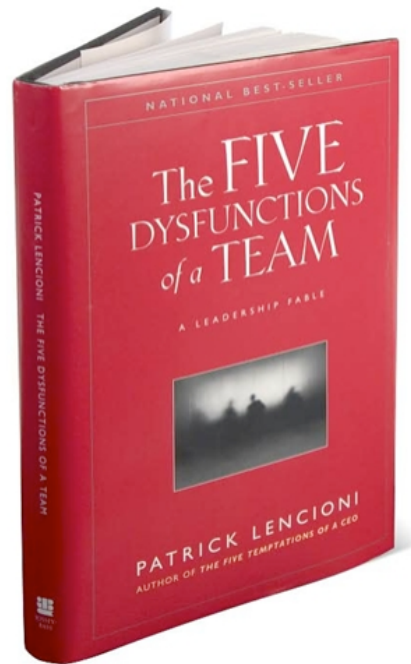




The Five Dysfunctions of a team

By Patrick Lencioni

Content = *** Readability = **** Clarity & Structure = ****



IN A NUTSHELL

There are five interrelated issues that undermine the performance of a team:

- 1) Absence of trust.** If the members of the team do not trust each other then they cannot be totally honest with each other.
- 2) Fear of conflict.** Without trust people will not have the healthy debates that are necessary to arrive at better thought through decisions.
- 3) Lack of commitment.** If the team have not aligned behind a decision then the individual members who did not agree with the final decision will ultimately be less committed to that decision.
- 4) Avoidance of accountability.** If they are not committed to the course of action, then they are less likely to feel accountable (or hold other people accountable).
- 5) Inattention to results.** Consequently, they are less likely to care about the group results (and instead focus on achieving their own goals).

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KEY PRINCIPLES

The book is written up as a fable, following an artificial company through the five stages.

1) Lack of trust

- Trust & respect are the foundation stones of any relationship
- Two types of trust: Trust in others to effectively deliver against their roles and responsibilities and psychological trust – i.e. trust not be taken advantage of

A team with no trust will:

- Conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from others
- Hesitate to provide constructive feedback
- Hesitate to offer help outside of their area of expertise
- Fail to tap into the skills of others in the team
- Waste time and energy managing their behaviours for effect
- Hold grudges

A team built on trust will:

- Quickly and genuinely apologize to one another when they say or do anything inappropriate or could damage the team
- Accept questions and challenges from other members (for the greater good of the team)
- Take risks in offering feedback and assistance
- Appreciate and tap into each other's skills & experiences
- Focus time & energy on important issues only
- Openly admit their weaknesses and mistakes
- Know about one another's personal lives and are comfortable discussing them
- Not be afraid to ask for help

Suggested strategies to help overcome absence of trust:

- Time together
- 'Calling' people on behaviour traits that demonstrate lack of trust
- Understand each other's personal history
- Use personality profiling e.g. Myers-Briggs Type Index (MBTI)
- 360 degree feedback
- Leader 'leads' by example

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2) Fear of conflict

- Its critical to have open lines of communication (so that everyone is clear & aligned)
- Debate leads to better solution
- Focus on the issue not the person

Teams that fear conflict will:

- Create environments where back-channel politics and personal attacks thrive
- Ignore controversial topics
- Fail to tap into the opinions of team members
- Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management

Teams that have no fear of conflict will:

- Be passionate and unguarded in their discussion of issues
- Discuss the most important and difficult issues
- Minimize politics
- Actively extract and exploit the ideas from all members

Suggested strategies to help overcome fear of conflict:

- 'Calling' people on behaviour traits that demonstrate fear of conflict
- Identify how we respond e.g. via Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument
- Leader 'leads' in behaviour



3) Lack of commitment

- Verbally agree (but unconsciously do not support)
- Alignment more important than agreement
- People often feel 'unheard'
- 'Call' on your peers to maintain high standards

A team that fails to commit will:

- Have ambiguity around direction and priorities
- Miss opportunities due to excess analysis and lack of decision-making
- Lack confidence and fear failure
- Revisit discussions and decisions again and again
- Encourage 2nd guessing among the team

A totally committed team will:

- All be aligned towards one goal
- Have clarity over objectives and roles
- Know what their peers are working on and how they contribute to the collective good of the team
- Ensure that everyone's ideas and opinions are properly listened to
- Learn from mistakes
- Make decisions with little hesitation (and can change direction without guilt)
- Be confident that their peers are completely committed to the decisions that were agreed on, even if there was initial disagreement
- End discussions with clear and specific resolutions

Suggested strategies to help overcome lack of commitment:

- 'Calling' people on behaviour traits that demonstrate lack of commitment
- Summarise decisions made in meetings
- Time-boxing decisions (any decision is better than no decision)
- Change course if wrong
- Clarify worst-case scenarios
- Low risk exposure therapy (c80% of the certainty of a decision comes within the first c20% of the data)
- Leader 'leads' in behaviour

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4) Avoidance of accountability

- Not holding members of the team accountable
- Lack of clarity of roles & responsibilities

A team that avoids accountability will:

- Create resentment among team members who have different standards of performance
- Encourage mediocrity
- Miss deadlines and key deliverables
- Place an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline

A team that accepts accountability will:

- Call out one another's deficiencies or unproductive behaviour
- Identify potential problems quickly
- Challenge one another about their plans and approaches
- Establish high respect among team members who all hold to the same high standard

Suggested strategies to help overcome avoidance of accountability:

- 'Calling' people on behaviour traits that demonstrate avoidance of accountability
- Open publication of goals, standards and metrics
- Regular progress reviews
- Bonus for team not individual
- Leader 'leads' in behaviour



5) Inattention to results

- Status & ego get in the way
- Focus on individual/personal goals rather than the objectives of the team
- In a team, the sum is greater than the constituent parts
- Need for clear metrics
- Often a lack of perceived clarity over what the big goal is

A team inattentive to results will:

- Stagnate and fail to grow
- Rarely defeat its competitors
- Lose its good staff
- Encourage team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals
- Be easily distracted

A team attentive to results will:

- Retain good staff
- Willingly make sacrifices (such as budget, turf, head count) in their department or areas of expertise for the good of the team
- 'Feel the pain' when the team fails to achieve its goals
- Be slow to seek credit for their own contributions, but quick to point out those of others

Suggested strategies to help overcome inattention to results:

- 'Calling' people on behaviour traits that demonstrate inattention to results
- Public declaration of results
- Results based reviews
- Leader 'leads' in behaviour

Criticisms

It's easy to spot the errors of a team but much harder to correct. In that sense the book is hardly revealing (I guess most of us knew many of these anyway). For me the biggest gap is in not providing enough tangible approaches and techniques that a facilitator or leader could use to address the situation.

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How to
successfully
manage multi-
agency
integrated
projects



The issue: Marketeers are struggling to manage multi-agency teams as technology opens up new ways to connect to their target audiences. Whilst everyone wants to use the experts in each field, it is leading to inefficiencies in budget, time and execution.

The solution: A workshop to help improve integration by developing a shared vision, set of values and process. The workshop encourages open discussion over the many issues that get in the way.

This workshop is designed around feedback from over 30 agencies and clients on what blocks integration and how to build a unified team.

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