

## Session 4

### Working with Teams

Bolt scene:

Tire change at Nascar....

Tell me why this team worked so well.....

I want to refer back to this team as we look at the 5 Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencion1.

#### The Model

##### An Overview of the Model

Two critical truths are clear. First, genuine teamwork in most organizations remains as elusive as it has ever been. Second, organizations fail to achieve teamwork because they unknowingly fall prey to five natural but dangerous pitfalls, which can be called the five dysfunctions of a team. These dysfunctions can be mistakenly interpreted as five distinct issues that can be addressed in isolation from the others. But in reality they form an interrelated model, making susceptibility to even one of them potentially lethal for the success of a team. A cursory overview of each dysfunction and the model they make up should make this clearer.

#### The Five Dysfunctions

1. The first dysfunction is an absence of trust among team members. Essentially, this stems from their unwillingness to be vulnerable within the group. Team members who are not genuinely open with one another about their mistakes and weaknesses make it impossible to build a foundation for trust.

2. This failure to build trust is damaging because it sets the tone for the second dysfunction: fear of conflict. Teams that lack trust are incapable of engaging in unfiltered and passionate debate of ideas. Instead, they resort to veiled

discussions and guarded comments.

3. A lack of healthy conflict is a problem because it ensures the third dysfunction of a team: lack of commitment.

Without having aired their opinions in the course of passionate and open debate, team members rarely, if ever, buy in and commit to decisions, though they may feign agreement during meetings.

4. Because of this lack of real commitment and buy-in, team members develop an avoidance of accountability, the fourth dysfunction. Without committing to a clear plan of action, even the most focused and driven people often hesitate to call their peers on actions and behaviors that seem counterproductive to the good of the team.

5. Failure to hold one another accountable creates an environment where the fifth dysfunction can thrive. Inattention to results occurs when team members put their individual needs (such as ego, career development or recognition), or even the needs of their divisions, above the collective goals of the team.

And so, like a chain with just one link broken, teamwork deteriorates if even a single dysfunction is allowed to flourish. \_

Dysfunction No. 1:

Absence of Trust

Trust lies at the heart of a functioning, cohesive team.

Without it, teamwork is all but impossible.

The kind of trust that is characteristic of a great team requires team members to make themselves vulnerable to one another and be confident that their respective vulnerabilities will not be used against them. These vulnerabilities include weaknesses, skill deficiencies, interpersonal shortcomings, mistakes and requests for help.

Overcoming Dysfunction No. 1

How does a team go about building trust?

Unfortunately, vulnerability-based trust cannot be

achieved overnight. It requires shared experiences over time, multiple instances of follow-through and credibility, and an in-depth understanding of the unique attributes of team members. However, by taking a focused approach, a team can dramatically accelerate the process and achieve trust in relatively short order. Here are a few tools that can bring this about:

- **Personal Histories Exercise.** This low-risk exercise requires nothing more than going around the table during a meeting and having team members answer a short list of questions about themselves.
- **Team Effectiveness Exercise.** This exercise requires team members to identify the single most important contribution that each of their peers makes to the team, as well as the one area that they must either improve upon or eliminate for the good of the team.
- **Personality and Behavioral Preferences Profiles.** Some of the most effective and lasting tools for building trust on a team are profiles of team members' behavioral preferences and personality styles. The best profiling tool is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).
- **360-Degree Feedback.** These tools call for peers to make specific judgments and provide one another with constructive criticism.

### The Role of the Leader in Building Trust

The most important action that a leader must take to encourage the building of trust on a team is to demonstrate vulnerability first. This requires that the leader risk losing face in front of the team, so that subordinates will take the same risk themselves. Team leaders must create an environment that does not punish vulnerability. Displays of vulnerability on the part of a team leader must be genuine; they cannot be staged. \_

## Absence of Trust

### Members of teams with an absence of trust...

- Conceal weaknesses and mistakes.
- Hesitate to ask for help or give feedback.
- Hesitate to offer help.
- Jump to conclusions.
- Fail to tap into others.
- Manage their behavior for effect.
- Hold grudges.
- Dread and avoid time together.

### Members of trusting teams...

- Admit weaknesses and mistakes.
- Ask for and give help and constructive feedback.
- Accept input and questions.
- Assume the best of others.
- Tap into others' skills and expertise.
- Don't play politics.
- Offer and accept apologies quickly.
- Enjoy meetings and working as a group.

### Dysfunction No. 2:

#### Fear of Conflict

Teams that engage in productive conflict know that its only purpose is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time. They discuss and resolve issues more quickly and completely than other teams do, and they emerge from heated debates with no residual feelings or collateral damage, but with an eagerness and readiness to take on the next important issue.

#### Overcoming Dysfunction No. 2

How does a team go about developing the ability and willingness to engage in healthy conflict? The first step is to acknowledge that conflict is productive and that many teams have a tendency to avoid it. As long as some team members believe that conflict is unnecessary, there is little chance that it will occur. But beyond mere recognition, there are a few simple methods for making conflict more common and productive:

- **Mining.** Members of teams that tend to avoid conflict must occasionally assume the role of a “miner of conflict” — someone who extracts buried disagreements within the team and sheds light on them. Some teams may want to assign a member of the team to take on this responsibility during a given meeting or discussion.

- Real-Time Permission. In the process of mining for conflict, team members need to coach one another not to retreat from healthy debate. One simple but effective way to do this is to recognize when the people engaged in conflict are becoming uncomfortable with the level of discord, and then interrupt to remind them that what they are doing is necessary.

- The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode

Instrument. This tool, commonly referred to as the TKI, allows team members to understand natural inclinations around conflict so they can make more strategic choices about which approaches are most appropriate in different situations.

### The Role of the Leader in Overcoming the Fear of Conflict

It is key that leaders demonstrate restraint when their people engage in conflict, and allow resolution to occur naturally, as messy as it can sometimes be. A leader's ability to personally model appropriate conflict behavior is essential. By avoiding conflict when it is necessary and productive — something many executives do — a team leader will encourage this dysfunction to thrive. \_

# Fear of Conflict

## Teams that fear conflict...

- Have boring meetings.
- Have back-channel politics and personal attacks.
- Ignore controversial topics.
- Fail to hear all perspectives and opinions.
- Waste time and energy posturing.

## Members of trusting teams...

- Have lively, interesting meetings.
- Extract and exploit ideas from all team members.
- Solve real problems quickly.
- Minimize politics.
- Put critical topics on the table.

## Dysfunction No. 3: Lack of Commitment

In the context of a team, commitment is a function of two things: clarity and buy-in. Great teams make clear and timely decisions and move forward with complete buy-in from every member of the team, even those who voted against the decision. They leave meetings confident that no one on the team is quietly harboring doubts about whether to support the actions agreed on.

The two greatest causes of a lack of commitment are the desire for consensus and the need for certainty:

- **Consensus.** Great teams understand the danger of seeking consensus, and find ways to achieve buy-in even when complete agreement is impossible. They understand that reasonable human beings do not need

to get their way in order to support a decision, but only need to know that their opinions have been heard and considered.

- **Certainty.** Great teams also pride themselves on being able to unite behind decisions and commit to clear courses of action even when there is little assurance about whether the decision is correct. They realize that it is better to make a decision boldly and be wrong — and then change direction with equal boldness than it is to waffle.

### Overcoming Dysfunction No. 3

How does a team go about ensuring commitment? By taking specific steps to maximize clarity and achieve buyin, and by resisting the lure of consensus or certainty. Here are a few simple but effective tools and principles:

- **Cascading Messaging.** At the end of a staff meet-ing or off-site, a team should explicitly review the key decisions made during the meeting and agree on what needs to be communicated to employees or other constituencies about those decisions.

- **Deadlines.** One of the best tools for ensuring commitment is to use clear deadlines for when decisions will be made and honor those dates with discipline and rigidity.

- **Contingency and Worst-Case Scenario Analysis.**

A team that struggles with commitment can begin overcoming this tendency by briefly discussing contingency plans up front or, better yet, clarifying the worst-case scenario for a decision they are struggling to make.

- **Low-Risk Exposure Therapy.** Another relevant exercise for a commitment-phobic team is to demonstrate decisiveness in relatively low-risk situations. When teams force themselves to make decisions after substantial

discussion but little analysis or research, they usually come to realize that the quality of the decision was better than they expected.

## The Role of the Leader in Building Commitment

More than any other member of the team, the leader must be comfortable with the prospect of making a decision that may ultimately turn out to be wrong. And the leader must be constantly pushing the group for closure around issues, as well as adherence to schedules that the team has set. What the leader cannot do is place too high a premium on certainty or consensus. \_

# Lack of Commitment

## A team that fails to commit...

- Creates ambiguity.
- Misses opportunities.
- Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure.
- Revisits the same old discussions.
- Encourages second guessing.

## A team that commits...

- Creates clarity.
- Aligns around common objectives.
- Develops the ability to learn from mistakes.
- Catches opportunities before competitors.
- Moves forward without hesitation.
- Changes direction without hesitation or guilt.

Dysfunction No. 4:  
Avoidance of Accountability

In the context of teamwork, accountability refers specifically to the willingness of team members to call their peers on performance or behaviors that might hurt the team.

The essence of this dysfunction is an unwillingness by team members to tolerate the interpersonal discomfort that accompanies calling a peer on his or her behavior and the more general tendency to avoid difficult conversations. Members of great teams overcome these natural inclinations, opting instead to “enter the danger” with one another.

Members of great teams improve their relationships by holding one another accountable, thus demonstrating that they respect each other and have high expectations for one another’s performance.

The most effective and efficient means of maintaining high standards of performance on a team is peer pressure.

More than any policy or system, there is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates to motivate people to improve their performance.

#### Overcoming Dysfunction No. 4

How does a team go about ensuring accountability?

The key to overcoming this dysfunction is adherence to a few classic management tools that are as effective as they are simple:

- Publication of Goals and Standards.

A good way to make it easier for team members to hold one another accountable is to clarify publicly exactly what the team needs to achieve, who needs to deliver what and how everyone must behave in order to succeed.

- Simple and Regular Progress Reviews.

Team members should regularly communicate with one another, either verbally or in writing, about how they feel their teammates are doing against stated objectives

and standards.

• **Team Rewards.** By shifting rewards away from individual performance and toward team achievement, the team can create a culture of accountability. This occurs because a team is unlikely to stand by quietly and fail because a peer is not pulling his or her weight.

### The Role of the Leader in Instilling Accountability

One of the most difficult challenges for a leader who wants to instill accountability on a team is to encourage and allow the team to serve as the first and primary accountability mechanism.

Once a leader has created a culture of accountability on a team, however, he or she must be willing to serve as the ultimate arbiter of discipline when the team itself fails. This should be a rare occurrence. Nevertheless, it must be clear to all team members that accountability has not been relegated to a consensus approach, but merely to a shared team responsibility, and that the leader of the team will not hesitate to step in when necessary. \_

### Avoidance of Accountability

A team that avoids accountability...	A team that holds one another accountable...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creates resentment among the team.</li><li>• Encourages mediocrity.</li><li>• Misses deadlines.</li><li>• Puts undue burden on leader as disciplinarian.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensures poor performers feel pressure to improve.</li><li>• Identifies problems quickly.</li><li>• Establishes respect.</li><li>• Avoids bureaucracy around performance management.</li></ul>

### Dysfunction No. 5: Inattention to Results

The ultimate dysfunction of a team is the tendency of members to care about something other than the collective

goals of the group. An unrelenting focus on specific objectives and clearly defined outcomes is a requirement for any team that judges itself on performance. Results are not limited to financial measures, like profit, revenue or shareholder returns. This dysfunction refers to a far broader definition of results, one that is related to outcome-based performance. Every good organization specifies what it plans to achieve in a given period, and these goals, more than the financial metrics that they drive, make up the majority of near-term, controllable results. So, while profit may be the ultimate measure of results for a corporation, the goals and objectives that executives set for themselves along the way constitute a more representative example of the results it strives for as a team. Ultimately, these goals drive profit. But what would a team be focused on other than results? Team status and individual status are the prime candidates.

- Team Status. For members of some teams, merely being part of the group is enough to keep them satisfied. For them, achieving specific results might be desirable, but not necessarily worthy of great sacrifice or inconvenience.

- Individual Status. A functional team must make the collective results of the group more important to each individual than individual members' goals.

### Overcoming Dysfunction No. 5

How does a team go about ensuring that its attention is focused on results? By making results clear, and rewarding only those behaviors and actions that contribute to those results.

- Public Declaration of Results. Teams that are willing to commit publicly to specific results are more likely to work with a passionate, even desperate desire to achieve those results.

- **Results-Based Rewards.** An effective way to ensure that team members focus their attention on results is to tie their rewards, especially compensation, to achieving specific outcomes.

### The Role of the Leader in Focusing a Team on Results

Perhaps more than with any of the other dysfunctions, the leader must set the tone for a focus on results. If team members sense that the leader values anything other than results, they will take that as permission to do the same for themselves. Team leaders must be selfless and objective, and reserve rewards and recognition for those who make real contributions to achieving group goals.

Inattention to Results	
<b>A team that is not focused on results...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stagnates.</li><li>• Rarely defeats competitors.</li><li>• Loses achievement oriented employees.</li><li>• Encourages focus on individual careers and goals.</li><li>• Is easily distracted.</li></ul>	<b>A team that focuses on collective results...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retains achievement oriented people.</li><li>• Minimalizes individualistic behavior.</li><li>• Enjoys success and suffers failure acutely.</li><li>• Good of the team supersedes individual interests.</li><li>• Avoids distractions.</li></ul>

### Conclusion

The reality remains that teamwork ultimately comes down to practicing a small set of principles over a long period of time. Success is not a matter of mastering subtle, sophisticated theory, but rather of embracing common sense with uncommon levels of discipline and persistence.

Ironically, teams succeed because they are exceedingly human. By acknowledging the imperfections of their humanity, members of functional teams overcome the

natural tendencies that make trust, conflict, commitment, accountability and a focus on results so elusive. \_



# Lencioni: Overcoming Five Dysfunctions of a Team



Pit stop one

Then pit stop 2