



5 Dysfunctions of a Team

Description

Many teams are unable to perform well, having neither the courage, nor the discipline to overcome the cause of politicking and dysfunctional behavior. In his book, Patrick Lencioni identifies five dysfunctions of a team that are a barrier to success.

1. **Absence of Trust:** Fearful of being open and vulnerable with others
2. **Fear of Conflict:** Can't get to discuss critical issues; trying too hard to keep the peace.
3. **Lack of Commitment:** Uncertain about the decisions they make, not committed to what is decided.
4. **Avoidance of Accountability:** Avoidance of interpersonal discomfort stops people holding each other accountable.
5. **Inattention to Results:** Seeking personal goals and status at the expenses of team success.

Teams that deal successfully with these five dysfunctions can become high performing, cohesive teams that:

- Are able to admit mistakes, take risks by giving feedback and willing to ask for help
- Tap into one another's skills and experiences
- Are focused on and deal well with the issues
- Avoid wasting time on the same old issues
- Do more in less time using fewer resources
- Deal with critical issues creatively
- Are aligned around common objectives

Purpose

Diagnose dysfunctional behavior of a team and make changes so the team becomes high performing.

Resources

Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team: A leadership fable*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Instructions

1. Print out the worksheet for each member of the team.
2. Ask members of to think about the first dysfunction – absence of trust – and make notes about what they observe and what strategies they would suggest for dealing with the situation.
3. Ask members to share their thinking, and record their ideas on a flip chart, or on a master electronic version projected onto a large screen from a personal computer.
4. Discuss and make a short list of corrective actions.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 for all other dysfunctions.

Interpreting the results/next steps

1. Publish a document listing the agreed new practices as part of a “team charter”
2. Encourage all members to hold each other accountable for straying from the agreed practices.
3. Conduct further assessments from time-to-time, or when the group performance is less than optimal.



5 DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM WORKSHEET

Typical team dysfunctions, indicators and impacts	What do we observe? How can we change this?
Absence of Trust Indicator: An unwillingness to be vulnerable; hiding or falsifying motives	
Absence of Trust Impact: Low morale; exceptional amount of energy spent just to manage the team	
Fear of Conflict Indicator: Artificial harmony; Lack of debate; guarded comments	
Fear of Conflict Impact: Tension; boring meetings; back-channel complaining	
Lack of Commitment Indicator: Continual need for consensus and certainty; Lack of buy-in to decisions; lots of second guessing	
Lack of Commitment Impact: Indecision; continual revisit of decisions; frequent conflicts in interpreting “marching orders”	
Avoidance of Accountability Indicator: Unwillingness to call peers out on statements and behaviors; inability to separate personal from team relationship	
Avoidance of Accountability Impact: Resentment due to “different standards for different people;” team leader is the only source of discipline	
Inattention to Results Indicator: Individual (or home organization) needs take priority over collective team needs; goal is to exist (being on team is “enough”	
Inattention to Results Impact: Stagnation; easily distracted; team loses high-achieving members	