



The Stages of Team Development And The Leading *EDGE*

Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, Enable

This Leadership Skill enables Leaders to:

- Understand the stages of development that every team progresses through
- Understand the characteristic of each stage of team development
- Understand the appropriate leadership style and strategy to match the stage of team development

All teams go through various stages of development as they come together. Individual people go through the same stages and their natural ups and downs as they take on new tasks or roles.

Let's focus on two important elements that change as we face a new task: *skill level* and *enthusiasm*. When starting out, enthusiasm tends to be high and skills tend to be low. As the members of the team learn more about each other and the demands of the team building process, they realize that they don't necessarily have all the skills or resources needed for success. The level of enthusiasm tends to drop. Skills are generally only slightly improving as the team members learn more about what's needed and how to do it. Once they start making progress and having some successes as a team, their collective skills and enthusiasm will start going up. As the team grows in cohesion and develops more skills, their enthusiasm and commitment will increase as well.

Characteristics of each Stage of Team Development:

- Starting out (skills are low; enthusiasm is high)
- Becoming discouraged (skills and enthusiasm are low)
- Making progress (skills and enthusiasm are rising)
- Finding success (skills and enthusiasm are high)



Team Skill Level and Enthusiasm

Skill Level - Generally, the skill level of the team starts low and increases as the team grows together and gets better at working as a team.

Enthusiasm - Often, unlike skill level, enthusiasm usually starts out high but can then take a sudden dip. Then, as the team members explore their differences and align their expectations with reality, the team begins to achieve results and enthusiasm begins to rise again.

Ultimately, both enthusiasm and skill level are high as the group becomes a high-performing team.

The Stages of Team Development

When the team is starting out (skills are low; enthusiasm is high), a leader can use the *Explain* method to assist the team. The same is true for an individual learning a new skill. Often, the best way a leader can help the team through the first stage is by Explaining what the group needs to get done and helping get every team member on the same page.

In the second stage, the team's productivity is still low but, hopefully, on the rise and morale can also drop as team members realize what must be done and with whom. This stage is often filled with tension, conflict, and power struggles.

As the team starts to come together in the second stage and starts to become discouraged as they understand the needed tasks, the leader can shift into *Demonstrating* showing the team how to do the needed tasks and where they are headed. Many times, a team will get through these early stages quickly. An effective leader can help the team move through more quickly and with less distress. The leader's team-building skills can have a significant impact.

In the next stage, the team is making good progress and there is an upswing of both attitude and accomplishment. Everyone gets moving in the right direction, but sometimes there are still some grumblings or interpersonal challenges among the team members. With skills and enthusiasm on the upswing in this stage, the leader can start shifting into *Guiding* mode, coaching the team and team members in taking charge of the effort.

In the last stage, the team finds success together. The leader can shift to an *Enable* style. There are a lot of smooth-flowing interactions, and the team is achieving its goals. Enable the team to function on its own. Help them see their success.

Goal Directed Leadership



Different teams may proceed through different stages at different speeds. A stage can last for a moment or a month, or it can be skipped entirely.

Recognizing the various stages enables the leader to use appropriate leadership style to smooth the progress of a team as it evolves. With a greater understanding of this individual and team development, Patrol leaders can better apply the best Leading EDGE skills at the right time to help their teams. We can modify how we lead the team based upon the stage of development. Teams don't start as effective high-performance teams; they grow as they come together as a team. A new team leader changes the dynamics of a preexisting team, such as when a new group of Troop leaders steps in. The new leadership team will want to pay close attention to what stages the troop is in as the new leadership team ramps up.

As a leader, learning to effectively include and engage use each member of your team is an important skill. Leaders want to look at their team and see how best to involve and use the skills of every person, not just a few friends or the strongest individuals. Leaders also want to understand the needs and goals of each individual person and how all the members of the team can help each team member achieve their individual goals.

Leadership Strategies

Strategies for applying the appropriate style of Leadership to the Stage of Team Development:

When the team is just starting out, what leadership method would help the team best? (Explain)

Once the team starts becoming discouraged (skills and enthusiasm are low), how can the leader change styles to help? What style would work in this stage? (Demonstrate)

When the team starts to gel, working hard together and developing a sense of accomplishment, what style should a leader use in this stage? (Guide)

As the team becomes a high-performing team, skills and enthusiasm are high, and the team finds success together, what style should the leader use? (Enable)

* For detailed description and graphic on The Stages of Team Development, see the instructional sheet of the same title.