



## Module 8.3 Criticism Stage Project Leader Maintenance Tasks

### STAGE 2 - CRITICISM

**Ground rules are ignored**  
**Near panic sets in over the realization of how much work lies ahead**  
**Resistance to the task**  
**Sharp fluctuations in attitude about the team**  
**Skepticism about the project's chances of success**  
**Argument begin amongst team members although there is agreement on the real issues**  
**Defensiveness**  
**Competition**  
**Doubt over the competence of superiors who chose the project**

**Challenge** – managing expectations and roles.

**What does it look like?** Differences in opinion are more common and are expressed more openly. Conflicts emerge around interpersonal issues and task needs. Power struggles may emerge as leadership is challenged and factions begin to form. Team members compete for positions, challenge goals, resent the group influence and resist task requirements. Note: Many groups commonly stall at this stage. If the ground rules, strengths and weaknesses, and personal expectations have been discussed properly in the Formation stage many of these characteristics are not present such as ignoring ground rules, sharp fluctuation in attitude, and competitiveness.

**Feelings** - As the team begins to move towards its goals, members discover that the team can't live up to all of their early excitement and expectations. Their focus may shift from the tasks at hand to feelings of frustration or anger with the team's progress or process. Members may express concerns about being unable to meet the team's goals. During the Criticism stage, members are trying to see how the team will respond to differences of opinion and how it will handle conflict. This is when the ground rules systems for conflict and negotiation become relevant, and the project leader will need to organize how the team's strengths and weaknesses will be utilized or compensated for.

**Behaviors** - Behaviors may be less polite than during the Formation stage, with frustration or disagreements about goals, expectations, roles and responsibilities being openly expressed. Members may express frustration about constraints that slow their individual or the team's progress; this frustration might be directed towards other

members of the team, the project leadership, the project management coordinator, or the faculty advisor. During the Criticism stage, team members may argue or become critical of the team's original mission or goals. Some of the behavioral pitfalls are: challenging the team's purpose, splintering into subgroups, struggling for power and control, resisting tasks and authority, and avoiding dealing with underlying tensions and hidden agendas.

**Team Tasks** - The team refocuses their attention on its goals, perhaps breaking larger goals down into smaller, achievable steps. Reviewing the Mission Statement and changing specific elements can help the team to foster more cohesiveness. The team may need to develop both task-related skills, revise the team process, and conflict management skills. A redefinition of the team's goals, roles, and tasks can help team members past the frustration or confusion they experience during the Criticism stage.

**Questions** - Why are we doing this?  
What's the point?  
Why are we doing it this way?  
Why don't we do it that way?

### **Maintenance Tasks for Criticism Stage**

1. After assessing each team member, **develop a profile** describing how you think each member will tackle the project that lies ahead.
2. Using **Situational Leadership**, the leader should be **Supportive** because there is usually some task competence, but low to medium commitment.
3. Review and adapt the **Ground Rules** to cover each situation that arises. **Ground Rules** are sometimes broken. Discuss them, and adapt them to the team culture.
4. If team member resists a task, utilize **Active Listening Techniques** to find out what the problems are and adjust plans accordingly.
5. Attempt to define what **Conflict Management Styles** members are using to deal with their resistance and feelings of being overwhelmed. Remember: conflict avoidance is overused during this stage of team development.
6. Many of the emotional issues in the **Criticism Stage** actually arise from differences in working styles or time management issues. These issues are covered over by defensive emotional reactions such as frustration, apathy about team structure, or anger regarding the organization of the course.
7. Motivation levels need to be considered when **Delegating Tasks**. Assess the motivation level of each team member and delegate task in the appropriate manner.

8. If members are feeling frustrated about the organization of the project, discuss the team's feelings openly with your faculty advisor or instructor to move the process along.
9. After clearly stating the problems, make discussion and resolution of these items, part of the **Agenda** so they are not avoided or mishandled.
10. Review overall goals with the team: becoming as efficient and as high- performing as possible to accomplish the task.
11. After a **milestone** is reached, summarize how the team used their time to understand how the time was really spent.
12. Facilitation of discussions during the **Criticism Stage** will be a large factor in determining how quickly your team reaches the **Accomplishment Stage**.
13. Is your recorder filling out the **Weekly Progress Reports** properly so they are useful to the team? Is your faculty advisor referring to your reports in meetings?
14. Bring problems for the team to discuss to the Project Management Coordinator's attention.
14. When roles are rotated, the leader should prepare for **Transition Meeting** with the team.