

Relationship and Group Dynamics That Affect Collaboration

Are you able to see relationships and group dynamics and understand how they will affect the interactions between people? Understanding relationship dynamics is the ability to see around the corner and prepare for what is coming next in an interaction with someone else or a group of people. Now I'm going to dive into what you need to know to see the patterns in people dynamics, so you can see around corners in collaborations with both individuals and groups. I'm going to give you new lenses to use when looking at groups. When we have a high level of awareness, we are able to be more effective collaborators. We are also able to become builders and leaders of high-performing teams.

Partnership and Enmeshment

First, let's define the terms *partnership* and *enmeshment* as they relate to individual relationships.

A partnership relationship is what exists when two people decide to do something together, and they grow as a result. 145

Please hold both your hands up in front of you now, thumbs touching and fingers pointing to the ceiling. Wiggle your fingers up and move your hands up. Imagine each hand is a person and the wiggle up is the two people growing and making progress upwards together. Because they are nearby, sharing ideas, information, or a story, and because the two people are carefully listening and pointed in the same direction, they are growing together. The same dynamic can occur with a group of people in a partnership relationship together.

An enmeshed relationship is what exists when two people get so overly focused on each other that they lose focus on their common goal to grow and get results together. Please clasp your hands together, interlocking your fingers sideways. It is hard to move up or grow in this enmeshed dynamic. When partners are in an enmeshed relationship, they may each be so overly focused on what the other person is doing that they take their attention off their own “That’s for Me!” lists. The blame game and passive-aggressive patterns emerge when enmeshed relationships occur. In enmeshed relationships, one person has an agenda he or she expects the other person to live according to.

You could be “partners” with a boss, a peer, a colleague, a parent, or even a child. I’m not using the word “partners” here to mean business partners or married partners, but rather to represent a way of growing together, focused on results, and collaborating. I use the word “partners” to describe a feeling that surrounds the way people interact with each other. If you are respectful of each other’s “That’s for Me!” lists, and if you find that some of the items on your separate lists align, you can grow and play together. You can focus on creating what you both want. Then you are in a partnership; then you are co-creating. Your group dynamic as it relates to accomplishing and experiencing could be called “being partners.” This is necessary for engagement and healthy collaboration.

Let me share another way of thinking about partnership and enmeshment. Imagine we are in a huge kitchen. There are

cooking island. We can talk with each other as we prepare our own meals. Every type of ingredient is available to us. We've decided to come together to enjoy making our own pizzas. I am putting pineapple and pepperoni on my gluten-free pizza crust. Have you selected the meat-lovers delight with a thick crust? Or maybe you wanted mushrooms, garlic, and onions on a thin crust? Whatever you want, the choice is yours. There is no right or wrong way to prepare this meal. There is no judgment. You are experiencing total unconditional acceptance as you create your pizza. You are making your own choices, and so am I. We are both creating desired outcomes. We are being "partners" as we co-create this experience.

Now imagine that Patel comes over to my island in the kitchen and says, "You should not be having pepperoni on your pizza!" She starts removing the pepperoni from my pizza, even though I did not ask her to do so. Patel is enmeshed. She has lost focus on her own pizza, and she is now trying to fix mine to suit her agenda. I have choices about how I will respond to her. I can let her mess up my pizza, or I can tell her to get lost, this is my pizza. I do not want to enmesh with Patel, so I kindly send her on her way. I want to be partners, engaged in having fun and growing together. I do not want to make someone else's pizza or have her make mine. I want to be partners growing and experiencing life together in all my relationships.

Decision-Making Power and Control

Now let me add another dimension to explore that has to do with power and control, especially in decision making. Do you share power and control in decision making, or is one person up and the other person down in the decision-making process? Does one person own the right to make the decision and do so *without* input from the other?

Do you discuss how decisions will be made together *before* decisions are made? If so, you are likely operating like partners and collaborating.

Imagine two stick figures standing next to each other on an equal level. We could say that these two stick figures represent being partners.

When we are in a shared partnership dynamic, we share power and control as we make decisions together as partners.

When we are in a one-up-one-down dynamic, one person owns the power and control and makes the decision without collaborating. One person is more powerful than the other and dictates what will be done. Imagine the two stick figures with one above the other representing one being on a higher level than the other. The lower figure reports into the higher figure.

Each of these patterns shows up frequently in the workplace.

Allow me first to give you an example that is not from the workplace, so that the implications from the business examples will be easier to understand. When I was a young girl, my father would sometimes announce, “There is something new in the driveway today!” My mother, sister, and I would race to the driveway to discover what new car my father had purchased. There was no discussion about what the new family car would look like. My father owned the decision, even though it affected all of us. My mother was always surprised by what her new car looked like. This decision-making process was classic one-up/one-down with my father being the owner of the decision.

This is the same dynamic that occurs when a supervisor says, “Here is the new assembly line that will replace the one you have been using,” when there has been no prior discussion about a new assembly line being implemented—or even considered. Or when a peer announces in a presentation to your joint boss, “This is our proposal,” indicating that it reflects suggestions from the team, though you had no input into what was created. This is not collaborating.

When you say, “Let’s decide together *how* this decision will be made,” you are likely collaborating in a partnership—you

are cocreating a decision path. Decision making can be a joint responsibility.

If you habitually put yourself into the one-down position with others, deferring to them to make decisions, you are giving away your power and your ability to partner. They will feel like you are not taking initiative, and eventually they will lose respect for you. Instead, put yourself into a partnership and begin to cocreate how decisions will be made. Discuss up front how decisions will be made from a place of partnering.

Regarding the car-buying story: today, when my husband and I are considering buying a new car, or anything important, we do so together. We determine what the goal is, and we come up with options we both like that could meet the goal. Then we communicate with our children to explore their opinions about the options, and we enable them to propose additional options—illustrating to them that their voices matter in decision making. Even though my husband and I will make the final decision jointly, their input is considered. This same model of decision making applies at work when a client wants to build a curriculum for leadership in his or her organization. We approach it by collaborating on how key decisions will be made in the project. We are choosing partnership in decision making.

Each of these decision-making dynamics has pros and cons. Being able to spot the pattern you are in with someone or with a team is useful. Being able to talk about which style you want to use before a decision is made enables real partnerships to form. We might decide that, on the XYZ project, we will use partnership and on the PQR project you will take the lead.

Trust builds when we have these conversations and do what we agreed to in decision making.

As a leader, it is important to distinguish which type of decision making you expect the people who report to you to use with you and when. Michelle Staas and I work together. She owns the administration and office management for most things in our office, even though I own the company. Because I trust

her and her decision-making ability in her job, every week when we meet for two hours, she is in the one-up position as she tells me what she needs from me. During that time she can delegate to me if needed. We have agreed she owns her projects. She is in the driver's seat, telling me what she has done or will do, delegating to me and asking me questions. We partner, even though I am the boss.

The decision about how we will move forward may be that Michelle will own the decision-making responsibility and I will trust and support her judgment. Sometimes Michelle and I agree that I will own the decision-making responsibility on a particular project, and other times we will co-own or jointly decide on something before moving forward. Using the earlier metaphor about pizza making, you could say we do not make each other's pizza. Pizza-making responsibilities are clearly defined in our conversations when we are in a healthy partnership dynamic. We decide together how we will make a decision about something, and we move forward with that plan.

When we feel powerless in our work or when we are living a victim story, there is no conversation about how decisions will be made. There is an automatic assumption that someone else will be making the decision. We are unhappy, shut down, in a bad habit or pattern of relationships that put us into the one-down role. That is a signal we need a more productive way of making decisions.

Teresa's Group Decision-Making Story

Earlier we discussed Teresa Bryce Bazemore, the president of Radian Guaranty Inc. Teresa served on a non-profit board that produced breakthrough results because of the way board members partnered in decision making about what was important. The board asked the question, "What do we need to do to accomplish our vision?"

Teresa said: “We had a list that was too long for the resources we had available. We realized as a board we would have to prioritize the list of initiatives, because we could not be successful if we tried to do it all. We did not want people working to the point of exhaustion or getting overwhelmed, spinning on a wheel going nowhere, so we agreed we had to decide what to spend our resources on. To ease decision making and ensure we heard from each person, we did an activity we called, ‘Spend the Dime.’ We put a list of all the possible projects onto the wall of the boardroom. Each board member was given 10 pennies. We each had to allocate our 10 pennies. Some people taped all ten on one project and others spread theirs across several projects. At the end of the activity, it was clear which were the high priorities for us to focus our resources on, based on equal input from every board member. This activity enabled us to have effective discussions about each project and make sure we saw our joint priorities clearly together. This successful collaboration activity caused us to want more opportunities to work together. We produced amazing breakthroughs in our work as a result.”

In Spencer Johnson’s book, *“Yes” or “No”: The Guide to Better Decisions*, he provides a map for better decision making:

“Yes” or “No”: The Map to Better Decisions

I avoid indecision and half decisions based on half-truths.

I use both halves of a reliable system to consistently make better decisions: a cool head and a warm heart.

I use my head by asking a practical question.

I consult my heart by asking a private question.

Then, after I listen to myself and then others, I make a better decision and act on it.

To use my head, I ask this practical question: Am I meeting the real needs, informing myself of options, and thinking it through? Yes _____ or No _____

Is it a mere want or a real need? What information do I need? Have I created options and discussed them with others? If I did “X” then what would happen? Then what?

To consult my heart, I ask a private question: Does my decision show I am honest with myself, trust my intuition, and deserve better? Yes _____ or No _____

Am I telling myself the truth? Does this feel right? What would I decide if I wasn’t afraid? What would I do if I deserved better?

If “Yes,” I proceed; if “No,” I rethink.

What is my better decision?

I’ve used this decision-making map hundreds of times with teams to evolve thinking and come to a better decision than any one person would make on his or her own. The questions guide a great conversation, either individually or with groups.

When a person only uses one side of this decision-making model, it causes other people around him or her to overfunction in the other side. Let’s look at Joe as an example. Joe uses the practical, logic questions when making decisions. He thinks through the options, and he decides based on what is most useful. He does not ask himself the warm heart questions. As a result, it often looks like fear or risk aversion is guiding his decisions. He does not take action on what he would love to do, or what would bring him joy. Joe is underfunctioning in the warm heart area. This causes the people who are closest to him to react by overfunctioning in the warm heart area when they are interacting with Joe. Have you ever observed this dynamic playing out in collaboration?

Overfunctioning and Underfunctioning

One of the dynamics that often occurs when two people are enmeshed is that one begins to overfunction while the other underfunctions. Imagine this situation:

Tammy needs to fill an entry-level role in her company. Her college roommate's son Tom recently graduated from college and is not working. Tammy agrees to interview him for the job. In the interview process, Tom projects confidence, asserting that he is the right person for the role. He convinces Tammy and her team that he has a strong interest in this entry-level position. Tammy hires Tom and begins training him to fit into her company.

As part of his work, Tom commits to several key goals and a timeline for completing them. His project due dates slip, and he does not speak up to say there is a problem. Since Tom is nonchalant about the results and shows no sense of urgency to solve the issues he has created, it appears that he is not taking his work seriously. In addition to shirking his responsibilities, Tom asks for two weeks of vacation during the heavy workload.

Tammy begins to feel anxious whenever she sees Tom or thinks about the projects he is supposed to have already completed. Tammy calls Tom into her office and asks him for an update on what is happening. She adds, "It does not appear the results are coming together here, Tom. How can I be helpful?"

Tom seems to make up excuses and blame others for the situation he is in; he seems distracted and not engaged in solving the issues at hand by taking responsibility himself. He says he can't get himself focused, but that he will figure it out. Tom often works from an office in his home, as he does not have to work in the main office. A week goes by, and then another, and it still seems as if nothing is moving forward with Tom, but he does not say anything about this. Tammy then asks if Tom needs her to manage his daily schedule for him. He shrugs his shoulders, rolls his eyes, and says he is having a hard time getting up in the mornings. As a result, Tammy starts to call his home each morning. She says she wants to, "Wake him up and get him moving." She gives him a motivational message for the day and asks him to identify exactly how he will use his time to accomplish his goals. She micromanages him and puts her energy into tracking down what he is doing. Tom and Tammy

are in the overfunctioning/underfunctioning dance. This pattern never produces desired results for either person.

Changing Patterns

You are the only one who can change these patterns for yourself. In your role as a team member, peer, or boss, it is healthy to consider these dynamics and where you may want to make changes in order to be more effective as a collaborator.

If you see that you want to change the dynamics in a relationship, it is also a signal that you are ready to grow to a new level of operating and a new level of collaboration. Let's explore the levels of business maturity and how they affect you.

Levels of Maturity

Levels of maturity affect how we think about and craft conversations. They help us understand what we can and cannot hear in conversations. Understanding these levels of maturity enables us to reduce conflict and misunderstandings and continue to grow.

I first discovered this model in a course at the University of Pennsylvania. Janet Greco teaches the highly respected master's course called "Stories in Organizations: Tools for Executive Development." Taking that course was a powerful experience, as it enabled me to see group dynamics through the lens of maturity levels. One of the readings was a breakthrough trigger. In *Personal and Organizational Transformations: The True Challenge of Continual Quality Improvement* (The McGraw-Hill Developing Organizations Series), Fisher and Torbert (1995) propose a six-stage continuum of personal and professional development.

Their work inspired me, and since then I have built on their insights in my own work. I've researched how this model of development affects what we talk about and how we craft conversations with others, based on where we are now. I've added my own language, focused on the influence

strategies of each level. Let me introduce you to this framework:

There are six stages of development or maturity that people have the potential to grow into. Each level is larger than the previous one, in that it includes all the possibilities from the former levels together with a new set of alternatives. At each stage we will be focused on different types of conversations. Our “That’s for Me!” list will look very different at each of these stages of development.

The Six Stages of Development

1. Getting my own needs met
2. Being liked by others
3. Being good at what I do
4. Getting broad results—having a big effect
5. Being principle focused
6. Being a life, business, or spiritual guru for others

Each stage is broader, deeper, and more complicated than the previous one. Most of us behave predominantly from one stage in our conversing, thinking, and acting.

I want to provide you with the awareness to identify the following:

- At what stage or level you currently operate
- At what level your peers, boss, and staff operate from most often
- Some ideas about how you can grow yourself and others to move into the next stage in development, if you want to do so

As we move from each stage, we take the conversation ability, thinking, behavior, and learning from that stage into the next one. When we are stressed, overwhelmed, or in fear, we tend to regress to lower levels. Let’s explore the ways we communicate, think, and act that are typical in each of the six levels.

Level 1: Getting My Needs Met

We are born into this level. Short-term thinking focused on getting current needs met fuels tactical, transactional communication and relationships. The person operating from this level is opportunistic; when needs aren't met in one relationship, he or she will quickly move toward someone who will meet those needs. Feedback, no matter where it comes from, is often ignored and never requested. Boasting about power, luck, and ability to break the rules is common. There is little self-control, self-regulation, or building for the future from this level. Demanding and threatening behavior is typical when one is angry or in control. "They are ALL my marbles. If you don't like it, leave" is implied in both actions and words. "An eye for an eye" may be the way of operating with others. Distrusting and blaming others are common at this level, as is using hostile humor or sexuality to get things done in a manipulative manner. The opportunistic mindset severely limits long-term collaborative relationships. Most relationships this person has are transactional. Some people do not mature beyond this level; however most move onto the next level early in life.

What This Level Looks Like at Work

Ken was a director in the sales department of a market research firm. His staff called him "the bully." Others saw him as focused on the next step that would serve him and his projects. Ken did not take suggestions or feedback well, so his peers stopped trying to engage him in conversations to explore and share learning. People were afraid of Ken and believed that if you crossed him, he would have you fired. Ken also thought he was above the procedures, rules, and laws of the organization; if he could get away with it, then it was ethical in his opinion. He literally had a bullwhip on the table behind his desk. When he was talking to one of his team members, giving orders, he would play with the bullwhip in his hands as he spoke. Command and control guided Ken's conversations and actions.

Level 2: Being Liked by Others

Being part of the group, well-liked, and able to get along are typical of this stage. Diplomatic, we tend to avoid taking risks and facing conflict at this level, learning the rules so we fit in. Socially expected behavior is prized. Ensuring that others know and follow the rules is important. There is a willingness to listen to positive feedback from those who are liked and part of the desired group. Knowing the social order or hierarchy is vital at this level, and telling others what they want to hear is common. Pleasing others may lead to placating conversations. Here we typically don't act as leaders of the group, but as followers, aspiring members of the group, or peers.

The desire to be heard and appreciated is a universal human need. We all experience this desire. This stage also has to do with how we heal the pain from not being heard and appreciated by people whose attention we want. What's learned at this stage is how to value ourselves enough so that our own opinion about what we are doing is more important than someone else's opinion, as well as learning how to balance this without reverting back to Level 1 (acting so arrogant that we don't hear others).

What This Level Looks Like at Work

Bill was the team glue, because he provided loyalty and goodwill. "Be nice" was Bill's motto. Bill appeared to be unable to make decisions or recommendations on his own if conflict was apparent. Bill was risk-averse and would give in to whomever had a clear, strong point of view. He would not give performance feedback to others, because he worried it would hurt their feelings. Bill believed people were who they were and they were not going to change, so there was no reason to speak up and give guidance. He did everything he could to help others save face. It was comfortable working with him, unless there was conflict that needed to be resolved. As a result, no one grew around Bill—including Bill. Over time, Bill's peers felt annoyed with him, because he would not stand up to his management

and instead accepted goal numbers that were way above what the team would be able to accomplish. Bill was a “company man” who never challenged anything, and therefore game-changing conversations did not occur in Bill’s interactions with others. He was blind to other ways of engaging.

Level 3: Being Good at What I Do

Mastery over a skill or technical ability is important here. The focus is on task efficiency over broad effectiveness. We are committed to high standards in the area of competency—being a technician or master, very focused on being perfect at our craft. At this stage we are quick to point out the faults or lack of competency in others and accept feedback only from those perceived to be better than we are at our particular skill. Our conversations are focused on competence, ability, skill level, and evaluation. We want to be considered unique and recognized for being the best. We worry that, if others have the same mastery of skills, we won’t be considered unique or valued anymore, so we may not share information with those who want to learn. At this stage, we typically have high expectations of others and criticize others frequently, which may cause others to shut down in the relationship.

What This Level Looks Like at Work

At his best, Jim was the go-to problem solver. He was unique in his software support department, because he was the only one who could solve the most complex problems for customers. Problem escalation ended at his office door. Jim was a perfectionist who would work late into the night to solve a problem. At his worst, Jim would not show the people in his department how he fixed the problem. He was openly critical of the way others did their jobs—including his boss. No one could live up to Jim’s high standards. He hoarded projects and did not share his thinking with others to help them grow.

Level 4: Getting Broad Results— Having a Big Effect

At this level we have long-term goals, see an inspiring future, welcome feedback from a wide variety of people, and value all accomplishments. Focused on achieving, we seek partnership with others instead of dominance, and we operate proactively, with a strategy to do what needs to be done. Working through differences of opinions and conflict to create resolutions is considered part of normal business. We accept a moral or values standard that may have been developed by others. Conversations focus on big-picture strategies that will lead to significant results. We feel personal emotional pain if we violate commitments or are disrespectful to others. At this level, people want to see the big picture and not get mired down in too much detail. They are willing to delegate and help others develop, and they are passionate about making an impact and leaving a lasting legacy.

What This Level Looks Like at Work

Susan was hired into a role to build the recruiting function for a global, complex organization. When she was hired, she was asked to change the hiring practices companywide and to build a global team that would meet the future hiring needs of the organization. During her first year in the role, she had to deal with several cross-functional conflicts, because there was confusion about who owned the hiring processes within this huge organization. She collaborated with her bosses to create a strategy to resolve the long-term conflict that had existed before she joined the organization. Susan hired her own teams in London, Hong Kong, New York, and India. She was committed to creating a high-performing team reporting to her and to creating a culture of growth within her team. Susan led team development activities to ensure that each person knew his or her own role and how to work well with peers.

Level 5: Being Principle Focused

By this level, judgment for making wise decisions has been honed. People who are principle-focused are effective strategists, with clear standards that have likely been self-developed, based on experience. Self-trust has evolved. These people are aware that their thoughts and feelings create outcomes, and they take responsibility for them. They understand complexity and paradox and enjoy variety, and even ambiguity. They see multiple sides of an issue. Conversations focus on being partners and collaborating for the common good and insuring that the principles of effectiveness will thrive. It is at this level that people begin to recognize, understand, and intentionally adapt to other people's needs, styles, and maturity levels. They no longer expect others to come to where they are in order for effective communication to occur. They have grown beyond the limitations of their preferred communication styles, have polished the edges of their own styles, and are now able to adapt communication to the needs of the conversation they are in.

What This Level Looks Like at Work

Susan (whom we discussed in the previous example) was given an opportunity to work with a coach a few months into her new role, because the conflicts she was experiencing caused her to want a sounding board, someone who could help her grow and not get caught up in the details of the conflicts that existed in her organization. Susan also wanted to learn how to recognize, understand, and intentionally adapt to other people's needs, styles, and maturity levels. Because she was a quick learner, she mastered this skill in about six months and landed in this new level of maturity. As a result, in her second year in the role, she broadened her focus and began facilitating meetings with key leaders across the global organization to define future hiring needs as well as new strategies to meet the changing workforce demands. She built deep relationships with people that went beyond the specific role she was in—people talked with her

about more than just her role's assignments—and she was heavily involved in designing the principles of leadership in the organization. Susan understood and enjoyed the ambiguity in her work. She tailored her communication to the specific needs of the person or group she was working with without having to work hard at doing so. Eventually, she was promoted to a higher level, which included having the Global Succession Planning Strategy team reporting into her as well.

Level 6: Being a Life, Business, or Spiritual Guru for Others

At this level, people set the stage for others to win and succeed. They are more focused on transformation, seeking joy, lightness, order, and creation. They are highly disciplined. Others think what these “gurus” are doing seems magical, because amazing things keep happening. Both time and experiences are symbolic or metaphorical for people operating from this level in a way that may be hard for those not operating from this level to understand. Those who achieve Level 6 inspire growth by the way they are, the questions they ask, and the stories they share. Conversations are collaborative and often let the other person win, as there is no need to seek the spotlight.

What This Level Looks Like at Work

The author of *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, Marshall Goldsmith, appears to be living from Level 6. He is a business guru who coaches CEOs from Fortune 100 companies all over the world. He is a Buddhist who shares the Buddhist principles by role modeling them from the stage as well as in his coaching and his writing. Recently, Marshall was speaking to a very small group of people, and I was lucky enough to be sitting near him. He talked about the importance of getting unstuck. Buddhist wisdom for how to live life is sprinkled with one story after another; Goldsmith brings these ideas alive when he speaks. He ended his comments with this wise thought: “The person who has the power to make the decision makes the

decision. Make peace with that.” And with a deep belly laugh he was gone.

“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of a candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”
—Buddha

When we understand these maturity stages and their role in our professional development, we can look at what is next for us. We have to master one level before we can move onto the next. In other words, we cannot leap over one level, hoping to mature faster. We can find someone who is already at the next stage, where we want to grow to, and begin to grow ourselves by watching and learning from his or her conversations. This whole book is designed to guide you to higher levels of business maturity, if that is what you choose.

The point of identifying your maturity level as well as the levels of the people you want to collaborate with is not to be right or to pigeonhole yourself or others, but rather to guide you to work more effectively together. There is one tricky thing to keep in mind, however. Unless we understand this framework, we do not tend to appreciate the thinking or conversation focus of people who are at two or more levels above or below where we are. For example, if I report to a manager who operates from Level 2, I will not likely be rewarded for operating from higher levels. A manager (or parent) at Level 3 will expect her staff members to be at that stage or lower. If you are communicating with someone who is operating from a level that is different from yours, consider how his maturity level will affect what is important to him and what he is focused on.

For this reason, as you grow you will want to find people who are also committed to growing with you—not enmeshed where you are now. Perhaps you will create a strategy for rela-

tionship building based on your current developmental level? Doing so will enable you to grow.

So far we've been exploring dynamics in one-to-one interactions. Now let's pull the camera lens back a bit and look at larger groups. When people come together, whether they have a goal yet or not, leadership roles will begin to emerge.

Emergent Leadership Roles

There are four leader roles that begin to evolve early in a group's meeting. Within 12 hours of the group members interacting, these roles will be established. Usually, these emerge in the order shown below:

1. **Task leader:** This person sets the agenda, assigns tasks and roles, and allocates resources. On a healthy team, this person participates, engages others, and is open to communicating and listening. On an unhealthy team, this person is a dictator or tyrant.
2. **Emotion or morale leader:** This person watches for the morale of the group, gets to know people as individuals, and encourages people to share their thoughts and feelings. On a healthy team, this person is a trusted colleague who is a sounding board for uncovering ideas and feelings, so that one does not get stuck. On an unhealthy team, this person gossips, pits people against each other, and creates tension in the team.
3. **Fun leader or scapegoat:** This person, on a healthy team, lightens the intensity, encourages playful interactions, ensures that team members take breaks and laugh. On an unhealthy team, this person is blamed or criticized; he or she becomes the scapegoat for people not taking responsibility for their own actions.

4. **Challenger leader:** This person challenges the task leader's thinking, agenda, process, and goals. On a healthy team, this person speaks up directly to the task leader and works out the blind spots in the task leader's style and thinking. On an unhealthy team, this person goes underground, sabotaging the task leader's role and power.

When a person in one of these emergent leadership roles moves off the team, another person moves into the emergent leadership role. In other words, sometimes a new manager will get rid of the challenger leader, not realizing that someone else will assume that role. It is wise for the task leader to align with and make good use of the feedback that comes from the challenger leader and the other types of leaders on the team. How do you do that? I'm going to show you how to do this.

When I lead workshops on team building and development, I discuss these roles and ask participants to identify the people playing these leadership roles on their past teams. Participants immediately get it and see the emergent leadership roles in their own experience.

The leadership role you prefer to play is likely to be one you have played on many teams or within family groups. Sometimes we find ourselves in a team dynamic where we are in a role we do not like. Maybe you do not enjoy being the challenger leader, but you find yourself in that role with a new boss who just took over the department. You are the most senior person on the team, so the group defers to you to challenge the new thinking. A conflict can emerge internally when the role one is cast into does not align with one's preferred communication style.

Now that you are aware of these four emergent leader roles, you can begin to think about which one or ones you want to play as you collaborate to get results at work.

After group leaders emerge, the individuals may decide they want to become a team. When that happens, there are predictable stages of team development that affect group dynamics.

Stages of Team Development

Dr. Bruce Wayne Tuckman is an American psychologist who researched the theory of group dynamics. He is currently a professor of educational psychology at Ohio State University. Dr. Tuckman created a useful model for understanding the predictable stages of team development. What we approach in collaborating will be different in each of these stages.

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing
5. Adjourning

His research revealed that groups return to the Forming stage whenever there is a change in the group's goals or team members. Many groups get stuck in one stage; only 29 percent of teams ever reach the performing stage. Reaching stage 4 and being a high-performing group requires regular attention to team maintenance as well as task functions.

I've built on this model, and I use it with coaching clients to help them navigate building teams as well as serving as a team member when collaborating with peers. Here is what you need to know to be effective collaborating during each stage:

Stage 1. Forming

New team members commonly experience these feelings:

Excitement and optimism about being part of the team

Pride at being selected for the team

Tentativeness about attachment to this new group—will they accept me?

Anxiety about the tasks ahead and fear of failure—will the people on the team have the skills to do what needs to be done?

Actions the team leader needs to take during the forming stage include:

Help people get to know each other.

Identify and prioritize the goals and vision for the group.

Inquire about team members' hopes, fears, and expectations.

Establish ground rules for independent action, participation, resolving conflict, presenting ideas, and reaching consensus.

Identify the roles and responsibilities of the team members and ensure that they understand them.

Hold meetings focused on having the team members share their preferred communication styles and workplace motivators, and how they like to add value to the team.

Make decisions and do not expect the team members to be able to make decisions together on their own yet.

Stage 2. Storming

During the storming stage, team members commonly experience these feelings:

Frustration at the lack of progress

Anxiety over miscommunication and problems with teamwork

Fear of different communication styles and different people

Fluctuations between optimism and pessimism about the group's chances of succeeding

It is common to see these types of behaviors when a team is in the storming stage:

Questioning the purpose, goals, tasks, and processes

Arguing among team members

Staking out areas of expertise

Forming subgroups

Complaining about the workload

Resisting leadership and influence from others

Actions the team leader needs to take during the storming stage include:

Bring underlying issues to the surface and encourage the expression of feelings and possible solutions to the issues.

Define the roles and accountabilities of the team members and play to each team member's strengths.

Create subgroups to make decisions, but mix subgroup members; focus on major issues with the entire group together.

Model listening skills to every member of the team, not just favorite members.

Be solution focused; ask questions that focus on what the team leader wants to create.

Make decisions and move through conflict; don't keep conflicts alive for long periods of time.

Do not ignore the conflicts; that will cause them to get bigger.

Stage 3. Norming

During the norming stage, team members commonly experience these feelings:

- Relief that the tension and conflict have subsided
- Renewed confidence in the team's abilities
- Increased willingness to be seen as a team member
- Willingness to give and receive developmental feedback; more openness to listening
- Increased caring for members of the team

It is common to see these types of behaviors when a team is in the norming stage:

- Enforcing of group norms and standards
- Communicating more openly and directly
- Cooperating with a focus on group goals
- Negotiating, rather than competing, for resources
- Testing for and building group consensus
- Sharing feelings and personal issues and being more authentic with each other
- Giving overt attention to the team's maintenance needs and functions

Actions the team leader needs to take during the norming stage include:

- Speak the hidden norms and help the team to evaluate and set new norms.
- Help the team to develop a unique identity.

Challenge the team members' boundaries individually.

Coach the team members in building new skills and sharing what they know.

Use consensus building and explore areas of difference.

Invite input and feedback on every major decision.

Let the team members make some decisions on their own together.

Stage 4. Performing

During the performing stage, team members commonly experience these feelings:

Acceptance of each others' strengths and developmental areas

Trust in the others and willingness to be vulnerable

Comfort in dealing with differences and resolving conflict

Pride in being part of the team

It is common to see these types of behaviors when a team is in the performing stage:

Adapting personal styles to the needs of the project

Multilateral influencing within the group

Openly communicating thoughts and feelings

Encouraging everyone to use his or her voice and be heard by the team

Managing and resolving conflict and encouraging and discussing differences

Enjoying collaborating

Giving and receiving coaching feedback at the deepest levels because trust is so high

Identifying strongly with the team and having deep pride in the accomplishments of the team

Actions the team leader needs to take during the performing stage include:

Sit back and enjoy! Let them lead!

Use consensus for all major team decisions.

Give lots of positive feedback.

Experiment and explore process improvements.

Encourage the group to develop evaluation criteria; do not do the work for the team.

Celebrate and affirm accomplishments.

Arrange ceremonies for closure and for assimilating new members into the group.

Stage 5. Adjourning

During the adjourning stage, team members commonly experience these feelings:

Apprehension over loss of group identity

Pride in the group's achievements

Reluctance to let go

Regret over any poorly managed conflicts or endings

It is common to see these types of behaviors when a team is
170 in the adjourning stage:

Evaluating results and producing final status reports

Being willing or unwilling to let go

Wanting recognition and appreciation

Saying good-bye and having conversations for closing

Actions the team leader needs to take during the adjourning stage include:

Establish closing procedures for the team.

Discuss endings with team members individually and as a group.

Provide a way for team members to acknowledge what they appreciate about each other.

End with a ritual that honors the group and each of its members.

Group dynamics emerge any time people work together. When you are aware of the different dynamics at play, you can be a more effective collaborator. Effective collaboration is a positive group dynamic in which we achieve desired results. When members of a team are overly fixated on each other, they lose sight of the common goals and become ineffective. In partnerships, decisions are made jointly and the decision-making process is agreed upon by all parties involved. In enmeshed relationships one person often takes control of the other, which can create a one-up-one-down dynamic and under- and overperformers.

We are constantly evolving and changing. Therefore, our group dynamics and collaborations will also change. We can progress from focusing on our own needs to a level of maturity in which we focus on meeting the needs of others, who are professionally developing themselves. The key to progress through the developmental stages is to ask yourself this question

after difficult situations, “What would need to exist for me to look back on this and be glad it happened, because it helped me grow?” This attitude will keep you moving forward towards being a more mature person and a more effective collaborator.

Kristy Tan Neckowicz’s Story: Schedule Chicken

Kristy Tan Neckowicz, PMP, former vice president of Oracle’s Primavera Global Business Unit, gave a presentation at the Project Management Institute titled, “Winning the Game of Schedule Chicken.” Her presentation provided an “aha!” moment for people about reading group dynamics and collaborating across departments or divisions as it relates to how schedules are managed. I appreciated what Kristy shared about what can and does happen in organizations, especially where there are complex schedules that are being managed across several groups. Her insights are useful to become a savvy collaborator who can solve group dysfunction.

Kristy started her presentation by asking, “Have you ever played the game called ‘Chicken?’” Two or more players are required. The objective is to be the last player to quit whatever the action is that you have agreed to do. The loser is labeled “chicken” and the winner gets bragging rights. Perhaps you’ve seen games of Chicken in movies like *Top Gun* and *Rebel without a Cause*.

In “Schedule Chicken,” two or more teams compete to see who will be the first to admit that schedule milestones cannot be met. The loser team is chastised and someone will have to pay for the faults as a scapegoat. When that happens, all the other teams will be able to breathe a sigh of relief, but the entire project will suffer schedule delays.

This is the typical strategy for playing the game:

Commit to an unrealistic milestone date.

Ensure that the due date is even more unrealistic for another team.

Keep schedule slippage a secret until it is absolutely apparent.

Shine the light on other teams, who are also running late.

Never be the first to say that you can't keep the schedule.

Why do people in organizations play a game like this? Dysfunction. People do it in all areas of business often because leaders are rewarding the wrong things and creating internal competition, not collaboration.

Although it may be human nature to engage in this kind of negative competitive behavior, that doesn't mean the behavior can't be changed. It can! Knowing it can occur is the first step; understanding the circumstances that precipitate it is the second step in changing the dysfunctional dynamic.

Why do project teams continue to play this game? Here are some reasons:

Job security: Make it less likely for management intervention.

Fear: Don't shoot the messenger.

Breathing room: Delay the recovery effort and rework.

Wishful thinking: More resources will become available later; schedule delays can be absorbed into later phases; another area of the project will overrun; there will be more time later to resolve issues.

Lack of long-term commitment to the organization: I may not be here when this blows up, so why make it happen now while I am here?

The true and long-term damage of a culture that encourages and allows schedule chicken is a disaster that keeps repeating. According to Peter Schuh, author of *Integrating Agile Development in the Real World*: “For project management, Schedule Chicken is an iterative game, where the most dishonest and deceptive participant wins and is encouraged to hone his destructive behavior so as to win again in the next round. In management environments that foster schedule chicken, transparency and honesty are inadvertently discouraged and even punished.” This game causes bigger problems for the organization; it is also a signal that there are larger leadership problems playing out organizationally.

If Schedule Chicken is occurring in your organization, you may see this pattern occurring:

1. Project schedule appears to be exactly on track.
2. Project schedule suddenly experiences a massive schedule delay.
3. Someone (or a team) is labeled as the culprit.
4. Project deadlines are officially extended.

Steps 1–4 repeat.

This game includes the following cast of characters:

The Novice Chicken: a relatively new member or unwilling accomplice who is clueless about the game and may inadvertently expose his or her team.

Chicken Little: the team member with a “the-sky-is-falling” reputation, who speculates and exposes delays; no one takes him or her seriously anymore.

The Yellow Bird: an eternal optimist who is liked by most players, who soothes and calms the chicken littles, and cautions or quiets the novice chickens before embarrassment occurs.

The Hawk: the bully who believes in survival of the fittest is never the first to confess there is a problem and never accepts blame.

The Love Bird: the harmonizer identifies the types of players, tries to create alignment, wants to negotiate resolutions, and anticipates players changing their natures.

No one wins schedule chicken in the long term; even when it looks like there are short-term winners, the losses add up over time.

Want to stop this pattern in your organization? A little education goes a long way. Make sure every team rewards these behaviors:

Understanding the project's goals

Placing successes of the project above the team or member

Agreeing on realistic target dates, given the capacity upfront

Knowing the dangers of multi-tasking

Providing tools for tracking progress against plan

Teaching techniques of variance analysis and forecasting

How do you do that? Use the following basic critical path concepts:

Identify the “critical chain”—the longest chain of tasks through the project, considering all the resource limitations.

Ensure the task durations are aggressive and not padded.

Focus on the task at hand; avoid multi-tasking.

Add “buffers” in strategic places to protect the project end dates.

Manage the buffers as a team; collaborate across the organization with all information available.

To stop the game of schedule chicken in your organization, build real trust and relationships among team members. Authentically collaborate by:

Knowing the culture and the desired state

Establishing and enforcing ground rules

Designing reward systems for the desired behaviors

Creating open and safe forums for full disclosure

Nurturing an environment of trust and transparency

The real winners in business are those that have rid their organizations of games like schedule chicken and instead cultivate leaders who can distinguish the dynamics among people. The outstanding leaders that succeed, time after time, are the ones that build partnerships within their organizations and foster higher levels of trust, maturity, and collaboration. They develop teams focused on the interactions between team members, so that the game of schedule chicken is not rewarded.

Group Dynamics Application Exercise

Where do you experience partnership and where do you experience enmeshment?

Think about a key relationship in your life, perhaps with your boss, a peer, your spouse, or maybe even your mother. Are you partners or are you enmeshed in each other? Use this new lens

to look at several relationships you have. What do you notice? What action do you want to take as a result of this awareness?

Explore your relationships and how decisions are made; are you acting as partners? Discuss how a decision will be made and ask clearly for what you want. Do you have a relationship in which you need to shift from being in the one-up-one-down pattern? Use Spencer Johnson's "Yes" or "No" guide to decision-making questions, described earlier in this chapter, the next time you are faced with a complex decision and you want to collaborate with others to make the decision.

Are there any overfunctioning or underfunctioning patterns you want to change in relationships you have at work? How could you use what you have learned here to begin to make this change?

What would need to exist for you to move to the next level of maturity? Look at your list of team members and colleagues. Identify someone who often operates from the next level. Begin to create opportunities to talk regularly with that person, so you can examine his or her forward movement. What actions can you take to continue your own professional development toward a higher level of maturity?

What stage of team development is your current team operating from? How can you use this information to guide the right discussions for collaborating with your team as a peer or leader?

Reflection question: What maturity level would someone be coming from if he regularly plays schedule chicken? Consider the level of maturity and the framework for group dynamics someone would have if he rewards schedule chicken. High-performing teams and organizations have grown beyond playing schedule chicken. If you are a leader in your organization, you have the ability to stop rewarding schedule-chicken games. If you are a team member and schedule chicken is being played, create a partnership conversation with your team leader and discuss what you see happening.