

Leading Teams #6: Performing¹

Carrie N. Baker, Sarah A. Bush, Laura L. Greenhaw, Matthew Gold, and Rachel Biderman²

Introduction

Teams are created to yield higher outcomes than would be possible from a single individual. However, it takes time for a team to get to know one another, navigate conflict, and establish norms before they can perform effectively. As a part of the Leading Teams series, this article explains the performing stage of group development (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). This article discusses how Extension team leaders and members can produce results during this stage and provides practical recommendations for enhancing team performance and outcomes.

What Is the Performing Stage?

In Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) model for small-group development, the performing stage is the fourth stage. The performing stage is hallmarked by production and output. In this stage, members understand their assigned roles, carry out their assigned tasks, and take on additional responsibilities for the team's benefit. However, many teams move through the previous stages and get stuck without ever reaching or mastering the performing stage. For many, especially teams working together for the first time, reaching the performing stage takes time and intentional effort from leaders and team members.

As we previously mentioned in Ask IFAS publication AEC770, [Leading Teams #1: Introduction](#), synergy is a key

indicator of effective teams (Franz, 2012). Synergy is also a key indicator that teams have entered the performing stage. By the time teams reach this stage, intragroup conflict has been resolved and/or the team has identified productive ways to work through tension and discomfort. Teams in the performing stage have clear lines of communication, feel connected, and have a vested interest in the team's success (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Because these benchmarks have been reached, team members can devote most of their energy to performing — or accomplishing tasks and working toward team goals.

What Should Leaders Know?

Time and energy are two of the most valuable resources for Extension professionals. Diverse, synergized, performing teams can help alleviate individual burdens and workload (Van Knippenberg et al., 2020). Leaders who can effectively support teams through the performing stage are critical for organizational success, especially across a large, multifaceted agency such as Extension.

While there are many strategies teams can implement, we have identified a few ways to help ensure team success in the performing stage: 1) leading effective meetings; 2) supporting collaboration; 3) enhancing team cohesion; and 4) using proper evaluation and feedback procedures. In this article, we break down each strategy and provide practical

1. This document is AEC814, a publication of the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date February 2025. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication. © 2025 UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#).
2. Carrie N. Baker, graduate assistant, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication; Sarah A. Bush, assistant professor, leadership education, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication; Laura L. Greenhaw, assistant professor, agricultural leadership, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication; Matthew Gold, master's student and graduate assistant, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication; and Rachel Biderman, M.S., Department of Agricultural Education and Communication; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

tips Extension leaders can use to enhance their team and unit performance.

Leading Effective Team Meetings

Team meetings are crucial for planning, sharing information, assessing task performance, and maintaining progress toward team goals (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). We have all probably left a meeting feeling less than inspired, deflated, or even frustrated with our team. Can we use this time together for good? Absolutely! But running a good meeting takes time and effort before, during, and after you gather. When managed well, team meetings can leave members feeling appreciated for their work, inspired to achieve team goals, confident in each other and the team's ability, and prepared for the work ahead (Franz, 2012). Team leads can refer to Ask IFAS publication AEC805, [Conducting Productive Team Meetings](#), for more information on holding a productive meeting.

Supporting Collaboration

In Extension, working with others and leaning on the strengths of different team members are crucial for organizational success (Forde-Stiegler et al., 2024). In studies about the success of teams within Extension, a top indicator of success was that team members were “committed to the work of the team and follow through with their agreed-upon roles and responsibilities” (Kelbaugh & Earnest, 2008, n.p.). Leaders must create systems that allow this type of interdependent work to occur. Below are a few tips for supporting collaboration and shared leadership among team members.

- **Play on your team's strengths:** For a synergized team in the performing stage, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and each team member brings different strengths to the table. However, well-balanced teams do not just form themselves. Consider working with certified Kirton (1976) Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) or CliftonStrengths practitioners to better understand the dynamics and skill sets within your team. The KAI and CliftonStrengths assessments highlight individual strengths and ways those can be used to better the team. These assessments can help leaders identify collaborators to fill gaps or better assign groups and responsibilities that play on your team's strengths.
- **Share the workload:** Provide opportunities for shared leadership and ownership over various tasks and responsibilities. Create mechanisms that support personal and professional development, skill-building, and collaboration in working toward accomplishing tasks (i.e., forming

committees or subgroups). Team members should hold one another accountable for their work (Lencioni, 2002). The team leader should encourage these interactions as opposed to intervening.

- **Create and communicate clear work processes:** Create convenient workflows that work well for your team and ensure they have the tools needed to follow through on tasks. This means setting up clear, organized guidelines for communication, submitting and reviewing work, providing feedback, etc. (Kelbaugh & Earnest, 2008). Consider looking into online tools and software for communication, project management, and file-sharing. You will want to check for organization or university-approved licensure agreements, but some popular tools include: Microsoft Teams and the MS Projects add-on, Asana, and Slack. These types of platforms take the guesswork out of teamwork and are designed to make collaboration easy and efficient (Kelbaugh & Earnest, 2008).

Using Proper Evaluation and Feedback Procedures

During the performing stage, it is critical that leaders routinely measure and evaluate the team's performance and progress toward goals. Healthy teams are focused on results and want to ensure they are meeting their team and personal goals (Lencioni, 2002). The process of gathering feedback often begins with cultivating a safe, trusting environment that encourages your team to share. Once you have laid the groundwork, consider the strategies below for team evaluation.

- **Know what you are evaluating:** Before you start to evaluate, know what goals and outcomes you are hoping to assess. You do not have to evaluate every aspect of your team and their performance. Instead, identify and evaluate the shared outcomes most relevant to your end goal.
- **Choose the right metric:** Now that you know what to measure, identify the best way to measure it. For example, if you are evaluating productivity, are you looking at the quantity and/or quality of work or missed deadlines? Asking the right questions about what you want to measure is key to evaluating your team.
- **Create methods for gathering insight:** Your evaluation strategies will likely change, depending on what components of your team you are evaluating. You might be able to assess work or project outcomes, but you also might need to survey team members. Make sure to create methods that allow your team members to share feedback

openly and comfortably. This could be through an online feedback survey, team meetings, or office hours.

- **Celebrate wins along the way:** You may not have reached milestone goals yet, but it is important to offer positive reinforcement to individuals and team members as they progress toward benchmarks. Small wins are important to celebrate!

What Should Team Members Know?

The performing stage requires a high level of investment and commitment from team members. Being a good teammate is crucial to overall team performance and success in this stage (Crutchfield & Klamon, 2014). By this stage, team members should be aware of their individual roles and responsibilities as well as team norms, and have identified productive ways to navigate conflict. Often, teams in the performing stage can benefit from being conscious of and self-regulating their attitudes and behaviors to enhance cohesion and improve outcomes. In addition, they can also be productive by holding each other accountable (Lencioni, 2002). A few strategies to consider are listed below.

Ask Questions and Communicate Needs

Good cooperation within a team is contingent on clear, consistent, and uncharged communication (Crutchfield & Klamon, 2014). When information is shared freely and frequently, it minimizes confusion and allows team members to focus on completing tasks and working toward shared goals. When communication breaks down, it often leads to harmful conflict and tension, which costs the team valuable time and resources (Farnsworth et al., 2020). All team members must communicate and express team- or task-related questions and/or concerns early and often. Research shows that “the more frequently collaborative communication occurs amongst team members, the more willing they are to express task-related doubts, the more innovating they can be, and the more efficient they become” (Crutchfield & Klamon, 2014, n.p.).

Practice Time and Task Management Principles

Working toward shared goals requires all team members to come together and pull their own weight. In the performing stage, roles and responsibilities should have already been outlined. However, this phase also requires interdependency from team members to ensure tasks get accomplished on time. Below are tips for wise time management when working in a team.

- Set daily and/or weekly task goals to track progress toward outcomes.
- Communicate progress or delays with the group so the team can adjust timelines and deadlines accordingly.
- Build in grace periods on deadlines to create flexibility on projects and allow for reasonable delays.
- Put working holds on your calendar and use that time efficiently.
- Actively participate in team meetings to ensure you have clarity about your role in shared tasks and overall team success (Goh et al., 2022).

Provide Productive Feedback

While [feedback from supervisors](#) is important for team success, productive peer feedback also contributes to a positive team environment during the performing stage (Gabelica et al., 2012). Productive teams are committed to their work and hold each other accountable (Lencioni, 2002). A few strategies for giving effective feedback are below.

- **Do not wait:** Whether the feedback is on the task or the team, timing is everything. The sooner you can raise a concern or redirect work to align with intended outcomes, the quicker your team member can address it.
- **Be specific and reference goals:** Use plain language and be specific about changes that should be made. Your feedback should relate to how changes will help your team members reach the intended goal or outcome (Wiggins, 2012, as cited in [Nesbitt & Barry, 2022](#)).
- **Be considerate in your delivery:** How and when you deliver feedback is almost as important as what you share. Listen actively when delivering feedback to assess your team members’ frame of mind (Nesbitt & Barry, 2022). Honest, candid feedback should never use emotionally charged language or personal attacks. For example, always ensure criticism is about the work or task and not about the individual completing the task.

Enhancing Team Cohesion

Group cohesion is like the glue that bonds a team together. Teams experience cohesion when members feel connected and committed to each other and the team’s success (Levi, 2017). Cohesive teams generally have positive morale which improves team performance (Levi, 2017). Enhancing team cohesion means focusing on social- and task-oriented team building to ensure team members are supported personally and professionally (Thiss, 2017). During the performing stage, leaders can focus on building trust, deepening relationships, and refining systems so that teams can work

interdependently to complete tasks (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

- **From me to we:** Use group and team-centric communication when talking. Transparent, open communication builds trust and unity (Yue et al., 2019). Sharing openly about the value of each member and their contribution to the team reinforces the message that each member is critical to group success (Friedley & Manchester, 2005).
- **Practice team goal setting:** Teams are more united when they feel they are working toward a common goal. Research shows that setting goals together as a team and integrating mechanisms for shared accountability can increase team cohesion (Senécal et al., 2008). Before launching a program or project, consider setting aside a few hours to discuss and finalize individual and team goals. Create a timeline and outline a plan of action for how these goals will be accomplished. Document and share them with the team after the meeting and consider posting them where everyone can see them.
- **Invest time and resources in team building:** Team-building exercises help team members get to know each other better — personally and professionally. In addition to boosting morale, when executed well, these exercises can help leaders assess team dynamics and identify strengths and weaknesses (Carron et al., 2007).

Conclusion

During performing, the goal of a team is to reach synergy and interdependence so that team goals can be achieved (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). When managed effectively, individuals and team members are fully functional and highly productive as they work to accomplish tasks. Therefore, team leaders must oversee and support collaboration and shared leadership; evaluate and assess performance; and provide positive reinforcement as milestones are achieved. Performing requires high commitment and peer accountability from team members (Lencioni, 2002). Team members should lean into their strengths as they assume their role on the team and work collaboratively with other teammates.

References

Carron, A. V., Eys, M. A., & Burke, S. M. (2007). Team cohesion: Nature, correlates, and development. In S. Jowett & D. Lavallee (Eds.), *Social Psychology in Sport* (pp. 91–101). Human Kinetics Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781492595878.ch-007>

Crutchfield, T. N., & Klamon, K. (2014). Assessing the dimensions and outcomes of an effective teammate. *Journal of Education for Business*, 89(6), 285–291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2014.885873>

Farnsworth, D., Clark, J. L., Gatlin, J., Wysocki, A., & Kepner, K. (2020). Understanding conflict in the workplace: HR024. *EDIS*, 2002(2). <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HR024>

Forde-Stiegler, C. T., Immendorf, M. C., & Cady, S. H. (2024). Chapter 18: Using collaborative leadership at all levels to build people-oriented organizations. In *Cases on Critical Leadership Skills*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035311866.00033>

Franz, T. M. (2012). *Group dynamics and team interventions: Understanding and improving team performance* (1st Ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Friedley, S. A., & Manchester, B. B. (2005). Building team cohesion: Becoming “we” instead of “me.” *National Forensic Journal*. <http://precisionmi.org/Materials/TeamBuildMat/BuildingTmCohesionBeWeMe.pdf>

Gabelica, C., Van den Bossche, P., Segers, M., & Gijsselaers, W. (2012). Feedback, a powerful lever in teams: A review. *Educational Research Review*, 7(2), 123–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2011.11.003>

Goh, K. T., Fisher, C. M., & Sommer, S. A. (2022). The effect of formal time allocations on learning trajectories and performance. *Small Group Research*, 53(6), 821–854. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10464964221092331>

Kauffeld, S., & Lehmann-Willenbrock, N. (2012). Meetings matter: Effects of team meetings on team and organizational success. *Small Group Research*, 43(2), 130–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496411429599>

Kelbaugh, B. M., & Earnest, G. W. (2008). Indicators of success for teamwork: What Extension professionals need to excel as team members. *Journal of Extension*, 46(4). <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol46/iss4/8>

Kirton, M. (1976). Adaptors and innovators: A description and measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 61(5), 622–629. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.61.5.622>

Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team*. Jossey-Bass.

Levi, D. (2017). *Group dynamics for teams* (5th Ed.). Sage.

Nesbitt, H. R., & Barry, D. M. (2022). Cooperating teachers' best practices for mentoring #2: Social support: WC420/AEC759, 9/2022. *EDIS*, 2022(5). <https://doi.org/10.32473/edis-wc420-2022>

Senécal, J., Loughead, T. M., & Bloom, G. A. (2008). A season-long team-building intervention: Examining the effect of team goal setting on cohesion. *Journal of Sport Exercise Psychology*, 30(2), 186–199. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.30.2.186>

Thiss, B. (2017). *A Delphi study: Identifying practices used to build cohesive teams in a virtual setting*. [Doctoral Dissertation.] Brandman University. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1929258415?fromopenview=true&pq-origsite=gscholar&parentSessionId=aE3JnZdEMetSy5UHYMJj2Q7h9RZxTP6Mrb5XB8ipMS4%3D>

Tuckman, B. W., & Jensen, M. C. (1977). Stages of small-group development revisited. *Group & Organizational Studies*, 2(4), 419–427. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105960117700200404>

Van Knippenberg, D., Nishii, L. H., & Dwertmann, D. J. G. (2020). Synergy from diversity: Managing team diversity to enhance performance. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 6(1), 75–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/237946152000600108>

Wiggins, G. (2012). Seven keys to effective feedback. <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/seven-keys-to-effective-feedback>

Yue, C. A., Men, L. R., & Ferguson, M. A. (2019). Bridging transformational leadership, transparent communication, and employee openness to change: The mediating role of trust. *Public Relations Review*, 45(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.04.012>

Appendix A: Leading Teams Series Overview

Leading Teams #1: Introduction

A description of teams that discusses the benefits of and challenges faced by teams, ways in which teams are different from groups, and a brief review of models and concepts to be expanded on through the series.

Leading Teams #2: Stages of Development

An in-depth description of the stages of group development model by Tuckman & Jensen (1977).

Leading Teams #3: Forming

An explanation of the forming stage of group development, accompanied by strategies to effectively lead teams through the forming stage. This publication provides tactics to help clarify team purpose, establish team culture, and guide team member socialization.

Leading Teams #4: Storming

A description of the storming stage of group development. This publication supplies strategies for conflict management, communication, and decision-making approaches.

Leading Teams #5: Norming

An outline of the norming stage of group development. This publication discusses approaches to defining roles and responsibilities, establishing an ideal team climate, and building organizational culture.

Leading Teams #6: Performing

An explanation of team performance and the performing stage of group development. This publication provides tips for leading effective meetings, supporting collaboration, enhancing team cohesion, and using proper evaluation and feedback procedures.

Leading Teams #7: Other Considerations for Leading Teams

This publication concludes the series with a short overview of adjourning and other suggestions and considerations for leading teams, including working with virtual teams, encouraging motivation, and managing team adjournment and team member termination.