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## The GRPI model

An approach for team development

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## Management Summary

GRPI is an acronym describing the different dimensions characterising a team, i.e.

**G**oals, **R**oles, **P**rocesses and **I**nterpersonal Relationships:

- \_\_\_ Goals provide the foundation of good teamwork by establishing the core mission of a team. They give direction to a team, understanding where they are now and where they want to go, uniting each individual effort in attaining it.
- \_\_\_ A role can be described by its authority, responsibilities and tasks. Each role should be aligned to support the achievement of the goals defined. To enable the team to function, each team member should have a clear picture of who is doing what, who is responsible for what, and know the extents of their authority.
- \_\_\_ Processes are tasks and activities within a team enabling and facilitating the achievement of its goals. Setting up processes for decision making, conflict management and communication will effectively support a team achieving its goals by determining the interactions within a team.
- \_\_\_ The Interpersonal section outlines relationships and individual styles. It is about establishing trust, open communication and feedback which support a sound working environment.

Applying the GRPI model at a team development workshop includes the following stages:

- \_\_\_ collectively shaping and setting the goals for the future
- \_\_\_ clarifying and defining the role each team member plays
- \_\_\_ establishing sound processes to effectively work together
- \_\_\_ building trust and appreciation on interpersonal level

The GRPI model facilitates the process of a teambuilding, thus improving team effectiveness, ensuring productivity, efficiency and quality and at the same time enhancing the way members work together. It is about setting up an effective cooperation model.

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# 1 Team Development

We use “team development” as a contrast to the more familiar “team building”, sometimes perceived as something mechanical and automatic made from the outside to the team. Whether individuals are brought together or forming a group on their own, a team has its own entity and identity, created and transformed by its member. Teams don’t just get better; they work on learning how to work together. Team development offers teams the opportunities to share, work, grow together and achieve outstanding performances.

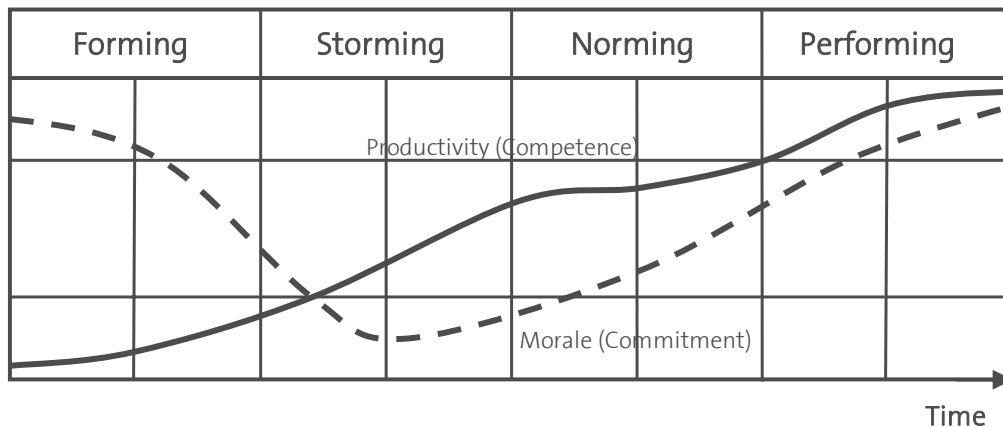
A team is characterised by a group of people possessing various skills, experience, competences, and who are jointly responsible for achieving a collective goal. Team members have to work together and in the same direction, concentrating their energy in pursuing the same directions and fulfilling the goals of the team. It is therefore important to ensure commitment and clarity at all stage of the team development process.

Successful team is a relative notion inherent to each team defined by what it wants to accomplish. However, we’d argue that a successful team is characterised by its ability to grow, as individuals and as a team, in facing up challenges, tackling problems, finding solutions and delivering results.

## Phases of growth

The phases of growth in teams were introduced by Bruce Tuckman based on his examination of empirical research studies, he found out that all successful teams must inevitably work through four developmental phases of growth, known as:

- \_\_\_ Forming
- \_\_\_ Storming
- \_\_\_ Norming
- \_\_\_ Performing



— **Forming** is the first stage a team goes through after it was set up. On a team level, objectives are vague, roles are not defined, procedures are missing, and personal relationships have not evolved yet. It is the phase where the team orientates and defines itself. At this stage, motivation is high and performance is low.

— **Storming** is the phase when conflicts arise, team members start to lose focus, and work blockages emerge. Recognition of this stage is usually clear because team members begin to disagree and sometimes become uncooperative.

— **Norming** is the phase where teams generally spend most of their time, getting the job done in a productive and effective manner: accepting responsibilities, meeting commitments, accomplishing work, the team moves forward.

— When **Performing** the team is working especially well. At this level, members experience a high level of trust with their colleagues. Team members feel that they are performing all of a piece. The team operates on a high level of effectiveness and efficiency; team members respect and trust each other.

When working with teams, it is important that team leaders and members understand the different phases of growth and adapt their behaviour to maximize team effectiveness. The team should be aware that it might regress to Storming or Norming again, when their balance of working together is offset by internal or external influences and changes.

A team development initiative, however, facilitates the process by clarifying goals, by setting up team processes and communication and by building trust on an interpersonal level.

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## 2 GRPI

Using the GRPI model shortens the time teams spent in their forming and storming phases, thus improving team effectiveness, ensuring productivity, efficiency and quality and at the same time enhancing the way members work together.

GRPI is an acronym describing the different dimensions characterising a team, arranged in cascading priorities towards a performance.

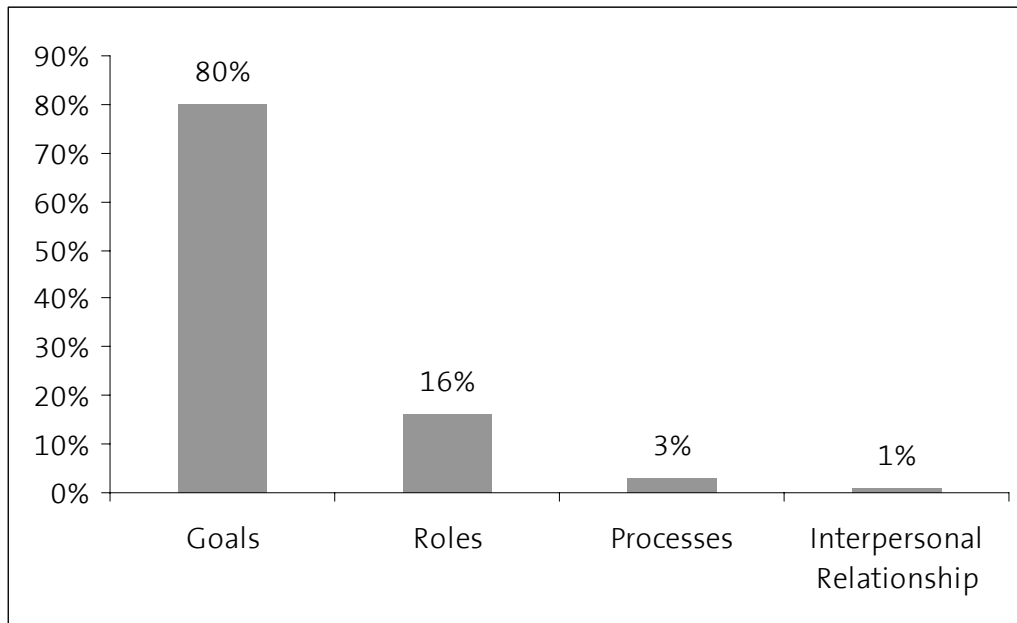
1. Goals
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. Processes and procedures
4. Interpersonal Relationships

This model highlights the different aspects of a team cooperation model, by helping to identify the definition of its goals, the clarity of roles and responsibilities, its processes and the way team members work with each other.

It eases the process of establishing and prioritising the core missions of a team and framing it into a clear action plan. By setting the priorities and potential cascade of problems of a team collaboration model, it helps identifying conflicts and therefore enables to find solutions at the right level.

Noel Tichy noticed that irritations were often addressed and approached at a personal level: “XY is responsible for the bad results”, “he’s delaying our work”, “she’s incompetent”, etc. Through his extensive research, he observed a ratio of 80:20 percent of conflicts accumulated at each level:

- \_\_\_ 80% of conflicts in team are attributed to unclear goals.
- \_\_\_ From the remaining 20%; 80% are assigned to unclear roles.
- \_\_\_ From the remainder there is again 80% to be found in the field of unclear processes.
- \_\_\_ At last, only 1% of the conflicts in teams can be attributed to interpersonal relationships.



Percentages of conflicts attributed to each level

Ambiguity at one level has got an impact on the following levels and often, problems on a lower level are symptoms of conflicts on a higher level.

- \_\_\_ If goals are not clear, uncertainties in the individual roles will arise.
- \_\_\_ If roles are unclear, this will result in cumulating conflict within the processes.
- \_\_\_ If processes are unclear, accumulated conflicts on higher levels will appear on the human level.

Therefore, it is crucial to set absolute clarity at each level and put foundation of shared commitment in place by setting ownership and commitment to those goals across the team and identifying any issues which limit the team from reaching their goals and addressing those issues.

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## 3 Goals

Goals provide the foundation of good teamwork by establishing the core mission of a team and framing its purpose. They give direction to a team, understanding where they are now, defining where they want to go, and uniting each individual effort in getting there. They create identity and generate sense: a common goal is what makes a team a team. Without a clear, shared and agreed upon goal, any kind of team development will have a limited impact.

Team members have to understand, accept, share and commit to common objectives. Commitment can be stirred by aligning team goals and individual goals. A method exists through which valid objectives can be set and identified: SMART goals. These goals have to be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound.

### Specific

Specific goals lead to specific results. The goal(s) should be addressing a real business issue. It helps focusing all efforts and clearly defines what the team is going to do. Before setting up the goal, a team should be able to answer who, what, why, when and how questions.

### Measurable

The goals must establish precise criteria for measuring progress of the attainment of the goal set. By measuring progress, the team can stay on track, feeling the sense of achievement while being encouraged to continue with their effort.

### Achievable

The goals should be reasonable and within the ability of the team. It must be understood and agreed by all team members. On the one hand, setting all-too difficult goals might waste resources if not end in complete failure. On the other hand, all-too undemanding goals might not be challenging enough. It is about setting up goals that

can be reached with some effort.

### **Relevant**

It should be realistic and related to a real business objective. Skills and competences are available to reach the goal(s) and fit the overall strategy of the organisation. By identifying goals that are important to the team, they can find out ways to make them come true and develop the attitudes, capabilities, skills etc. to reach them.

### **Time bound**

Goals must include clear deadlines and milestone, committed and owned by all team members. Framing goals into a timeline creates a sense of urgency and brings people to work on the goal.

### **Example**

Thus, an example of a SMART goal would be:

"We will increase our net profits by 50% at the end of the 4th Quarter of 2009 by increasing the launch of small electronics products from 1 on average per trimester to 5 on average per trimester. This change must take place before the end of the November 2008."

When having goals set and clear, understood and committed, it is important to keep record and be sure to stay on track. It is then the time of finding out how to achieve these goals and who might be doing what.

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## 4 Roles

A role can be described by its authority, responsibilities and tasks and should be aligned in supporting goals defined. A functional role is defined by tasks that need to be done and requires certain type of skills, knowledge, experience etc.

To enable the team to function, each team member should have a clear picture of who is doing what, who is responsible for what, and know the extents of their authority. They should understand, agree and be satisfied with their roles and responsibilities, being accountable individually and collectively. In this sense, it is crucial that team members cooperate with each other and accomplish goals as effectively as possible. This is the foundation of a clear process in addressing, clarifying and resolving issues.

### Authority

This is the allowance attributed to a role and setting a certain level of freedom for a person to act within this role. It is about framing the space for action, initiatives or decision making within the role. For example, in a case where a personal assistant must answer urgent emails during her/his supervisor absence should know to which extend he/she has the right authority to do so and should be given the appropriate level of action (eg. accessing his/her supervisor email account)

### Responsibility

It is about being accountable for the deliveries defined by the role, which can be appreciated either qualitatively or quantitatively. It refers for example to the quality of a certain task and gives team members clear indication for addressing any issue related to a certain task to the right person. Setting clear responsibilities ease the time for resolving any issues by addressing the right person immediately.

## Task

A task is defining any activity set to achieve the goals within the role, within the team, and it is crucial to ensure that the person has the required capabilities, skills, experiences and ambition to fulfil the role.

A clear role definition takes the interdependencies between authority, responsibility and tasks into account in order to deliver and achieve the goals of the role, team goals and aligned with individual goals.

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## 5 Processes

Processes in GRPI identify tasks and activities a team will have to work on if the goals are to be achieved. Setting intelligent standardised processes for actions, decision making, conflict management, problem solving, communication procedure, resource allocations etc. will effectively support the team's goals by determining the interactions within a team.

Examples for team processes are:

- \_\_\_ Communication procedures: we cannot not communicate. In everything we do or say, we communicate all the time. It is therefore important to know the communication channels and use them properly. Communication is vital for successful teams. Communication procedures are about providing space for team members, whether it is a blog, coaching sessions, or regular meetings to share with the other team members to know what the others are doing. By doing so, it provides measurements on how the team is doing and gives team members and team leaders the information needed for adjustments.
- \_\_\_ Decision making: to a certain extent, decision making is already defined by the authority of the roles. In this regard, however, it is about decision making on a collective level. A team leader might have a certain authority to take decisions alone and might need some inputs from team members. It is then a question on how team members should interact for taking decisions, setting up formats (e.g. emails, meetings etc.) and including a time frame. This will ensure rapid response and reduce the delivery time.
- \_\_\_ Conflict management: as a team is composed by people, conflicts are natural and can arise anytime. Conflict management is about addressing a clear process when conflicts happen. When a team member is unhappy within his/her role or has a problem with his/her colleague, a clear process should be established for addressing issues in order to solve them quickly and to avoid escalation.

Establishing clear processes provides a basis for success. By doing so, a team can gain significant insight into how work is actually completed, as a process flow will be identified. People will be in a position to work together efficiently by providing rapid response to natural deficiencies within a team.

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## 6 Interpersonal Relationships

The Interpersonal section of the GRPI model outlines relationships and individual styles and is about establishing trust, open communication and feedback which support a sound working environment. Like goals and roles, a specific format and rules have to be established, understood, shared, and agreed upon.

Improving interpersonal relationship could be done in many ways and is anything from smiling to someone to listening carefully, asking advice, passing on compliments etc. The level of trust, however, can be enhanced with the Emotional Bank Account<sup>1</sup>, a metaphor for defining and building the amount of trust with deposits and withdrawals in a relationship:

- \_\_\_ Understand the Individual: know your colleagues; honestly seek to understand what is important to them without diminishing what is important to you and adjust your behaviour.
- \_\_\_ Attend to the Little Things: perform small acts of courtesy and kindness, such as a smile or a compliment, and offer your help.
- \_\_\_ Keeping Commitments: this is a major and solid basis for developing trust. People hope in promises and not keeping them can lead to irritations.
- \_\_\_ Clarifying Expectations: make sure that people understand each other when they deal with their expectations. Plenty of time and good listening skills are needed.
- \_\_\_ Show Personal Integrity: trust is the basis of good relations. Integrity means keeping promises, meeting expectations, showing respect.
- \_\_\_ Apologise Sincerely When You Make a Withdrawal: if making a withdrawal, be sincere and explain it to the other one.

Applying these principles will build a high level of trust within the team and communication will be at ease. Negative behaviours such as showing disrespect, threatening, being harsh, or judgmental will limit the options of communicating effectively and deteriorate relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Stefen Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

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