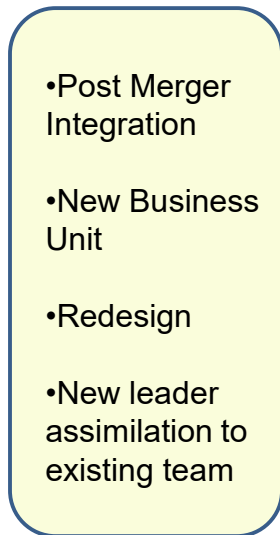
TEAM DEVELOPMENT 'LAWS OF GRAVITY'

• No team ever 'skips' a stage - they go faster or slower
• Some teams get to 'performing' more quickly than others
• Many teams get stuck in 'storming' - 'performing' has to be earned
• Leadership and expert external facilitation make the difference

PERFORMING
- True inter-dependence
- The work gets done
- Roles/authority flexible
- Highly productive
- Team morale high - loyalty intense
- Comfort with risk-taking - creativity

NORMING
- Active engagement
- Real dialogue
- Shared leadership
- Growing trust
- Initial productivity
- Fear of break-up can lead to change resistance

STORMING
- Testing around leadership, power, and authority
- Establishment of "Rules of the Road"
- Conflicts build up – spoken and unspoken

FORMING
- Uncertainty, caution
- Look to the leader for direction
- Gathering of data
- Orientation to the task ahead

Predictable New Team Challenges

Skillful Navigation of New Team Ambiguity Will Shape Later Productivity
Early Dynamics and Relationships Cast the Die for Later Success or Mediocrity

New teams arise from a diverse set of circumstances

- Post Merger Integration
- New Business Unit
- Redesign
- New leader assimilation to existing team

New structures, roles, culture, relationships and team norms

Uncertainty, testing, caution: conflict or avoidance

Internal Focus & Lowered Productivity

No action prolongs 'forming' and 'storming'

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Ambiguity, unconstructive conflict or avoidance - **internal** focus prevents productivity

Clarity, healthy disagreement and collaboration - **external** focus creates value

Early team assimilation removes obstacles & accelerates passage into 'norming' & 'performing'
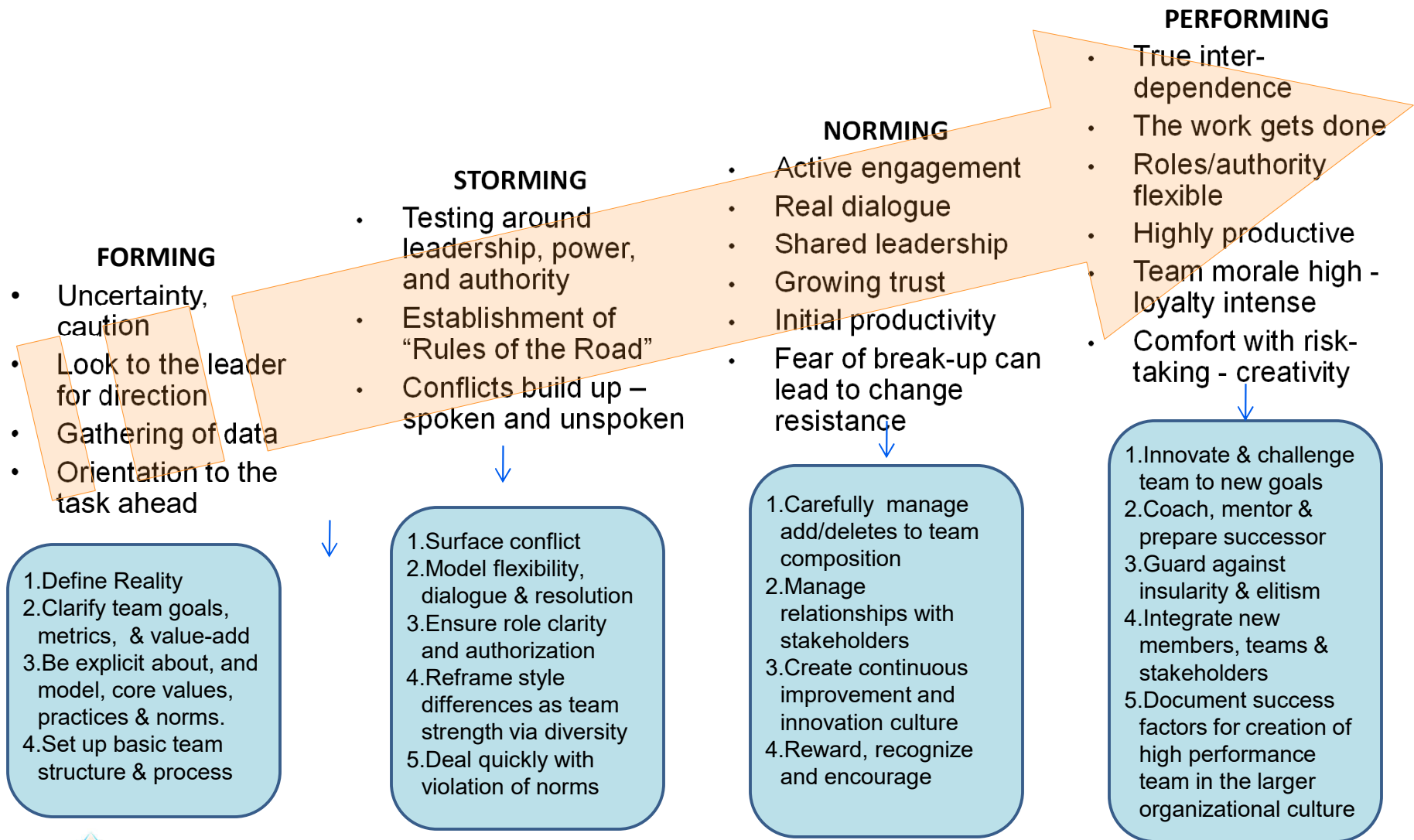
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Pay a Little Now – Or a Lot Later

- Early focus on team dynamics to reduce uncertainty produces high return

- Failure to proactively shape the new team also carries a high cost.
    - Prolonged testing and misalignment
    - Initial misconceptions that form the basis for misalignment and conflict
    - Lowered performance

- The team leader should play a directive role in clarifying expectations in the new team setting, with these caveats:
    - Avoid cutting off input or communicating a message that input is unwelcome
    - Avoid preempting member-member dialogue that promotes collaboration
    - <u>Do</u> clarify non-negotiable expectations and goals
    - <u>Do</u> clarify stylistic or value-based expectations that are non-negotiable

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How Leaders Accelerate Team Capability

FORMING
- Uncertainty, caution
- Look to the leader for direction
- Gathering of data
- Orientation to the task ahead

1. Define Reality
2. Clarify team goals, metrics, & value-add
3. Be explicit about, and model, core values, practices & norms.
4. Set up basic team structure & process

STORMING
- Testing around leadership, power, and authority
- Establishment of "Rules of the Road"
- Conflicts build up – spoken and unspoken

1. Surface conflict
2. Model flexibility, dialogue & resolution
3. Ensure role clarity and authorization
4. Reframe style differences as team strength via diversity
5. Deal quickly with violation of norms

NORMING
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1. Carefully manage add/deletes to team composition
2. Manage relationships with stakeholders
3. Create continuous improvement and innovation culture
4. Reward, recognize and encourage

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1. Innovate & challenge team to new goals
2. Coach, mentor & prepare successor
3. Guard against insularity & elitism
4. Integrate new members, teams & stakeholders
5. Document success factors for creation of high performance team in the larger organizational culture

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New Team Assimilation Event

Setup

- Contracting between team leader and objective third party with consulting expertise
- 1-1 Private Interviews
- Design of Assimilation Event and follow-up coaching

Offsite – AM (2 hrs)

- Leader framing: key expectations, values & style introduction, transparency re: anticipated changes
- Brief individual introductions: background, history, role, prior relationships: 5-10' each

Offsite – PM (3 hrs)

- Team Norms – 'Rules of Engagement': Universal & Specific team expectations
- Individual style comparison – reframing differences as team strengths
- Other topics as determined by Setup interviews: e.g. role clarification & authorization

The New Team Process - Details

1. Expert and objective facilitation that is 'outside the system'
2. Surface initial team member concerns in private
3. Offsite Agenda:
   - Kickoff framing by team leader to call out key external stakeholder expectations and primary value outputs – perhaps also the time to convey the leader's view on key challenges and objectives
   - Brief individual introductions: background, history with company and other team members, perhaps personal interests.
   - Discussion of team norms: usually a blend of 'universals' (e.g. communication, confidentiality, accountability, decision protocols) that every team faces plus team-specific norms that reflect member values
   - A structured discussion of individual differences and how these can be turned to best advantage. Tools like Myers-Briggs are useful in quickly creating a common language for this discussion – but the tool is only a means to this end of appreciating how differences add value
   - Other focus topics as needed: e.g. role clarification and authorization

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