Notebook - The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (J-B Lencioni Series)

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Page viii | Highlight

as desirable and powerful as teamwork is, it remains unnatural and requires people to willingly enter into risky discomfort.

Page ix | Highlight

ensure that the people on a team are, in fact, capable of being team players.

Page ix | Highlight

The Ideal Team Player

Page ix | Highlight

The Six Types of Working Genius,

Page x | Highlight

Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare.

Page xi | Highlight

teams, because they are made up of imperfect human beings, are inherently dysfunctional.

Page 42 | Highlight

to achieve results. This, in my opinion, is the only true measure of a team,

Page 43 | Highlight

the first dysfunction is a failure on the part of team members to understand and open up to one another.

Page 44 | Highlight

"Great teams are honest with one another," she said. "They are unafraid to air their dirty laundry. They admit their mistakes, their weaknesses, and their concerns without fear of reprisal."

Page 46 | Highlight

if everyone is completely on the same page and working in lockstep toward the same goals with no sense of confusion, then I suppose a lack of debate might be a good sign."

Page 71 | Highlight

the tendency of team members to seek out individual recognition and attention at the expense of results.

Page 72 | Highlight

The key is to make the collective ego greater than the individual ones."

Page 78 | Highlight

"The key, of course, is to define our goals, our results, in a way that is simple enough to grasp easily, and specific enough to be actionable. Profit is not actionable enough. It needs to be more closely related to what we do on a daily basis. And to that end, let's see if we can come up with something right now."

Page 88 | Highlight

"Politics is when people choose their words and actions based on how they want others to react rather than based on what they really think."

Page 92 | Highlight

You have tension. But there is almost no constructive conflict. Passive, sarcastic comments are not the kind of conflict I'm talking about."

Page 93 | Highlight

Your frustration sometimes surfaces in the form of subtle comments, but more often than not, it is bottled up and carried around.

Page 94 | Highlight

When people don't unload their opinions and feel like they've been listened to, they won't really get on board."

Page 95 | Highlight

consensus becomes an attempt to please everyone." "Which usually turns into displeasing everyone equally."

Page 95 | Highlight

most reasonable people don't have to get their way in a discussion. They just need to be heard, and to know that their input was considered and responded to."

Page 100 | Highlight

Two years of behavioral reinforcement around politics is a tough thing to break,

Page 129 | Highlight

I know I should be the last person to say this because I was JR's biggest critic behind the scenes, but let's not do this. He's gone, and we need to figure out what we're going to do."

Page 148 | Highlight

Some people are hard to hold accountable because they are so helpful. Others because they get

defensive. Others because they are intimidating. I don't

Page 170 | Highlight

"You are fighting. But about issues. That's your job. Otherwise, you leave it to your people to try to solve problems that they can't solve. They want you to hash this stuff out so they can get clear direction from us."

Page 180 | Highlight

launched into some of the most passionate debates Joseph had ever heard and ended those debates with crystal-clear agreements and no sense of lingering bitterness.

Page 188 | Highlight

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. 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. 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. 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. 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 departments above the collective goals of the team.

Page 189 | Highlight

how members of truly cohesive teams behave: They trust one another. They engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas. They commit to decisions and plans of action. They hold one another accountable for delivering against those plans. They focus on the achievement of collective results.

In the context of building a team, trust 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. In essence, teammates must get comfortable being vulnerable with one another.

Page 196 | Highlight

requires team members to make themselves vulnerable to one another, and be confident that their respective vulnerabilities will not be used against them. The vulnerabilities I'm referring to include weaknesses, skill deficiencies, interpersonal shortcomings, mistakes, and requests for help.

Page 196 | Highlight

act without concern for protecting themselves.

Page 196 | Highlight

they can focus their energy and attention completely on the job at hand, rather than on being strategically disingenuous or political with one another.

Page 196 | Highlight

most successful people learn to be competitive with their peers, and protective of their reputations.

Page 196 | Highlight

waste inordinate amounts of time and energy managing their behaviors and interactions within the group. They tend to dread team meetings, and are reluctant to take risks in asking for or offering assistance to others.

Page 197 | Highlight

Members of Teams with an Absence of Trust . . . Conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from one another Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback Hesitate to offer help outside their own areas of responsibility Jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of others

without attempting to clarify them Fail to recognize and tap into one another's skills and experiences Waste time and energy managing their behaviors for effect Hold grudges Dread meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time together Members of Trusting Teams . . . Admit weaknesses and mistakes Ask for help Accept questions and input about their areas of responsibility Give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a negative conclusion Take risks in offering feedback and assistance Appreciate and tap into one another's skills and experiences Focus time and energy on important issues, not politics Offer and accept apologies without hesitation Look forward to meetings and other opportunities to work as a group

Page 198 | Highlight

Personal Histories Exercise

Page 198 | Highlight

number of siblings, hometown, unique challenges of childhood, favorite hobbies, first job,

Page 198 | Highlight

worst job.

Page 198 | Highlight

see one another as human beings with life stories and interesting backgrounds.

Page 198 | Highlight

Team Effectiveness Exercise

Page 198 | Highlight

identify the single most important contribution that each of their peers makes to the team,

one area that they must either improve upon or eliminate for the good of the team.

Page 200 | Highlight

Personality Profiles

Page 200 | Highlight

Six Types of Working Genius

Page 200 | Highlight

help team members identify their natural gifts and frustrations.

Page 200 | Highlight

relative areas of genius and frustration,

Page 200 | Highlight

360-Degree Feedback

Page 200 | Highlight

should be used as a developmental tool,

Page 200 | Highlight

By being even slightly connected to formal performance evaluation or compensation, 360-degree programs can take on dangerous political undertones. Experiential Team Exercises

Page 201 | Highlight

regular follow-up

Page 201 | Highlight

The most important action that a leader must take to encourage the building of trust on a team is to demonstrate vulnerability first.

Page 201 | Highlight

environment that does not punish vulnerability.

Page 201 | Highlight

One of the best ways to lose the trust of a team is to feign vulnerability in order to manipulate the emotions of others.

Page 202 | Highlight

building trust, a team makes conflict possible because team members do not hesitate to engage in passionate and sometimes emotional debate, knowing that they will not be punished for saying something that might otherwise be interpreted as destructive or critical.

Page 202 | Highlight

All great relationships, the ones that last over time, require productive conflict in order to grow.

Page 202 | Highlight

It is important to distinguish productive ideological conflict from destructive fighting and interpersonal politics. Ideological conflict is limited to concepts and ideas, and avoids personality-focused, mean-spirited attacks.

Page 203 | Highlight

They discuss and resolve issues more quickly and completely than others,

Page 203 | Highlight

When team members do not openly debate and disagree about important ideas, they often turn to

back-channel personal attacks, which are far nastier and more harmful than any heated argument over issues.

Page 204 | Highlight

Teams that Fear Conflict . . . Have boring meetings Create environments where back-channel politics and personal attacks thrive Ignore controversial topics that are critical to team success Fail to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management Teams that Engage in Conflict . . . Have lively, interesting meetings Extract and exploit the ideas of all team members Solve real problems quickly Minimize politics Put critical topics on the table for discussion 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 the light of day on them.

Page 205 | Highlight

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.

Page 205 | Highlight

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, commonly referred to as the TKI.

Page 206 | Highlight

One of the most difficult challenges that a leader faces in promoting healthy conflict is the desire to protect members from harm.

Page 206 | Highlight

Therefore, 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. This can be a challenge because many leaders feel that they are somehow failing in their jobs by losing control of their teams during conflict.

Page 207 | Highlight

By engaging in productive conflict and tapping into team members' perspectives and opinions, a team can confidently commit and buy in to a decision knowing that they have benefited from everyone's ideas.

Page 207 | Highlight

In the context of a team, commitment is a function of two things: clarity and buy-in.

Page 207 | Highlight

The two greatest causes of the 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.

Page 207 | Highlight

And when that is not possible due to an impasse, the leader of the team is allowed to make the call. 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. That's because they understand the old military axiom that a decision is better than no decision. They also 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.

Page 208 | Highlight

conflict underlies the willingness to commit without perfect information.

Page 208 | Highlight

and perspectives on the table can the team confidently commit to a decision knowing that it has tapped

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Page 208 | Highlight

one of the greatest consequences for an executive team that does not commit to clear decisions is unresolvable discord deeper in the organization. More than any of the dysfunctions, this one

creates dangerous ripple effects for subordinates. When an executive team fails to achieve buy-in from all team members, even if the disparities that exist seem relatively small, employees who report to those executives will inevitably clash when they try to interpret marching orders that are not clearly aligned with those of colleagues in other departments. Like a vortex, small gaps between executives high up in an organization become major discrepancies by the time they reach employees below. A Team that Fails to Commit . . . Creates ambiguity among the team about direction and priorities Watches windows of opportunity close due to excessive analysis and unnecessary delay Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure Revisits discussions and decisions again and again Encourages second-guessing among team members A Team that Commits . . . Creates clarity around direction and priorities Aligns the entire team around common objectives Develops an ability to learn from mistakes Takes advantage of opportunities before competitors do Moves forward without hesitation Changes direction without hesitation or guilt

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Page 210 | Highlight

How does a team go about ensuring commitment? By taking specific steps to maximize clarity and achieve buy-in, and resisting the lure of consensus or certainty.

Page 210 | Highlight

Cascading Messaging

Page 210 | Highlight

At the end of a staff meeting 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.

Page 210 | Highlight

Deadlines As simple as it seems, one of the best tools for ensuring commitment is the use of clear deadlines for when decisions will be made, and honoring those dates with discipline and rigidity. The worst enemy of a team that is susceptible to this dysfunction is ambiguity, and timing is one of the most critical factors that must be made clear.

Page 211 | Highlight

Contingency and Worst-Case Scenario Analysis

Page 211 | Highlight

helping them realize that the costs of an incorrect decision are survivable, and far less damaging than they had imagined. Low-Risk Exposure Therapy Another relevant exercise for a commitment-phobic team is the demonstration of 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 they made was better than they had expected.

Page 212 | Highlight

the leader must be comfortable with the prospect of making a decision that ultimately turns out to be wrong.

Page 212 | Highlight

pushing the group for closure around issues,

Page 212 | Highlight

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

Page 213 | Highlight

As politically incorrect as it sounds, the most effective and efficient means of maintaining high standards of performance on a team is peer pressure. One of the benefits is the reduction of the need for excessive bureaucracy around performance management and corrective action. More than any policy or system, there is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their performance.

Page 214 | Highlight

A Team that Avoids Accountability . . . Creates resentment among team members who have

different standards of performance Encourages mediocrity Misses deadlines and key deliverables Places an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline A Team that Holds One Another Accountable . . . Ensures that poor performers feel pressure to improve Identifies potential problems quickly by questioning one another's approaches without hesitation Establishes respect among team members who are held to the same high standards Avoids excessive bureaucracy around performance management and corrective action Publication of Goals and Standards

Page 214 | Highlight

clarify publicly exactly what the team needs to achieve, who needs to deliver what, and how everyone must behave in order to succeed. The enemy of accountability is ambiguity,

Page 214 | Highlight

Simple and Regular Progress Reviews

Page 215 | Highlight

Team Rewards

Page 215 | Highlight

shifting rewards away from individual performance to team achievement,

Page 215 | Highlight

This creates an environment where team members assume that the leader is holding others accountable, and so they hold back even when they see something that isn't right.

Page 216 | Highlight

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 it is necessary.

Page 216 | Highlight

If teammates are not being held accountable for their contributions, they will be more likely to turn their attention to their own needs, and to the advancement of themselves or their departments.

Page 216 | Highlight

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

Page 217 | Highlight

Team status. For members of some teams, merely being part of the group is enough to keep them satisfied.

Page 217 | Highlight

Individual status. This refers to the familiar tendency of people to focus on enhancing their own positions or career prospects at the expense of their team.

Page 218 | Highlight

many teams are simply not results focused. They do not live and breathe in order to achieve meaningful objectives, but rather merely to exist or survive.

Page 218 | Highlight

A Team that is not Focused on Results . . . Stagnates/fails to grow Rarely defeats competitor Loses achievement-oriented employees Encourages team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals Is easily distracted A Team that Focuses on Collective Results . . . Retains achievement-oriented employees Minimizes individualistic behavior Enjoys success and suffers failure acutely Benefits from individuals who subjugate their own goals/interests for the good of the team Avoids distractions Public Declaration of Results

Page 219 | Highlight

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.

Page 219 | Highlight

Results-Based Rewards

Page 219 | Highlight

leader must set the tone for a focus on results.

Page 220 | Highlight

teamwork ultimately comes down to practicing a small set of principles over a long period of time.

Page 220 | Highlight

embracing common sense with uncommon levels of discipline and persistence.

Page 222 | Highlight

Annual planning meeting and leadership development retreats (three days, off-site)

Page 222 | Highlight

Quarterly staff meetings (two days, off-site)

Page 222 | Highlight

Weekly staff meetings (two hours, on-site)

Page 222 | Highlight

Ad hoc topical meetings (two hours, on-site)