

fit this experience into the framework of the forming, storming, norming, and performing model of team development, it's clear that the first team never grew past the politeness of the forming stage, while the second team clearly charged into and through the storming phase.

Examining the Storm

The "storm" starts in different ways for different teams. Just as teams differ in many ways, "storming" can begin within a team in many different ways. It may be as subtle as someone sitting in a different chair, or as unmistakable as an explosive outburst of anger. Storming, like the meteorological phenomenon it's named after, comes in many forms. But in every case, storming doesn't end until the team addresses the needs and desires of each of the team members.

When people come together to form a team, they do so to accomplish some common goal they can't achieve by themselves. However, while the team members may agree in broad terms on the goal and what needs to be done to get there, they each bring their own individual needs and desires with them. At the outset the individual needs and desires of each member remain largely unknown to the other members of the team. It's not until these needs and desires are shared and addressed that a team begins to coalesce and "perform."

So why is it so hard for people to share their needs and desires with the other members of their team? Well for starters, they're often strangers, so there's the real concern of embarrassment, ridicule, or even retribution, especially if the desires are self-centered or not politically correct. Thus, for most people there's a significant level of "discomfort" involved in sharing their needs and desires. In addition, because needs and desires, like assumptions, are often subconscious, team members sometimes aren't even aware of their needs and desires, so they don't get openly shared.

As long as the discomfort or fear remains, most people will avoid openly sharing their needs and desires. This leads to the polite, reserved behaviors

typically seen within teams in their early "forming" stage. But even at this stage, "norms" are inadvertently being set within the team. Team members begin to sit in the same chair—"their" chair. A few of the members begin to make decisions and to speak for the whole team, deciding what's to be done next and setting deadlines. Because these "norms" are not set explicitly—they usually happen without anyone talking about them—they often clash with the needs or desires of one of the team members. When this happens, it can open the door for the team to begin storming. But only if that team member feels safe enough to put his or her concerns on the table. If a team member believes that speaking up is more painful than living with the consequences of a proposed action or decision, and chooses to remain silent, then the team will miss the benefits of storming.

When something does get thrown on the table that is in direct conflict with someone else's need—something too painful to ignore—and the team member speaking up still feels a bit unsure of his or her safety, then the resulting challenge may be a bit clumsy and emotional. This can be painful (not meaning blood is spilled or punches are thrown), but until all team members have put all their needs on the table, and they've all been addressed by the

group, the team won't get to performing. It's necessary for a team to go through the awkward, uncomfortable discussions we've labeled as "storming." So don't be afraid of it. Encourage it.

It's About Trust

Storming is saying what you honestly think, despite the risks involved. This takes a tremendous amount of trust, which highlights why it's so important to spend time up-front in team development addressing things such as ground rules, common values, and roles and responsibilities.

When the members of a team develop trust in each other, they're willing to present ideas and defend them because they know that everyone will listen to their ideas, think about them, and give them honest criticism. That's the benefit. The process of storming improves and polishes ideas by identifying and challenging assumptions, obstacles, and expected outcomes. Better ideas result in better solutions, and better solutions equate to higher team performance. By "storming" ideas before implementing them, teams can create their rainbow and follow it to the pot of gold.

Editor's Note: The author welcomes questions or comments on this article. Contact Patnode at Norman.patnode@dau.mil.

DFARS Transformation

The Department of Defense is kicking off a major transformation initiative to identify dramatic improvements and reductions to procurement policies, procedures, and processes in the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS).

A task force, under the direction of Deidre Lee, Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, will consider bold changes and make proposal recommendations. The task force will also develop legislative proposals for consideration by the Congress for future changes to the DFARS.

The public is encouraged to participate in generating ideas for improvements. To submit your proposals, go to the following Web site:

<http://www.acq.osd.mil/dp/dars/transf.htm>

DPAP will consider and post all ideas, but its aggressive schedule precludes responding on an individual basis.