

The “Dot test”

- How to make any team’s Monday a better day

It’s a fact: If you put a project team or group of folks in a room who come from different walks of life (firms, professions, or generations) working towards a common purpose, and ask them, “How are things going?” the feedback will be “fine, ok, as usual.”

A project survey can be sent in a typical fashion. Generic questions sent randomly with an expectation of honesty. Your impact will be limited as a quality “moment” of robust conversation does not exist. You don’t get clarity of “why.” You don’t get a common baseline of measurable “cause/effect.”

I developed the “Dot test” years ago while working at a design-build firm. I touched 194 projects, which provided me with a vast amount of measurable information. I tracked the major impact topics and the corresponding “lead” vs. “lag” impact on those main topics. The OUTCOME was that I (my teams) stopped building buildings and only focused on building Environments. It’s a simple Lead / Lag validation.... If we build the right environment, we will get the expected outcome.

In its most simplistic form: [The Dot Test gives you and your team a Formal, Visual, and Measurable Pulse of your team in 15 minutes. It covers eight 8 Major Topics \(Accountability, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Team environment, etc.\) and includes 12 sub-actions under each topic that are the typical Risk/Cause of misalignment.](#)

[Green/Yellow/Red dots are the gift of reality. Green means going well, Yellow indicates needs focus, and Red means totally off the tracks. The team is NOT ALLOWED to TALK...only dot the tar out of the wall \(and they will like you can’t believe\). Now we have a wall of “Accountability.” A wall that starts a robust conversation based on **“What do we have in place to move the dots?”** Now it’s about creating an action plan.](#)

The outcome is an incredible/impactful/robust tool. This tool can be used for any project or any moment of need that requires (Plan, Act, Measure, & Adjust). The opportunity here is one of an additional measure (many teams or projects do all four steps consistently).

THE “DOT Test” – Create a Measure of Accountability

Current measure of “How many construction projects formally implement (PDMA) by step?

- **Plan (100%)** – every project must have a starting point (or plan). Does it get tested, measured, adjusted?
- **Do (100%)** – every project has a “do” phase.... we are going to “do it” even if it’s wrong
- **Measure – (less than 50%)** – Why? – because we simply don’t create the right measures. Projects are way more complicated than just time and money. But what are the right measures? Do we even pause to ask?
- **Adjust – (20%)** – The following image of the Tuckman Model explains this clearly

Without a “measure of accountability,” we can pause and adjust. If we have those measures, we can take a moment of “transformation” (or, as it’s called in our industry, “retrospective”) to reset, realign, and continually improve. It’s simply not the norm.....

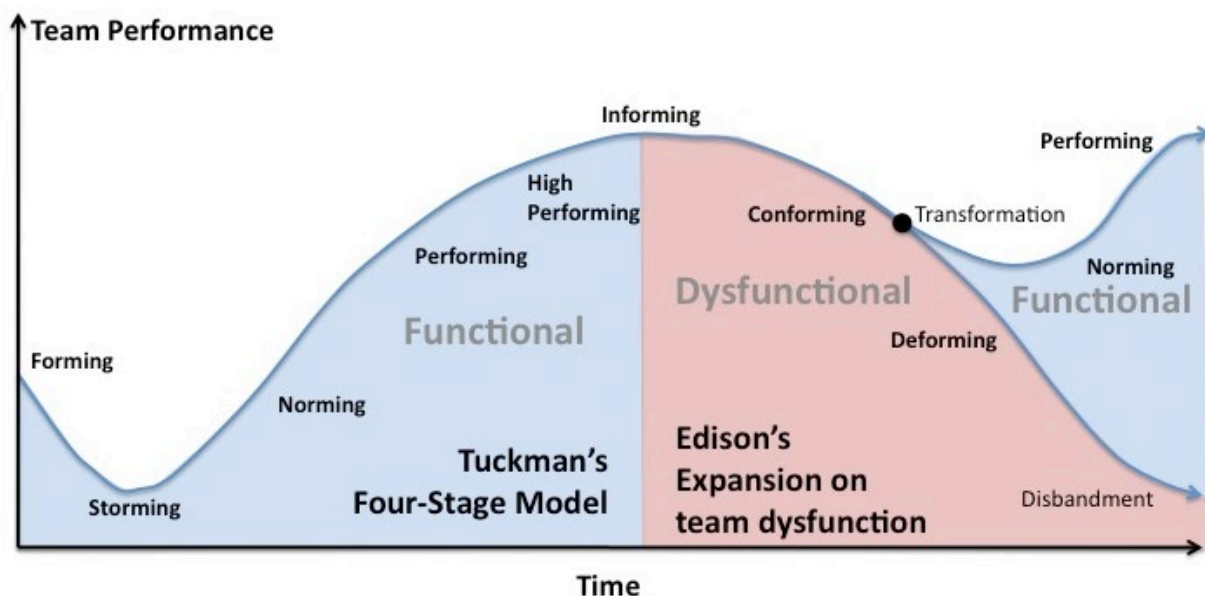


Figure 1 – This illustration shows the full life-cycle of a team's development, from its initial formation to its potential decline unless there is a transformation initiated (adapted from Edison [6])

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Typical "Outcome" of a Dot Session:

