F. I. R.O
Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation

FIRO, Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation was developed by the American psychologist Will Schutz. He found that teams undergo three main phases in its evolution towards unity and efficiency.
A group that strives towards openness and efficiency must undergo the Belonging Phase, The Control Phase and the Openness Phase in that order to succeed. A team that has reached the third phase - Openness - will occasionally return to the earlier phases. Reasons can be that a new task falls outside the group frame, or that a new group member comes or a member leaves. It is a cultural process (See circle on last page.)

In every phase all the individuals within the group must answer some basic questions in order to proceed further.

The BELONGING phase   -Do I belong in this group?
                               -Am I accepted in this group?
                               -Do I accept others in this group?

The CONTROL phase   -What is my role?
                               -What is your role?
                               -Who is the leader?

The OPENNESS phase   -How close, how far apart?

manuel knight
ACADEMY

Av overview of the phases

As a leader or team member you can look at different characteristics and behaviors to find out in what phase the group is. Based on where the group is, you can adapt your leadership and behaviors to help the group develop further.

Belonging Phase:
Group focus:	Membership
Basic feeling:	I am significant
Basic value:	Dependence
Conflicts:	Quiet
What we talk about:	Small talk, weather
Actions:	Talk too much or is very quiet
	Questioning of goals
Situation-adapted leadership:	Direct
To continue to the next phase:	Build trust, encourage openness, show more of yourself

Control Phase:
Group focus:	Leadership
Basic feeling:	I am competent
Basic value:	Independence
Conflicts:	Open
What we talk about:	Things, competence
Actions:	Achieve or avoid leadership
	Forming subgroups
Situation-adapted leadership:	Supportive/tutorial
To continue to next phase:	Give the group a challenge that requires real team work
	Respect diversity
	Build bridges

Openness Phase:
Group focus:	Relationships (how close or far apart)
Basic feeling:	I am likeable
Basic value:	Interdependence
Conflicts:	Mutual exchange of feelings
What we talk about:	You and me
Actions:	Making efforts to be close
	I´m comfortable expressing personal feelings
	It is OK to work in subgroup
	It is OK to be quiet.
Situation-adapted leadership:	Delegating
To stay in this phase:	Keep having high demands on the group
	Be content with your role in the group.
	Everyone takes responsibility and performs.

The development process

A group striving towards the openness phase must pass through all three phases. There can be no shortcuts. If the group reaches the third phase of development, openness, it can still go back to the control phase or the belonging phase. It all depends upon how the group handles different situations such as a new goal from the organization's leadership, a task that falls outside of the group's normal operating area or the introduction of new group members.

The journey through the three phases is characterized by open communication and the evolvement of strong relationships, which are the core of strong teams. A group that has established solid routines, roles and developed a strong common maturity needs less time to return to the openness phase.

The belonging phase is characterized by quiet conflicts. Group members don't feel secure enough to speak of their conflicts openly.
In the control phase conflicts are open and can be loud. The group members talk openly about their feelings in the conflicts they experience. In the control phase, the leader should support conflict solving. A group that has successfully reached the openness phase the conflicts are characterized by mutual exchange of feelings. The individuals in this phase can solve their conflicts without outside help by speaking openly and honestly to each other.

Leadership and leadership needs vary depending upon in which phase the group is. In the belonging phase, the most appropriate leadership style is direct because the group is new and most likely has no experience together as a group. In the control phase the most appropriate leadership style is supportive and in the openness phase delegating leadership is the best choice.
The most important thing is that the leader has the ability to adapt his leadership to the individuals and the situations he or she faces.
This is called situation-adapted leadership. Remember: As a leader you should always be half a step in front of where your group is.

Reflect over a current relationship

• What do you recall from the beginning of the relationship?
• What characterized the relationship?
• How is the relationship now?

Reflect over your work group

• What is the basic feeling in your work group right now?
• What characterizes your work group?
• Can you recognize the different phases in a group's development?
• What do you need to do to come to the next phase?

  For further reading:
• The Human Element: Productivity, Self-Esteem, and the Bottom Line by Will Schutz

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Control Phase
- My role
- Your role
- Who is the leader?

Conflicts:
Open

Leadership:
Supervising/
Supporting

Belonging Phase
- Do I belong?
- Am I accepted?
- Do I accept others?

Conflicts:
Quiet

Leadership:
Direct

Openness Phase
- Well-being
- Openness
- Top performance

Conflicts:
Mutual exchange
of feelings

Leadership:
Delegating