

Building Team Chemistry

2018 Massachusetts Youth Soccer Workshop

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"No individual can win a game by himself." –Pele

"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team." --Phil Jackson

"If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself." --Henry Ford

Objectives

- Learn about and begin to team building.
- Understand the key elements of team building activities including planning, modifications for stage of team development and player age, and debriefing
- Apply team building knowledge in soccer-related team building activities

Team Building

The most common model for explaining how individuals form as a group was developed by Tuckman (1965). This model suggests that when developing into a group, individuals go through 4 distinct stages: Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing. Although the progression from one stage to another may be perceived as linear, in many cases teams may move back and forth between stages before progressing on to the next stage.

Forming

During the forming stage team members usually come together for the first time for the season. Coaches go over team rules, responsibilities, and roles within the team. Returning and new team members, acquaint and/or reacquaint themselves with how the team functions, their roles within the team, and the team goals. In order to facilitate this stage, coaches may discuss and distribute the team's mission statement, expectations, and procedures. Activities set up outside of practice such as pasta parties and outings to other sporting events can help the group to get to know each other better. All of these strategies facilitate the forming of a team.

Storming

The storming phase usually occurs a few weeks into the season when the honeymoon period ends and the hard work starts. Not all teams experience storming, but for those teams that do, the storming phase can include conflict over who has control, infighting for status positions, and efforts to gain the coach's attention. It is during the storming phase that athletes with a poor work ethic and/or bad attitude emerge and personality and goal conflict among team members becomes apparent. Although storming may seem like a counterproductive stage, the storming phase, IF CHANNLED CORRECTLY CAN LEAD TO EFFECTIVE TEAM BUILDING. Coaches manage this stage best when they are vigilant in identifying emerging conflicts and when efforts are made to discuss and resolve conflicts in a timely fashion. Successful resolution can lead to increases in team members self-esteem, respect, overall trust, and communication skill effectiveness. An example of storming on a soccer team is when Olivia, a new player, joins the team and immediately tries to "run the show." Team captain, Alexa, may feel threatened and frustrated, which can lead to infighting and affect the atmosphere on the team. If approached carefully, this situation presents an opportunity to talk with both players and to teach Alexa and Olivia life skills to help them to develop more effective goals together.

Norming

Norming is the calm after the storm, when the team has come to a consensus about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Goals, objectives and expectations have been clearly defined by the coach and the athletes. Players come to appreciate teammates' unique contributions to the team. During the norming phase Alexa may gain respect for Olivia's abilities and realize that Olivia is helping to push the team in practice, making the whole team better. Olivia may settle into the group, adjusting her role to fit the needs of the team.

Performing

During the performing stage, the bond among the team members grows as the team focuses on their collective goals. The team members begin to value each individual's contribution and the relationships are secure within the team. The group generally functions as a cohesive unit. We often see the performing stage in action at tournaments or in games against key rivals. In the performing stage, teams are typically motivated to play hard together.

Having an awareness of the 4-stage process of becoming a team can be helpful in several ways. First, it allows for observed athlete and team behaviors and relationships to be placed into a defined context. Second, by understanding each of the stages, proactive steps can be taken to facilitate the successful progression through each of the stages, to promote successful team formation.

Other examples of teambuilding activities

Adopt a team name

Create cheers/slogans

Design a group t-shirt

Create a group chat (discuss team rules with regard to respect for teammates and opponents online)

Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384–399.
doi:10.1037/h0022100

Broadly adapted from: USA swimming mental toolbox: pphyswim.org/news/psychology/mentaltoolboxchap6.pdf

Building Team Chemistry Activities

Forming: On the bus/Off the bus (5 minutes)

- team lines up in single file facing forward
- a phrase statement is made by the “bus driver” and athletes will move in one direction or the other as pointed out by the bus driver.
- everyone has to get off the bus, no one can be left on the bus
- after everyone has gotten off the bus, team members get back on line (the bus) for the next statement/phrase
- statements/phrases
 - peanut butter or jelly
 - goldfish crackers or pretzels
 - hot weather or cold weather
 - indoors or outdoors
 - Halloween or Thanksgiving
 - defense or offense
 - dribbling or juggling
 - watch on TV or go to the game
- modifications
 - age/team appropriate statements
 - translation for limited English speakers
 - take turns being “bus driver” (with bus driver saying name if new group)

Storming: Jump the line (10 -15 minutes)

- The team lines up facing the same direction
- A rope is placed on the ground in front of them
- As a group they must get from one side of the rope to the other at the exact same time
- Modifications
 - Round 1: no limitations
 - Round 2: no talking

Performing: Hula hoop (10-15 minutes)

- Each team stand in a circle and clasps hands
- Temporarily release hands of one pair and place a hula hoop on forearms, reclass hands
- Ready, set, go command for team to pass the hula hoop around circle without breaking hands
- Players bend and twist their bodies through the hoop by climbing through it, getting the hoop over their heads and to the other side of their bodies
- First team to pass the hoop around the circle without breaking grip wins
- Modifications
 - Group set goal related to time (try to be faster next time) with no discussion of how to meet goal
 - Allow discussion of how to be faster and set new goal
 - Use smaller hula hoop

Debrief:

- What does teamwork mean to your group and how did your group represent and show teamwork through the activity?
- What did you learn from these activities?
- What was successful? Challenging?
- How did you have to work through the activities together?
- What new things did you learn about your teammates and yourself?
- How can you take what we learned today and transfer them to soccer?
- Address any questions, comments, or concerns