

A Case for Teamwork
Adapted from the work of Patrick Lencioni
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Building an effective, cohesive team is extremely hard. But it's also simple.

Teamwork doesn't require great intellectual insights or masterful tactics. More than anything else, it comes down to courage and persistence.

And so, if you're committed to making your team a healthy one, and you can get the rest of the team to share your commitment, you're probably going to make it. And just in case you're not sure this will be worth the time and effort – and risk – there is a case for going forward.

In this day and age of informational ubiquity and nanosecond change, teamwork remains the one sustainable competitive advantage that has been largely untapped. Teamwork is almost always lacking within organizations that fail, and often present within those that succeed.

It is true that teamwork is hard to measure. Why? Because teamwork impacts the outcome of an organization in such comprehensive and invasive ways that it's virtually impossible to isolate it as a single variable. Many organizations prefer solutions that are more easily measurable and verifiable, so they look elsewhere for their competitive advantages.

But even if the impact of teamwork were more easily measurable, executives probably would still look elsewhere. Why? Because teamwork is extremely hard to achieve. It can't be bought, and it can't be attained by hiring an intellectual giant from the world's best business school. It requires levels of courage and discipline – and emotional energy – that even the most driven executives don't always possess.


As difficult as teamwork is to measure and achieve, its power cannot be denied. When people come together and set aside their individual needs for the good of the whole, they can accomplish what might have looked impossible on paper. They do this by eliminating the politics and confusion that plague most organizations. As a result, they get more done in less time and with less cost.


Also, when it comes to helping people find fulfillment in their work, there is nothing more important than teamwork. It gives people a sense of connection and belonging, which ultimately makes them better parents, siblings, friends, and neighbors.


As difficult as teamwork can be to achieve, it is not complicated. The true measure of a team is that it accomplishes the results that it sets out to achieve.


To do that on a consistent, ongoing basis, a team must overcome the five dysfunctions listed here by embodying the behaviors described for each one.


The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

 **Dysfunction #1: Absence of Trust:** Members of great teams trust one another on a fundamental, emotional level, and they are comfortable being vulnerable with each other about their weaknesses, mistakes, fears, and behaviors. They get to a point where they can be completely open with one another, without filters. This is essential because...

 **Dysfunction #2: Fear of Conflict...**teams that trust one another are not afraid to engage in passionate dialogue around issues and decisions that are key to the organization's success. They do not hesitate to disagree with, challenge, and question one another, all in the spirit of finding the best answers, discovering the truth, and making great decisions. This is important because...

 **Dysfunction #3: Lack of Commitment...**teams that engage in unfiltered conflict are able to achieve genuine buy-in around important decisions, even when various members of the team initially disagree. That is because they ensure that all opinions and ideas are put on the table and considered, giving confidence to team members that no stone has been left unturned. This is critical because...

 **Dysfunction #4: Avoidance of Accountability...**teams that commit to decisions and standards of performance do not hesitate to hold one another accountable for adhering to those decisions and standards. What is more, they don't rely on the team leader as the primary source of accountability; they go directly to their peers. This matters because...

 **Dysfunction #5: Inattention to Results...**teams that trust one another, engage in conflict, commit to decisions, and hold one another accountable are very likely to set aside their individual needs and agendas and focus almost exclusively on what is best for the team. They do not give in to the temptation to place their departments, career aspirations, or ego-driven status ahead of the collective results that define team success.

THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM by Patrick Lencioni. Jossey-Bass, 2005. Pages 3-7