



PLANNING

&

START UP

What Type Of Team Are We?

Teams of all kinds exist today. Choose any combination of rider or horse make-up you can dream of. Bear in mind though, that the more restrictive or detailed in your requirements you are, the smaller the potential pool and the more difficult it will be to find riders. Military, parade, posse, rodeo, social, junior, senior, mixed, quadrille, breed teams, paint horse drill teams, mustang rescue, 4 H, high school, college and many other combination of teams exist. Though team goals and requirements can vary greatly, one thing all teams have in common is that their long term viability is directly related to the organization of the team structure. Proper planning and a strong foundation will lead to a team that is capable of focusing on the team goals, and riding the drill, the segment that generally team members have joined the team for. A well developed team operates like a closely knit family including the squabbles, and like strong parental supervision, a team's structure will guide them through the rough patches and promote longevity. To follow are some of the elements of team structure that should be considered during start-up and reviewed and updated as required.

Drill Master / Team Leader

“Drill Master”, “Team Leader”, “Team Captain” are some of the titles used for the leadership position of a team. Regardless of their title, this is often the person that has taken the initiative to bring together a group to form a team, and has probably made some initial decisions regarding the type of team they are starting.

A team may however, have both a team leader and a drill master if a team leader that rides inside the drill chooses to bring in a drill master to help instruct the team and be on the outside of the drill with an overall view. In the case of both a drill master and a team leader the drill master will report to the team leader and acts as the eyes of the leader while in the arena. It can be challenging to instruct a team while riding in a drill.

In any team the team leader is a vital position. A leader either leads a team towards accomplishing their goals, or by exhibiting over dominance or weakness, leads a team wrought with disappointment and negativity. A leader of a team must wear many hats, manager, organizer, therapist, teacher, parental, arbitrator, etc. Balancing these roles is a monumental task that is generally under appreciated.

A structure that includes a pre-thought out order of succession is highly recommended. If a team leader leaves a team for any multiple of reasons, a team can be thrown into chaos just by the act of having to select a new leader if not pre-defined. The orderly transition and continuity of a team can be pre-managed through the establishment of a vice president or lieutenant position. A secondary leadership position should carry more than a, in name only, title. In the absence of the leader for a single practice or an extended period of time, the second in command should be able to insure the smooth running of the team and the focus on goal achievement.

A future chapter will focus in detail on Leadership, Respect & Team Building.

Purpose & Mission Statements

The purpose of the team should be decided upon and made clear to every team member so everyone is on board with the team's direction. This unity and clarity will prevent dissension down the road. The stated purpose will help with defining the team goals and the team's goals will assist you with establishing team rules necessary to achieve team goals.

Your team purpose is simply the foundational reason your team is coming together, why are we here? Are you a social group, a charity based group, a team with a mission of juvenile development? Once you have defined why you are forming this group you will be able to define the goals to support your purpose. A mission statement is a brief and concise declaration of your purpose and your road map to getting there. A mission statement written down can serve as a reminder and a clarification tool when goals are discussed.

A team purpose may in fact evolve or change over time. As long as it is an acknowledged and agreed upon shift this is acceptable. Your purpose and mission statement should be relevant to every team member and should periodically be reviewed and updated if necessary. Don't just write it and stick it in a file. Every team member should read it, understand it and believe in it.

Team Goals

Goals are the road map to achieving your purpose. They define the direction you take and provide measurable checkpoints of accomplishment or breakdown. Goals will provide momentum that keeps the team moving in the desired direction. A team without goals is less likely to produce much of anything good or bad.

Long term goals should be established first. These are the goals you will strive to reach for over a long period of time. Maybe your long goal is entering your first competition in the Novice division or maybe it is becoming Grand Champion, maybe it has nothing to do with winning but how many members you ultimately want to have. Your long goal might be to have a novice team for new riders and an advanced team for them to move up to. While they are the most important goals to you, you may lose focus and momentum because they are so far in the future. The long term goals lay out the pathway.

If long term goals lay out the path then the short term goals you will establish become the stepping stones along the path. Short term goals are things you will achieve in a single practice, or a month. Short term goals should be easily measureable for success, black and white, did we do it or not. You will establish multiple short term goals for every long term goal. Your goals may be extreme in variation but ultimately relative to your long term goal. Your short-term goals provide team motivation, enthusiasm, and drive.

During practice a team should always be working on obtaining a short-term goal for continued and constant team improvement. Celebrate the success of the goal at the end of practice, or acknowledge that even though you fell short, the knowledge gained still advanced you towards your long term goal can provide a team with a positive feeling of achievement.

Rules

Rules should further and protect the purpose and goals you established above. Rules that are agreed upon and enforced will help the team run smoothly. Rules clearly define the expectations and consequences of the team. What age riders will your team allow to ride? Do you have to provide your own horse & trailer? How many absences can a person have in what time frame? If more team members are available for a performance than what is needed who will get to ride the performance? Rules of behavior and member conduct must also be addressed. If your team is an advocacy against drinking and driving you may wish to address the use of alcohol at team functions in your rules. There are many questions you need to consider and answer as you create your team rules.

Rules are less likely to be broken if they are well written, organized and clearly define acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Well defined team rules can minimize conflicts by addressing how decisions are made and the penalty of breaking rules. ***Do not include rules you do not intend to enforce!*** The extent of your rules should be determined by the purpose of your team. A team together purely for social reasons, coming together for sheer enjoyment will tend to have less stringent rules than a junior team that has a purpose of youth leadership or preventing juvenile delinquency.

Conflict is part of human behavior and of any team. It can be minimized but cannot be completely avoided. Having within your rules a means to resolve conflicts will minimize distractions to the team when conflicts arise. Your rules should include some means for members to question a decision, and for them to be heard in a fair and objective process. A common complaint among team members is that leaders do not listen to them or consult them when making important goals or decisions. Rules on conflict resolution clarify the process through which members can question a decision or express a grievance. This process will probably involve a hearing before a committee that represents the entire team. Above all, it is important to ensure rules are applied fairly and equally among all members. Spending the time to clearly define conflict rules and procedures will be time well spent.

Once rules have been established it is equally important to make sure all members have read and understand the rules *before* committing to follow them as part of the team. Rules clearly written, clearly communicated and equally applied will prevent numerous team problems. Provide every potential member with a copy of your rules and express to them that they are enforced. You may want to have them return a signed copy to you upon joining the team. When rules are broken pre-defined rules and penalties allows a team leader to say, "Hey it's nothing personal, these are the rules, you knew them, you knew the penalty and you chose to break the rule, take the consequence then let's move on".

Practice Facility

Finding an arena for practices can be difficult enough, finding one centrally located to the team even more so. If a few team members are from a common boarding facility consider an arena at the facility the team can use that the owners will allow outside team members to use during practice. Try local fairgrounds or community arenas. If you are planning to practice at weeknights obviously you will need an arena with lights for the winter months which is harder to find. Most facilities will charge an arena fee either per rider or per team to pay for lights, facility upkeep etc. Many facilities may require proof of insurance as well. Offer to advertise a facility as a team sponsor for use of their arena. You may also offer to have team workdays around a facility in exchange for team use.

Unless you are lucky enough to practice in a covered arena you may also want to try and find a community room or gymnasium to use on rainy days or for team meetings. Walking through a drill on foot, when you cannot ride, particularly when learning a new drill, can be very beneficial.

Recruitment

Most teams try to compete or perform with a minimum of 12 riders, this means you need probably 15 or 16 riders to field a 12 person team. It is difficult to ride a drill with an empty spot so alternate riders should always be available to fill in. It is challenging to fill an arena effectively with eight riders; a larger team of 12-16 is optimal for competition. A 12-rider competition team may be a long goal however and many teams start with an 8-rider team or even as a Quad team. Post flyers at boarding facilities, attending poker rides, horse shows etc. to find people to be on the team. Word of mouth is one of the best ways to find people. Start with a 4-6 member quad if necessary but keep building your team. Numbers will add stability and flexibility to your team.

Online and social network sites provide a relatively new way to solicit new membership. Post your email or website on your trailers with magnetic signs. Community recognition and exposure is an important recruitment tool as well. Be sure to have flyers with you at any public event you do. You would be surprised at how many riders have been recruited at a bake sale! Many local papers have community sections for community group news or event posting. Submit your events and practice schedule inviting people to attend and see what your team is about. Have nice posters or flyers with a colorful picture printed up and ask to put them up in local feed stores, grocery stores, etc.

You should always use a “try-out” system to opt out of having someone on the team that doesn’t fit the team. If a friend recommends someone and they show up with no riding experience are you willing to teach them, refer to your rules where you defined this! Even after you have enough people keep looking for interested people to have in reserve or to expand your team. Create a separate novice team or quad to keep new riders interested and learning until they have the skills necessary to move up.

Time Commitments

Establish time commitments up front in your rules. The commitments adults have in life can present real challenges to participating on a team that will require a major time commitment. Lay out practice time allotment, including time to trailer to and from practices and team meetings before or after practice. Practice time should be consistent, for example always on Saturdays between 1:00 and 3:00 pm or maybe Friday nights from 7:00pm to 9:00 pm. Team members can then arrange other things around this time slot. Performance commitments, how many performances are you looking to do in a season and know they will most likely be on the weekend. Time to clean tack, sew costumes, do fundraising are all time commitments that need to be stated up front so there are no surprises. Many riders new to teams only think about the practice schedule initially and have no clue as to the hours involved in fundraising or performance traveling.

Work schedules can be difficult to manage, and riders should be prepared if they will be required to take time away from work or school to attend competitions or performances. If a rider works weekends and will not be able to attend team events you may want to confine their role to a fill-in person for absent riders.

There is a difference in the *will to commit* and the *ability to commit*. Look at it like this: basically, you have 2 buckets in your life, one is things **you have to do** and the other is **things you want to do**. But you only get 1 full bucket. So first you put all the things you have to do into your *have to do* bucket and if that bucket is 1/2 full that means you get a 1/2 bucket of stuff to put into the *want to do bucket*. If your *have to do* bucket is 3/4 full then you only get 1/4 to put into your *want to do* bucket.

Time management is about trying to reduce the stuff in the *have to do* bucket, so you can have more time to put into the *want to do* bucket. So when you are working with a team and someone comes up to you and says “ I really want to do this, I just don’t have the time”, share with them about the buckets and get them to look at their life and see what they can move out of their have to do bucket to free up time in their want to do bucket. And if they cannot get enough out of that have to do bucket then they just might not be a good fit for a team whose goal is to be a highly competitive busy team. They might need to find a team with different goals, a team whose priority is more of a social makeup. And we need teams that have different commitment levels just for this purpose. It makes our sport stronger, so never look down on a team that has a different vision than yours, they are all helping our sport.

Now they have to look at the *want to do* bucket and look at all the stuff they put in that bucket. People are going to put things like going to a concert, going skiing for the weekend, going to the beach, so there is a multitude of stuff they will want to put into their *want to do* bucket. What you need to do as a team is make the experience of being a part of your team the number 1 priority in that *want to do* bucket. If you have someone come up to you and say I can’t come to practice next week because I bought tickets to a concert, then your team is not the number 1 priority in their bucket. And you need to find a way to make sure that every member of the team understands that to be a member of a team that really wants to be a great competitive team that they have to make sacrifices and make the team the number one priority in their want to do bucket.

But be very careful about how much time you are requesting from them and make sure if you add anything they are on board with it. If the average adult has a bucket that is 2/3 full of *have to do* and they have 1/3 bucket of *want to do* and understand there is more in that *want to do* bucket than just drill. But you want to be the priority in that bucket, but you will not be the whole third.

Once you have made it clear to them what the time requirement will be, you need to start working on how you make your team the number one priority in their *want to do* bucket. **The way we do that is by making sure what they get out of the team, is more important to them than anything else in their *want to do* bucket.**

Financial Commitment

Time commitment and financial commitment are the two main drawbacks for team membership for many riders. As part of your rules and expectations lay it out truthfully at the beginning. If you sugar coat it up front just to get rider’s you will invest time training them only to lose them shortly because you neglected to be truthful. What team fundraising will be done and what will be out of pocket. Team costumes, travel expenses, practice facility costs, insurance, etc. all add up.

Discuss how your team will be fund these expenses. Will every team member pay his or her own way? Will you have team fundraisers? If you have fundraisers and only the same few people always participate, how will the funds be divided? You may choose to go after corporate sponsorships or solicit private donations, but you will need to incorporate and become a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit before most companies will donate substantial amounts of money. There are a lot of costs that will come up and if you have not been clear about financial expectations you will have problems. Ideally it would be wonderful if everyone could self-fund, but you will be eliminating a great many potential team members.

It is very important to lay out a team budget at the beginning of the year and try to anticipate all your foreseeable expenditures. Indicate which will need to be raised and what will come directly from members pockets. Try to think of everything including the cost of gas and how far you anticipate travelling, overnight stays etc.

Many teams have a dues structure that all members pay weekly or monthly from their pocket then plan fundraisers to raise the rest.

CSHA tries to assist teams with fundraising efforts for CSHA competitions. Raffle fundraisers or sponsorship advertising opportunities in an event program will be announced to teams when available.

Team Name Selection

Try to make sure you pick a unique team name. You don't want confusion with another team. Before finalizing a name, check with your local drill-team governing body like CSHA or at competitions or on an internet group chat-room to see if the name you are considering is already being used. If you are planning on incorporating your team in the future a name check will be conducted by the Secretary of State and if it is too close to another corporate name you may need to make a change. Adding "Equestrian Drill Team" or "Rodeo Drill Team" to the end of your legal name will significantly reduce the chance of having your name rejected. Using your county name in your team name will also reduce conflict. Using your town name may be too small an area as you may find team members coming from several nearby towns.

Select a team that will apply to the current and future membership of the team. Many teams have started out as "The Crazy Cowgirls" only to start admitting men and have to change to "The Crazy Cowgirls & Cowboys".

The length of your name should be considered when adding it to shirts, flags, tack, etc. If you use "Crazy Cowgirls Equestrian Drill Team" you can drop the Equestrian Drill Team part from general use and use it just for legal documents.

Riding Attire

This can be an area of major team conflict. If you have a team of all women imagine getting 12 to 15 women or more to agree on what to wear on any occasion! Outfitting a mixed team of both men and women is also a challenge. This is where a team leader must really step up and hopefully rules have been established that dictates who will make costume decisions and what will they cost and who will pay that amount. Will the team own the rights to the costume? If someone quits will the team buy it

from the departing team member? Will you have fundraisers to pay for them? If costumes are custom made can you get replacements? Another discussion should be regarding helmets. If you are a western style group and one or more but not everyone wants to wear a helmet for safety reasons how will the team deal with that.

Choosing team colors may be a starting point. It is advisable to start with a color combination that is fairly commonly found in shirts, tack etc. Keying in on a particular color combination can establish a direction. Select colors that work for both male & female if you currently or may have a mixed sexed team in the future. Even cowboys tough enough to wear pink may not appreciate a pink sequin shirt as a uniform.

Whoever is making costume selection must be conscience that they are selecting what will look best on the majority of the team, not on themselves.

Outfits run the gamut from military style team's uniforms to expensive flashy rodeo outfits. The majority of teams start simple with matching off the rack western shirts, matching pants, boots & hats. Custom shirts, chaps, matching buckles, etc. can be added as the team grows. Long sleeved shirts are pretty much an unwritten rule in competition. When you get into custom clothing it is advisable that the team own or have a policy to buy back any clothing as you may not be able to replace it. Even off the shelf shirts may vary in color dye lot year to year and it is recommended that they are bought together and washed the same to avoid variances in color. Shirts should be well fitted and shirt tails long enough to stay tucked in. Sloppy is not acceptable to judges, but simple, clean, matching outfits are fine.

Though competitions no longer require riders to wear gloves it is preferred by many judges. Very cheap cotton gloves with non slip grips can be purchased online through a store like band shoppe for a few dollars a pair. It is nearly impossible to tell the difference between cheap cotton gloves and expensive leather riding gloves from up in the arena stands. Gloves give a polished look to the team and eliminate the problems of no matching nail polish and jewelry.

Hats, helmets or a combination of both must be matching in color. CSHA does not mark down for a combination of both as long as there is a color match. Though not mandatory at this time the use of helmets in drill is encouraged by all riders, particularly junior riders. Hats must be well fitted and pinned to stay on rider's heads during the drill. Hats lost in the arena have cost teams many points and placements over the years.

Your team appearance can greatly affect the overall appearance of your team. Messy hair, unmatched jewelry, untidy clothing, can just take away from the general performance appearance (showmanship). Use your outfits to cover flaws if possible. If you have riders that cannot keep their free hands down do not dress them in shirts with brightly colored sleeves against dark pants, black sleeves against black pants will probably disguise that flaw much better.

With hair it is generally recommended that everyone on the team wear it the same. Hair nets are great at keeping stray hairs in line. Matching hair accessories while not required are a cheap way to make your team appear polished. Buns tend to look tidy while braids tend to bounce drawing attention to a bouncing rider. A long pony tail of curls, often hair pieces, tied back in colorful ribbons can add a glitzy rodeo appearance to a team. Consider your type of team, military, rodeo etc when determining what hair style will be best suited to your team.

Make-up, color and application, should also be consistent among all riders to add polish to a team. Define the eyes and cheeks with color as well as matching lipstick to define your smiles and you are good to go.

Jewelry if worn should be matching and is generally confined to matching buckles and post style earrings.

Tack

Much like costumes, uniform tack requirements can cause issues if clear rules are not established up front. How will equipment be purchased? Who owns it? Where will it be stored and who has access to it? These and many other questions should be considered. The type of legal formation you decide on for your team may come from how you decide to deal with some expensive purchases. When starting a team up you will probably start with everyone using their own private tack but as you grow you will want to start purchasing matching tack. Matching saddle blankets and leggings are usually a good start. Purchasing matching breast collars and bridles can be next on the list. Matching saddles is a massive undertaking and generally not a feasible purchase for most teams. If riders store and clean their team owned tack you may want to require a sizable *security* deposit upfront that will be returned when they return the tack if they leave the team. Always consider investing in spare pieces of any tack or uniform pieces that you buy to cover the situation that may occur if someone decides not to return tack or perhaps has it stolen. Sometimes it is harder to replace than you think a few years down the line.

Music

Your team purpose may influence the type of music you select to perform to. Competition music for the most part is instrumental. This has relaxed some in recent years. Ten years ago, no one dared use music with vocals in competition. The addition of theme, patriotic and short programs introduced vocal music into competition and have helped it gain acceptability with judges. Rodeo performance teams use patriotic or country songs to get the crowd going. Music is another area team members will often not agree, so make this another area where you have established rules in advance to deal with music selection. Music can really have an impact on how people react to your performance (showmanship). The tempo of the music must match your teams speed. Though you won't see "music" as a score sheet item it is accounted for in showmanship and overall performance scores.

A great way to create music that goes with your program is to create, learn and perfect the program to the speed you will use in competition or a performance. Video the drill then listen to music selection while watching the video and see what goes best. You will need someone on the team that has some computer ability to use a music software program to splice the music together smoothly. There are some pretty user friendly programs out there but if no one is willing to tackle it you may need to hire someone to put it together for you but you will need to lay out for them what music for how many minutes/seconds before transitioning to the next piece. Generally using the same piece of music throughout a ten minute drill can be pretty monotonous so try to find several pieces of music that work together and work with your drill. It is not an easy task.

When selecting music consider the age of your audience and/or judges! Music selected by a team of juniors of current hits will probably not translate well in competition. Movie soundtracks are popular selections. Rarely is everyone on the team happy with the music, allowing them the option of coming up with something better that is appropriate, will usually end the conversation. When beginning music

selection explain to the team what qualities drill music needs to have and ask team members to submit possible selections for consideration. It is not necessary to change your music every year. Your team may be tired of hearing it but remember audiences and judges probably only hear it once or twice a year and if it's good music they will look forward to hearing it again. Certain selections of music can actually help define your team.

Very Important: You will most likely be requested to bring your music on a CD to the competition. Play the CD on a boom box or portable CD player to test that it was formatted correctly to play on these devices **before** you go to compete. It may be formatted to play on your computer fine but will not play when you get to competition. Have only the one track you are going to use on a CD and have it marked with your team name and division. If you are going to ride in a short and a long you want it clearly indicated which is which and for what team so you do not get the wrong music played.

Whistles

California State Horsemen's Association competitions do not allow voice commands. Use of a whistle to signal the team to start a maneuver is commonly used. Have someone in the drill responsible for the whistle as most competitions in California do not allow a person outside of the arena to coach or signal a team. Get a good quality whistle and the drill leader should always have a back-up whistle at practice in case the whistle person is out or forgets to bring their whistle. Depending on the structure of your drill it is advisable to have your whistle riding at the back of your drill as much as possible so they can keep an eye on what is going on with the whole team. You may want to look at your drill on paper and see what position ends up at the back the most and assign this position to the person that will be in charge of the whistle. You may have more than one whistle as well for specific maneuvers that may be blind to one whistle. Learning to blow the whistle is not as easy as it appears. Learning to blow it sharply and clearly when your adrenaline is flowing and your mind is deeply focused on what you are doing is challenging. Attaining the knowledge of exactly the right timing for each maneuver takes practice and should be assigned to a person with the most drill experience but training a backup is important.

Insurance

Proof of group liability insurance will be required by many facilities before you can perform. It is suggested that even if not planning performances right away that you investigate group liability insurance from the beginning of practice. Liability releases should also be considered before allowing anyone to ride. Accidents do happen in drill, horses and riders can be injured and whose fault it is can quickly turn into a nasty mess.

CSHA will provide liability releases to teams prior to competitions. It is the drill master's responsibility to ensure every team member that will be competing properly and fully fills out the documents and turns them in prior to the competition or practice as directed. Additional releases may be required by a competition facility and must be handled in the same manner.

Riding clubs and their varied functions pose unique liability exposures, which need specially designed coverage tailored to these needs. Riding Club Liability programs have the flexibility to be custom tailored to cover such exposures as premises liability for meetings and fund-raisers, trail rides, boarding, clinics and public events (i.e. shows and parades). The policy can be written on a short-term basis for one-time events or annually.

Many CSHA clubs have insurance through the same insurance CSHA uses and the agent used is listed below or contact an equine insurance agent in your area that handles riding clubs.

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Legal Structure

You will want to get legal advice on the best legal structure for our team depending on the purpose and goals of the team. Raising money for equipment, travel and competitions without a formal corporation or organizational structure can be tricky. When money is raised, whose money is it? Your group leader might have to report it on her personal income tax return because she could be seen as a proprietor. Forming a corporation to handle the money separates club money from personal money.

Drill teams are among the types of entities that can apply for nonprofit status. Nonprofits cannot be owned by individuals and they do not create or share profit. The Internal Revenue Service and state tax boards grant nonprofits tax exemptions so organizations can use their full resources toward their missions and goals. In the case of a team, that means that whatever monies you raise can be used for your team's activities and purchases rather than paid to the IRS.

If you want to get sponsors and donors to support you they may require that you form a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 corporation. Incorporation, non-profit status and tax exemption are all different and handled by different government agencies. Not all nonprofit organizations are exempt from taxes, and not all exempt organizations are nonprofit organizations. The IRS separates nonprofit organizations into approximately 25 categories. Organizations whose purposes are charitable, educational, scientific, literary or religious are eligible for exemption under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). The most important distinctive feature of organizations exempt under Section 501(c)(3) is that, unlike gifts to most other exempt organizations, donations to 501(c)(3) organizations are deductible to the donor.

Your legal formation can be designed to protect your organization and its members but there will be a cost associated with the legal fees as well as a paperwork and legal procedures and rules you will be bound by. The legal process of incorporating and obtaining tax-exempt status is extensive, expensive, and time-consuming, make sure your team is in it for the long term.

Corporations are entities until themselves and shield individuals involved in the corporation from personal liability while conducting business and making and spending money. As long as a director or manager of a corporation does not perform unethical, illegal or self-serving behaviors, an individual's personal assets are not on the line if a lawsuit occurs and they cannot be held responsible for a corporation's debt or taxes.

In order to form a nonprofit corporation, check the IRS, the California Secretary of State's, and the California Franchise Tax Board websites for information. The easiest path is to hire an attorney to handle the incorporation and non-profit status for you. It can cost you about \$2000 or more to incorporate and obtain a 501 (c) 3 status in filing and attorney fees.

Becoming a nonprofit corporation allows you to raise money, receive donations and apply for government grants. Nonprofit status enables you to do things as simple as selling raffle tickets, casino nights, holding community auctions, or something as sophisticated as applying to foundations for grant

money. Keep in mind that raising and spending money requires accounting and a separate corporation bank account. Your club's corporation must adhere to all applicable state and federal laws related to the operation of a corporation and especially the regulations regarding maintaining nonprofit status.

Choose an attorney experienced in tax and corporate law governing nonprofit organizations when choosing a legal structure.

Stages of Formation

It is important for everyone to know that teams don't just form and immediately start working together to accomplish great things. There are actually stages of team growth and teams must work through the stages to become effective. The leadership displayed, and a team's level of commitment will determine how quickly your team progresses through them.

It is also important for members to know that every team goes through these stages, so they understand that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and to push through the tough stages to get to that goal of the *Performing* stage.

In a year with high turn-over you may slide back a stage but once you reach stage 4 your turn-over usually decreases, unless you are a junior team with continuous turnover due to ageing out. When a team reaches Stage 4 the culture often perpetuates itself through the existing members to the new members.

If you are an existing team see if you recognize what stage your team is currently in and if you recognize stages, you have been through.

Tuckman's Stages of Team Formation

Stage 1: Forming. When a team is forming, members cautiously explore the boundaries of acceptable group behavior. They search for their position within the group and test the leader's guidance. It is normal for little team progress to occur during this stage.

Stage 2: Storming. Storming is probably the most difficult stage for teams. Members often become impatient about the lack of progress but are still inexperienced with working as a team. Members may argue about the actions they should take because they faced with ideas that are unfamiliar to them and put them outside their comfort zones. Much of their energy is focused on each other instead of achieving the goal.

Stage 3: Norming. During this stage team members accept the team and begin to reconcile differences. Emotional conflict is reduced as relationships become more cooperative. The team is able to concentrate more on their work and start to make significant progress.

Stage 4: Performing. By this stage the team members have discovered and accepted each other's strengths and weaknesses and learned what their roles are. Members are open and trusting and many good ideas are produced because they are not afraid to ask questions, offer ideas or make suggestions. Much is accomplished and team satisfaction & loyalty is high. I also like to call this completing your

“Inner Circle”. When this is accomplished you will recognize it because it will be one of the most satisfying team experiences you will ever be blessed to be a part of.

