

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (2002)

Patrick Lencioni

“Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare (p.vii).” This is the way Patrick Lencioni opened his best-selling book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (2002).

Lencioni Model—Understanding team dysfunction

One of the most interesting models of team effectiveness was developed by Lencioni (2005). According to him, all teams have the potential to be dysfunctional. To improve the functioning of a team, it is critical to understand the type and level of dysfunction. Again, a pyramid is used to demonstrate the hierarchical progression of team development. Similar to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1954), there are five levels and each must be completed to move on to the next one.

There are five potential dysfunctions of a team in Lencioni’s model:

Dysfunction #1: Absence of Trust

This outcome occurs when team members are reluctant to be vulnerable with one another and are unwilling to admit their mistakes, weaknesses, or need for help. Without a certain comfort level among team members, a foundation of trust is not possible.

Dysfunction #2: Fear of Conflict

Teams that are lacking trust are incapable of engaging in unfiltered, passionate debate about key issues. It creates situations where team conflict can easily turn into veiled discussions and back channel comments. In a work setting where team members do not openly air their opinions, inferior decisions result.

Dysfunction #3: Lack of Commitment

Without conflict, it is difficult for team members to commit to decisions, fostering an environment where ambiguity prevails. Lack of direction and commitment can make employees, particularly star employees, disgruntled and disenfranchised.

Dysfunction #4: Avoidance of Accountability

When teams do not commit to a clear plan of action, even the most focused and driven individuals are hesitant to call their peers on actions and behaviours that may seem counterproductive to the overall good of the team.

Dysfunction #5: Inattention to Results

Team members naturally tend to put their own needs (e.g., ego, career development, recognition, and so on) ahead of the collective goals of the team when individuals are not held accountable. If a team has lost sight of the need for achievement, the business ultimately suffers.

Lencioni Team Assessment

The primary purpose of this assessment is to provide you with a sense of your team's unique strengths and areas for improvement against the Lencioni model of 5 dysfunctions of a team. For a more accurate analysis your whole team could complete it and then discuss the results, and agree actions to be undertaken for improvement.

Instructions:

Please assign a rating to each statement.

Evaluate each statement as honestly and objectively as possible and assign a score as follows:

- 1 = never
- 2 = rarely
- 3 = sometimes
- 4 = usually
- 5 = always

The assessment should not take more than 15 minutes to complete.

1. Team members admit their mistakes
2. Team members are passionate and unguarded in their discussion of issues
3. Team members are quick to point out the contributions and achievements of others
4. Team meetings are interesting and compelling, not boring
5. During team meetings, the most difficult and important issues are discussed
6. Team members acknowledge their weaknesses to one another
7. Team members voice their opinions even at the risk of causing disagreement
8. Team members point out one another's unproductive behaviours
9. The team has a reputation for high performance
10. Team members ask for help without hesitation
11. Team members leave meetings confident that everyone is committed to the decisions that we are agreed on
12. During discussions, team members challenge one another about how they arrived at their conclusions and opinions
13. Team members ask one another for input regarding their areas of responsibility
14. When the team fails to achieve collective goals, each member takes personal responsibility to improve the team's performance
15. Team members willingly make sacrifices in their areas for the good of the team
16. Team members are quick to confront peers about problems in their respective areas of responsibility
17. Team members acknowledge and tap into one another's skills and expertise
18. Team members solicit one another's opinions during meetings
19. Team members end discussions with clear and specific resolutions and calls to action
20. Team members question one another about their current approaches and methods
21. The team ensures that poor performers feel pressure and the expectation to improve

22. Team members willingly apologise to one another
23. Team members communicate unpopular opinions to the group
24. The team is clear about its direction and priorities
25. Team members are slow to seek credit for their own contributions
26. All members of the team hold the same high standards
27. When conflict occurs the team confronts and deals with the issue before moving on to another subject
28. The team is aligned around common objectives
29. The team consistently achieves its objectives
30. The team is decisive even when perfect information is not available
31. Team members value collective success more than individual achievement
32. Team members are unguarded and genuine with one another
33. Team members can comfortably discuss their personal lives with one another
34. The team sticks to decisions
35. Team members consistently follow through on promises and commitments
36. Team members offer unprovoked, constructive feedback to one another
37. Team members place little importance on titles and status (a high score indicates that titles and status are NOT important to team members)
38. Team members support group decisions even if they initially disagree

Scoring

- Transfer your ratings for each statement to the corresponding box below
- Add the scores for each column and fill in the total
- The average score is the total divided by the number indicated at the end of each column – fill it in the box provided for each column.

TRUST	CONFLICT	COMMITMENT	ACCOUNTABILITY	RESULTS
1	2	11	8	3
6	4	19	16	9
10	5	24	20	14
13	7	28	21	15
17	12	30	26	25
22	18	34	35	29
32	23	38	36	31
33	27			37
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Average: Total divided by 8	Average: Total divided by 8	Average: Total divided by 7	Average: Total divided by 7	Average: Total divided by 8

Interpreting the scores

	High Average score of 3.75 and above	Medium Average score of between 3.25 and 3.74	Low Average score of 3.24 or below
Trust	Your team has created an environment where vulnerability and openness are the norm	Your team may need to get more comfortable being open with one another about individual strengths and weaknesses, mistakes and the need for help	Your team lacks necessary levels of openness and vulnerability about individual strengths, weaknesses, mistakes and asking for help
Conflict	Your team is comfortable engaging in unfiltered conversation about important topics	Your team may need to learn to engage in more unfiltered discussion about important topics	Your team is not comfortable (or skilled?) in having unfiltered conversations about important issues
Commitment	Your team has the ability to buy into clear decisions leaving little room for ambiguity and second guessing	Your team may struggle at times to make clear decisions and stick to them. This could be creating ambiguity in some areas of activity. It may cause some confusion	Your team is not able to buy into clear decisions. This will result in ambiguity and possibly lead to actions being taken which are out of alignment with the team objectives
Accountability	Your team does not hesitate to confront one another about performance related and behavioural concerns. The givers and receivers of such feedback are able to handle it maturely	Your team may be hesitating to confront one another about performance or behavioural issues, or it may be patchy or inconsistent. This will in some cases affect team results	Your team hesitates to confront one another about performance or behaviour. This is holding back team overall performance
Results	Your team values collective outcomes and results more than individual recognition and attainment of status	Members of your team may be placing too much importance on individual or departmental recognition and ego rather than focussing on the collective goals of the team	Your team needs to work on building a collective sense of team performance and achievement. It is likely that you are experiencing individualism and possibly internal competition at the expense of the team success

Reference

- Lencioni, P. (2005) *Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Jossey Bass