

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

By Patrick Lencioni

This simple to read, simple to understand, simple to agree with story was powerful. However, as stated in the book, it's not that these ideas are revolutionary or uniquely mind-boggling, rather it is the difficulty in the implementation of them that cause grief to so many well-intending teams. Lencioni's story, though fictional, was realistic in the approach and the push-back such a powerful implementation would cause.

The absence of trust is without question the greatest struggle that I see in teams I work with across the country. Trust, as defined in the book, is "the confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good, and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group." The ability we have to trust cuts to the core of who we are naturally. For some, it is naturally easy. For others, it is a constant battle. Though in a team setting, we must all strive to go beyond our comfort level to prove our desire to connect and trust those around us. There is a personal touch to trust, though I feel that at times in the Christian community we overstate this. I believe that trust is the ability to communicate without fear... not get overly emotionally involved in every situation.

The fear of conflict is a unique dysfunction to me. I would agree with this one, though I probably wouldn't use conflict as my choice of words. Rather, I would again restate the importance of open communication without fear of repercussions. Conflict is a negative word for debate, leaving a harsh edge to it that I don't feel is always needed. I do, however, believe that the clear communication without fear is a time saver, as Lencioni stated in the book.

The lack of commitment is a cultural issue that we see every day from the divorce rate to the number of teens fully committing themselves to outside activities such as sports. There is a significant downward trend in the follow-through of these individuals, and it's sad. People don't buy into the ideas that are presented, rather they fearfully wait to see if there is a safe, half-hearted way to still give the appearance of full commitment.

The avoidance of accountability clearly connects to the core of trust. When we are insecure in our approach to teams, or role on teams, and who we are as individuals, we push back and even fear people checking in on our work. Our work ethic, our standards, or goals, and our follow-through should never be under question, and the word accountability has an interpretation of "I'm not good enough to do it on my own so you better keep an eye on me." We only want to have checks in place from those in authority over us, not peers who have struggles as well.

The final dysfunction is inattention to results. When we fail to, as a team, set collective goals, we will constantly focus on ourselves. We fight for our own agenda and our own advancement, and overlook the value of furthering the team. I see ego as the poison that will infiltrate each of the other dysfunctions to infect the morale and the attitude of the team. It shuns others and leave the focus of the organization as secondary at best to the desire of one to rise to the top.

This was an extremely enjoyable book, and I would recommend it to anyone. It was an easy read, and I hope that in each team situation I am in, I can be actively watchful to see these dysfunctions in play to attack them with Christ-centered ambition.