

TEAM BUILDING HANDBOOK

1. Tuckman's stages of group development

Team members were introduced to Tuckman's stages of group development. These stages are inevitable and crucial for the growth of the whole team. Passing each stage, the team accumulates knowledge on how to face the inner and outer challenges, tackle arising problems, find solutions, arrange work, and deliver results. In order to develop and improve, the group of people, that cannot be yet called a 'team', has to go through the following stages¹:

1) Forming. At this stage, the team is formed, everyone is positive and polite, showing their best behavior and getting to know each other. The group of separate individual people is moving towards the 'team,' but clear responsibilities are still not present.

2) Storming. At this stage, the disagreements over team priorities might arise within the team while formulating the main goals. There is also the probability of a struggle for leadership. The team needs to stay focused and avoid distractions that might be caused by tensions and emotional issues.

3) Norming. This stage brings consensus, leadership acceptance, and established trust. By overcoming the conflict, the team sets its norms and standards. Team members tend to develop a stronger sense of commitment to a common goal. You might spot initial results and progress during this phase.

4) Performing. The team is stable; the goals are clearly set. Different perspectives of the team members are seen as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Each team member has his/her role, and the team is flexible and capable of solving any arising challenges. If the team succeeds in entering this stage, it means it is a high-performing team, capable of showing the best results.

Why are these stages important? From our experience, we could say that conscious team realization that it is going through a certain stage can **help the team understand why some things are happening**, and **how to overcome issues** in order to become productive more quickly. It enables to follow the dynamics of the team. The reflection on these four stages led to the understanding that **some arguments, controversies and disagreements are natural and enriching experience**, that shows **we care** about our project.

Normally, the team is fighting for trying to find the best possible form of working together. Discussing and standing for one's position is an important integral part of become the more productive team, as disagreements usually lead to beneficial consensus on new productive work forms. The worst thing that a team can do, is to ignore the storming phase, as grievances and discomfort in disguise stay with each of the team member if not pronounced out loud. In general, the workshop on Tuckman's model and team development stages helped to understand the importance of conscious decision-making based on logic, facts, and felt senses within the team.

¹The whole description on Tuckman's group development stages is based on Multi-stakeholder Partnerships, Tool 34: Tuckman (forming, norming, storming, performing), accessible via <http://www.mspguide.org/tool/tuckman-forming-norming-storming-performing>.

'My why'

After introduction to team development stages, we continued the workshop with the greater focus on individual level. The individual level analysis started by defining 'my why', meaning that each of us shared **the goals and hopes towards the upcoming year as Vilnius-Lithuania iGEM team member**. Each of us had to outline the main reasons why he/she decided to join the team; afterwards, we shared our motives out loud, formed an accumulated list of most prominent reasons and reflected on the deeper meaning of the most popular reasonings. The main perception underlying and following our motives were **free choice** and **unrestricted freedom to express, share and receive** (as well as provide) **feedback on our ideas**. Our team members see iGEM as favorable setting for suggesting, communicating and realizing the ideas that otherwise

Matrix of team roles

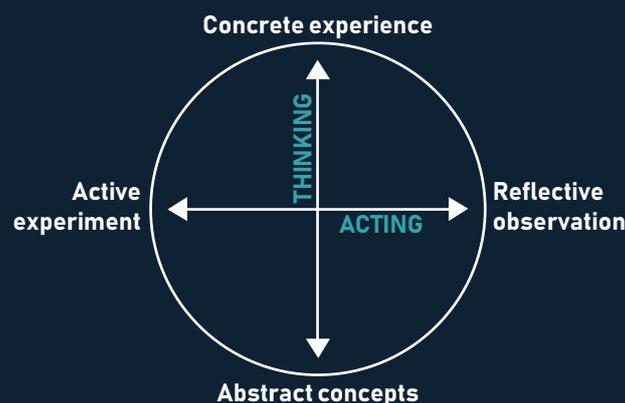
Interpersonal role matrix was another important sub-topic of our workshop. Each of team member was provided with the theoretical descriptions of four role areas:

- 1) interpersonal roles;
- 2) informational roles;
- 3) analytical roles;
- 4) acting roles.

Each area was defined providing concrete examples of qualities; then, each team member was asked to select three most important qualities that could best describe him/her.

Thinking and acting

Based on the selected qualities, each team member was positioned in the matrix consisting of two axes: **acting** (X axis) and **thinking** (Y axis) (see figure below). The position of the team member in this matrix describes how one is thinking and acting, for example, some team members tend to think of their actions with the help of concrete examples and act only after reflectively observing, while others are more likely to think in abstract concepts and act actively experimenting on things themselves. Knowing the types of people who are in the team (e. g. some team members are more apt to observe, while others prefer to act immediately) is useful for the implementation process of the project and understanding on internal team dynamics. In other words, by realizing the types, we can more effectively benefit from all of them – by making a valuable synthesis of sharp-sighted observers and courageous experimentalists. The mapping of our team interpersonal role matrix showed that **we have all types of people in our team**, which turns out to be the best possible composition of the team aiming to achieve common goals.



Helium Stick

After getting to know the qualities of each team members in regard to thinking and acting, we proceeded with the **teambuilding game 'Helium Stick'**. The first task for the team was to construct the long straight stick. For that, the moderators of the game provided the team with limited materials on their desk: paper, pencils and scissors. After complementing the pool of resources, we finally made the stick. The second task was **to lower the stick to the ground** using only the index fingers and holding our arms out. After few unsuccessful trials, we finally made it with our fourth trial.

There are many possible ways to interpret this game. It is interesting to **observe how the team solves the problems and challenges faced** – how it plans the actions, how the plan is followed, who leads the planning and implementation activities, how the stick is being lowered, etc. The main takeaway of this game for our team was that we are not keen to look for the possible resources and assistance outside our team bubble – we are more tend to look for solutions internally without trying to get something from outside the team.